

ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2013

A GUIDE FOR DELEGATES & CLP SECRETARIES

from Peter Willsman



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**Katy Clark MP
says...**

“Coming to conference as a delegate can be great fun, but still a daunting experience. You get bamboozled with all sorts of jargon, the agenda can be confusing and sometimes it’s hard to follow what’s going on. But it’s important not to give up on the conference hall – for conference is pretty much the one chance grassroots members have to have their say on party policy and practice. For over 25 years, Peter Willsman, secretary of the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy (CLPD) has been producing this helpful guide about everything that happens at conference, and how to get your head around it. Please give it a read, and you can get in touch with either of us (contact details on the back page) if you have any questions.”

The conference agenda:

- **The NEC report** – the party’s national executive committee (NEC) will report to conference on its activity over the past year, in one or more reports. It was agreed in 1997 that the NEC would report back on motions from the previous year’s conference – but this has never happened.
- **The NPF reports** (see page 2) – reports from the eight policy commission that make up the party’s national policy forum (NPF) and deal with different areas of party policy
- **“Contemporary”** (p.2) and **“emergency”** (p.3) **motions** that deal with issues not covered by the NEC and NPF reports.
- **“The Collins Review”** (p.4) On Sunday, Ray Collins is likely to table an interim report on proposed reforms to the trade union link for debate. There may also be associated rule changes. The consultation paper on the subject may also be launched – this would be the basis for the announced special conference in the spring (possibly 1st March).
- **Proposed rule changes from the NEC and CLPs** (p.4) – the latter are subject to a one-year delay, so conference will debate those submitted in 2012
- **Elections for the national constitutional committee (NCC) and conference arrangements committee (CAC)** (p.11)

Agenda details are set out in daily reports from the CAC, which acts as the standing orders committee. Delegates have the right to raise queries and objections with the CAC directly, and should not feel inhibited from exercising this democratic power.

The policy commission reports

There are now **eight** policy commissions, which draw up policy reports for discussion by the NPF. Each of these commissions reports to conference.

The eight policy commissions (each made up of 16-20 members representing the shadow cabinet, the NEC and the NPF) are: stability and prosperity; work and business; living standards and sustainability; education and children; stronger, safer communities; health and care; better politics, and; Britain's global role.

Last year's annual conference sent Contemporary Motions on the following subjects to the NPF: banking, growth and jobs; economic alternative; employment rights; health and social care; schools.

Each of these motions has since been discussed at the relevant policy commission. The best practice is that reps from organisations that submitted the motions are invited to the discussions. The NPF should report to this year's conference on the progress of these discussions.

Final year reports will be published early in the new year for consultation. After this, party units and affiliates can submit amendments, which will be debated at an NPF meeting in the summer of 2014. Subsequently, the final document agreed by the NPF will be tabled at the 2014 annual conference as Labour's policy programme.

Contemporary motions from CLPs and affiliates

CLPs can only submit policy motions to party conference if they are on issues considered "contemporary" – that is, covering issues that have taken place from 1st August to the closing date for submissions, 12 noon on 12th September. (Emergency Resolutions cover an event that occurs after this date). The justification for this arbitrary time bracket is that issues that arise before can be submitted to the policy commission and are therefore covered in the NPF reports submitted to conference. But in reality, conference is the only democratic and transparent (well, more transparent at least!) part of the policy process.

It is therefore crucial that CLPs make use of their right to each submit **one** contemporary motion - provided they did not submit a rule change in 2013.

Head office has issued the following guidance on contemporary motions:

"In deciding if a contemporary motion is valid (contemporary) the CAC will consider the following points:

- *Is the issue already addressed in the Conference agenda?*
- *Has the issue been dealt with by the NPF and Policy Commissions in their work during the year as set out in their reports to Conference and Policy Papers?*
- *Could the issue have been sent to the NPF and Policy Commissions or the NEC for consideration before they published their work?*

A motion will be deemed contemporary if:

- a. It is no more than 250 words, deals with one subject and does not propose a rule change.*
- b. It deals with a topic that arose after the publication of the reports and Policy Papers of the National Policy Forum (NPF), Policy Commissions or National Executive Committee on the 31st July or has not been substantively addressed in those reports.*
- c. The issue could not otherwise have been raised through the Agenda 2015 process.*
- d. It does not seek to bypass either the National Policy Forum policy-making or the National Executive Committee decision-making processes or to overturn or revisit the Party Policy Programme as agreed through the Agenda 2015 process, including issues defeated at the NPF which failed to achieve the status of an alternative position at the NPF.*

The National Policy Forum's Annual Report will be published in early August on Membersnet at: <http://members.labour.org.uk/agenda-2015> Paper copies of the annual reports of the National Executive Committee and the National Policy Forum will be sent to delegates in early September."

There is nothing wrong with your contemporary motion being about party organisation and campaigning instead of policy. This was clearly spelt out in the Partnership in Power procedures agreed by Conference in 1997, where it specifically referred to the possibility of motions covering "issues that are not substantively addressed in the organisation and campaigning work of the NEC". However, in recent years the Party's senior officials seem to have forgotten this and have been resistant to such motions.

Contemporary motions **are submitted online** via Membersnet – if you encounter any problems, phone 0845 092 2299, or get in touch with the party's constitutional unit – email cac@labour.org.uk or phone 020 7783 1498.

Because the window for submitting a contemporary motion is so narrow, in many CLPs the executive committee or officers are empowered to agree the motion.

Before conference the CAC will adjudicate on whether or not each motion is "contemporary"- on 16th September. Then the CAC will contact the CLP secretary with its decision, and appeals will be heard by the CAC on the afternoon of Wednesday 18th September, when CLP reps can put the case directly to the CAC – via conference call if necessary. See page 9-10 for further information.

The Campaign for Labour Party Democracy (CLPD) has prepared several draft contemporary motions for consideration by CLPs. These are being circulated to CLPs, but are also available on the CLPD website clpd.org.uk and on leftfutures.org, or by phoning 01865 244459.

Emergency motions

Emergency resolutions may be submitted on matters that arise after the final date for submitting contemporary motions and, therefore, could not be the subject for a contemporary motion.

To be valid the issues in an emergency motion:

- Could not reasonably have been submitted through the contemporary motion process
- Should cover an issue of urgent and immediate importance to the discussions of the whole party at conference

Unfortunately, there can be no guarantee that valid emergency resolutions will be debated at Conference. It is simply up to the CAC – so delegates are encouraged to lobby the CAC as necessary.

There is no special form for emergency motions. They have to be emailed to the CAC assistant secretary – on cac@labour.org.uk

In the past the CLP Secretary has been asked to follow this up by a hard copy signed by the secretary or authorised officer, and sent to the CAC at Labour Party HQ or faxed to 020 7783 1506.

The Collins Review

Ray Collins, Labour's former general secretary, has been asked by Ed Miliband to review and make recommendations concerning "the development of a new relationship between the Labour party and members of our affiliated organisations". Ray has also been asked to consider ways to make the selection system for Labour's parliamentary candidates more of a level playing field, and to consider implementing some form of 'primary' system for selecting Labour's candidate for London mayor.

The unions founded our party and they are an intrinsic part of the federation that makes up the party. Many members think that instead of looking inwards we should be wholly concentrated on fighting the Tories.

Ray Collins is likely to produce an interim report for conference to consider, and then there will be a consultation culminating in the spring at the proposed "special conference". It is vital that this is a genuine consultation and not some sort of fix, like we have seen so often in the recent past.

Rule changes from the NEC

These are set out in the **delegates' report** issued to delegates before conference. CLPD's daily newsletter, "the Yellow Pages", will provide information and advice on these rule changes.

Rule changes from CLPs and affiliates (submitted in 2012 but debated in 2013)

At Brighton delegates will be debating and voting - by card vote - on several proposals to change the Labour's rule book. Some will be from the NEC, but two rule changes are tabled by CLPs – one from Northampton Borough Labour Party and one from Leyton & Wanstead and Redcar – and one is tabled by the ASLEF trade union.

Under a convention known as 'the 1968 Ruling', rule changes from CLPs and affiliates – but not those from the NEC – are subject to a one year delay.

Last year, in addition to the three mentioned above, a further **five** rule changes were submitted by a total of 21 CLPs (Tower Hamlets, Beverley and Holderness, Burnley, Braintree, Derby North, East Devon, Glasgow North, Halifax, Hemsworth, Islington South and Finsbury, Leeds Central, Leeds North East, Mid-Bedfordshire, Newport West, Saffron Walden, Stevenage, Tunbridge Wells, Exeter, Islington North and Rotherham.)

All of the rule changes have been ruled 'out of order' by the CAC. In some cases this ruling out was completely unfounded, and in other cases it was certainly questionable. It is obvious that the powers-that-be do not want pesky CLPs interfering with their preordained rally, which is what annual conference has degenerated into.

And this, despite the protestations from Ed Miliband et al that they take CLPs seriously and want to listen to them. Unfortunately these fine words do not butter any parsnips.

Support the rule change from Northampton Borough Labour Party

An important rule change that provides for natural justice. It limits the period that the NEC can suspend a party member without any action being taken to **one year**. It is right that the NEC should have the power to suspend members pending an investigation, and possible action by the party's national constitutional committee. But unfortunately there have been cases where the investigation and hearing have been so delayed that the suspension itself has become a punishment. For if you are suspended from the party, you are prevented from standing for any party or public office. This suggested rule change would debar open-ended suspensions and implement a consistent and understandable procedure.

Support the rule change from Leyton and Wanstead CLP and Redcar CLP

This rule change would allow local Labour parties to **elect Labour group leaders via an electoral college** – expanding the choice of local leaders beyond small groups of councillors. Such a change in a local party would be subject to permission from the NEC and a local consultation process. It would mirror the arrangements for the election of our national party leader.

The idea of a local electoral college to choose leaders of Labour groups was floated in the first draft of Refounding Labour. It presumably met resistance from supporters of the status quo, and was regrettably dropped from the final document that was presented to annual conference.

Giving Party members more of a role and influence within our Party was a key commitment by Ed Miliband during his leadership campaign. A wider franchise for electing council leaders would be an important step forward for party democracy. In recent years, central government has made many changes to local government structures and arrangements. Many of these have increased the power of group leaders and tended to weaken their accountability to the rest of the group. A local electoral college would enhance the accountability of a leader to both councillors and party, and strengthen the link between the group, the local CLPs and Party members.

Support the rule change from ASLEF

This was submitted, as with the others, last year, and at the time of writing remains on the conference agenda. In Spring 2012 when there was uproar in the Party about the powerful faction “Progress” receiving £3 million from Lord Sainsbury, and the suggestion that some of this bling was being used to bankroll Blairite Parliamentary hopefuls. Progress frequently claim to not be a faction, to be an open forum for debate or even just a newspaper (where have we heard that before?) – but they run slates for internal elections and support candidates in selections.

ASLEF merely propose that half of all donations to internal groups over £25,000 should be donated to the Labour party. Most internal groups operate on far smaller sums, and would be happy to donate anything above this to Labour. But after Ed Miliband’s election, Lord Sainsbury **stopped giving to the Labour party**, instead funding Progress.

It’s the CAC that’s out of order!

There are two rule changes that have been ruled out by the CAC using arguments that would be considered to be wrong by any fair minded party members. These are the rule change from Leeds Central CLP/Leeds North East CLP and the rule change from Exeter CLP/Islington North CLP. Both decisions by the CAC are based on their interpretation of the ‘three-year-rule’ which reads as follows:

“when Party conference has made a decision on a constitutional amendment, no proposal to amend that part of the constitution or rules of the party shall appear on the agenda for a period of three years”

The key word here, of course is “part”.

Justice for Leeds Central CLP and Leeds North East CLP

These CLPs want to introduce a Labour Party Ombudsperson, who would be a vital check on the internal machine politics that Ed is so concerned about. Leeds have proposed a completely new Clause (10) to chapter 1 of the rule book, with all subsequent clauses renumbered. The new Clause (10) from Leeds has, of course, no overlap with any of the existing Causes in Chapter 1. The CAC, apparently, are arguing that because the old Clause (10) (ie what would be Clause (11) under the Leeds proposals) has been amended in the last three years, then this means that the new Clause (10) from Leeds is somehow caught by the ‘three-year-rule’!!

They also argue that because there were amendments to Chapter 2 in 2011 that have a bearing on the proposal for an Ombudsperson, this also means that Leeds are caught by the ‘three-year-rule’. But every reader will have clearly appreciated the falseness of this last argument. Namely, that Chapter 1 cannot possibly be the same “part” of the Rule Book as Chapter 2!

Had the originators of the ‘Three-year-rule’ meant “clause”, they would have put “clause,” and had they meant “chapter” they would have put “chapter” – but they put

“part”. Obviously “part” was generally intended to be something smaller and more discrete than an entire clause.

Justice for Exeter CLP and Islington North CLP – say no to machine politics

These CLPs want to institute a national one-member-one-vote postal ballot for the election of the CLP seats on the CAC by amending Chapter 4 Section (B) (Election of CAC).

This has also been ruled out by that very CAC! And again, they employ the ‘three-year-rule’. The CAC argues that a rule change containing a proposal for OMOV elections for all national committees was defeated in 2010. This is true, but the 2010 rule change was to Chapter 1. Clearly Chapter 1 is not the same “part” of the Rule Book as Chapter 4! It is also the case that Chapter 4 Section (A) (Election of NEC) was amended by Conference in 2011 and 2012, but obviously Section A (Election of NEC) is not the same “part” as Section B (Election of CAC).

Now, it may be the case that the ‘three-year-rule’ is inadequately worded. But that is neither here nor there. The CAC’s only job is to interpret the rules as they are written in the rule book - not to make them up as they go along. That is the “machine politics” that Ed Miliband rails against.

Mandating of delegates for votes at conference

All unions and many CLPs ‘mandate’ (ie. instruct) their delegates for votes at conference. This is an established and legitimate practice – delegates votes are not their own, but their organisations, and are weighted according to their organisation’s membership numbers. CLPs are allowed to make their own arrangements on the subject of mandating, as the rule book is completely silent on the matter.

In the past some regional officials have illegitimately interfered, and attempted to confuse delegates, telling them that mandating is not allowed! Not only should such interference be reported to the general secretary, CLPD and NEC members, delegates should challenge the relevant official to produce the rule that supports their case – which of course does not exist.

Delegates credentials

In early to mid September, head office issues delegates credentials and rail tickets if these are being supplied centrally – these will either be sent by post, or handed out at regional pre-conference briefing meetings. Card vote booklets were previously sent out in advance, but last year these were distributed by regional officials at conference or collected by delegates from the ballot area.

Late accreditation (eg for replacement delegates)

If a CLP needs to change its delegate, it should apply to the CAC at head office.

CLPs should advise the conference services unit in writing and (unless in an emergency) well in advance of conference of any change of delegate giving the reasons.

The Conference Unit is in Newcastle and can be contacted via the head office

switchboard, or at conferenceservices@labour.org.uk Due to tight security arrangements, all late registrations at conference itself involve a long wait.

New delegates are therefore advised to attend the late accreditation office on the Saturday before the start of conference. The office usually opens at 9am and is open throughout Conference for help and advice.

New delegates need to have a letter of authority from the CLP secretary, personal identification and their party membership card. Delegates must have been a member for at least 12 months. They also need a passport-style photo and full payment.

Pre-Conference Regional Briefings

Before conference, delegates are usually called to at least one briefing meeting in their region. Any delegates unable to attend these briefings must contact their regional office to make alternative arrangements for obtaining their credentials – any delegate without a credential is denied entry to conference.

Every CLP delegate (including women and youth delegates) should have their own card vote booklet. But when voting for the CAC and NCC only one delegate goes to vote – so if the delegation is not mandated for these votes, votes should be agreed collectively.

Delegates should be aware that regional briefing meetings have occasionally been used, illegitimately, to pressure delegates to follow the platform line on the contentious issues coming before conference. If delegates encounter this sort of behaviour by party officials they should formally complain at the meeting, and also inform the general secretary, NEC members and CLPD.

Delegates are, of course, at Conference to represent the views of their CLP and are accountable to their own CLP and not to ministers or regional officials. They should stand firm and not be bamboozled. Regional officials may need reminding that they are party Civil Servants and should, therefore, be impartial at all times. Indeed, the general secretary has written to all party officials to remind them of their obligations in this regard.

How CLPD can help you prepare for conference

Due to regional briefings having previously been at best, confusing, and at worst, improper, CLPD is investigating hosting its own series of conference briefings in locations where it is feasible to do so. Look out for further communications about these meetings. CLPD representatives can also meet with delegations on an individual basis, to answer any questions, explain the jargon and help delegates prepare for conference – such as helping delegates find opportunities to speak, and lobby on behalf of constituents' concerns. If you would like to arrange such a meeting, call us on 01865 244459.

Conference times:

Delegates should arrive early each day, as the security arrangements involve long delays. Any delegate who misplaces documentation will need to report to the CAC for replacements (before conference opens, the CAC secretary can be contacted at the NEC hotel). Delegates need to be in conference from the start of each session, since this is when the CAC gives its very important reports.

The conference sessions will probably be:

Saturday:

11.00 – 17.00 Women’s Conference

Sunday:

11.00 – 12.45 Conference Session

Contemporary motions ballot (ie
Priorities Ballot)

14.15 – 17.00 Conference Session

Monday:

9.30 – 12.45 Conference Session

Likely CAC ballot and NCC ballot
(Probably 9.00 – 16.00)

14.15 – 16.00 Conference Session

16.15 – 17.30 Policy Seminars

Tuesday:

9.30 – 11.45 Conference Session

The rule changes from CLPs are likely to
be taken first thing Tuesday morning.

14.15 – 16.00 Conference Session

The NPF/JPC ‘Priorities for year’ ballot
could be Tuesday or Wednesday, if at all.

16.15 – 17.30 Policy Seminars

The Leader’s Speech is in the afternoon.

Wednesday:

9.00 – 10.15 Policy Seminars

The Leader’s Q and A is in the afternoon.

10.30 – 12.45 Conference Session

14.15 – 16.00 Conference Session

During the debates there will be a platform introductory speech and a platform reply. And during policy debates members of Policy Commissions will move reports. Ordinary delegates often feel they are not given a fair chance to speak. Platform speakers usually make lengthy speeches but ordinary delegates, if they are lucky enough to be called, are strictly limited to three minutes.

Daily Business

Wednesday 18th September (in London)

The CAC sits on the eve of conference, in order to receive appeals from CLPs and affiliates that have had their contemporary motions or rule changes ruled out of order. CLPs should send a representative to this meeting so that their case gets a proper hearing, though written appeals and conference calls are also possible. Major unions have had much more success than CLPs at getting the CAC to reverse its decisions, but it is always worth a try.

Contemporary motions that are ruled out are not published, and are referred to either

the NPF or NEC. In effect, however, they disappear without trace.

Sunday 22nd September

CAC Report No 1 (and the Delegates Report) moved by the Chair of the CAC. CAC Report 1 gives details of the definitively agreed timetable for the week. Delegates who feel the CAC has acted unfairly should challenge the CAC's position by moving "reference back" (see below). It is likely that CLPs, who have had their rule amendments ruled out unfairly under the 3-year-rule, will challenge the CAC on Sunday.

In the interests of party democracy they should be given full support. Each day there is at least one report from the CAC some are written some are verbal. All of these can be challenged if a delegate is not satisfied with what is being said. The written CAC reports which set out the days' business etc, are handed to delegates as they enter the Conference Hall. They can also be obtained from the Labour Party stand or the CAC office.

The Party produces a conference newspaper, which is usually available inside entry points to the centre every morning. The paper contains the very important daily record of decisions. Delegates should keep these for when they report back to their CLPs.

In 2013, ballot and card vote results are likely to be published in the daily CAC reports.

The Priorities Ballot (on Sunday)

Those contemporary motions that slip through the CAC's nets and reach conference will be grouped into subjects, and published in CAC Report 1 available on Sunday morning at delegation meetings, from the Party stand and when delegates enter the hall. These subject headings then go into the 'priorities ballot', which will be held on Sunday.

The ballot may open before conference opens, and therefore delegates would be prevented from overturning any controversial decisions by the CAC in relation to what are, and what are not, valid contemporary motions. Thus, the CAC would not be accountable to Conference in respect of a major part of its decision-making powers.

Don't waste your vote!

Conference is allowed to debate a total of eight different subject areas. But it is not as simple as the eight highest ranked in the priorities ballot going forward for debate. Instead, the four most popular choices of CLPs, and the four most popular choices of trade unions will go forward – and if any of these are the same, then four plus four does not equal eight!

This means that CLP delegates must **not** vote for any of the four subjects that are favoured by the unions, since to do so is to waste your vote. It is in no way anti-union to vote for four different subjects – in fact, the trade unions, like CLP activists, want to ensure maximum debate and so support CLPs in voting for different subjects.

The four subjects that the unions will choose are known well in advance of the Priorities Ballot. The unions arrange a voting pact to ensure their four choices are

guaranteed a place on the agenda. On Sunday morning, CLPD will inform delegates via its daily briefing, “the Yellow Pages”, handed out outside the conference centre, of the four union choices, and suggest four choices for CLP delegates to unite around.

Sunday evening – contemporary motion ‘compositing’ meetings

The delegates involved with the motions that win the priorities ballot (announced at 6pm on Sunday) will be invited to meetings, probably on Sunday evening. Every delegate **must** attend, unless they are given permission by the CAC to be absent. At these meetings, delegates will meet the relevant NEC Policy Commission co-convenor and shadow ministers to discuss how the subject could be taken forward. Speakers to propose and second the subject on the conference floor will also be chosen.

Motions submitted by each of these organisations will be “composited” into one or more motions to be voted on by conference. The contemporary motions are treated as a gigantic ‘pot of words’. Each organisation has equal standing at the meeting – no matter how big or small they are. The delegates alone are in charge of compositing and decisions are reached collectively. Don’t be bamboozled by ‘helpful’ officials or shadow ministers. Don’t allow material into a composite that contradicts or negates other material – be alert to wrecking tactics.

After debate at conference the motion is referred to the relevant policy commission for deliberation over the next 12 months. Reps from those organisations involved with the subject should be invited to these deliberations – that is the best practice established by some commissions.

Monday (and possibly Tuesday) – voting for the CAC and NCC

The CAC is not only in charge of conference – but elected, in sections, during it. It has seven members. There are five general section seats (of which two must be women) and two CLP section seats (of whom one must be a woman). In 2013 only the CLP section is up for election. Each CLP has two votes, each worth the number of members in the CLP, cast by its delegates collectively as a delegation vote.

These votes will take place in the ballot area. CLP delegates will be told the precise times of these votes – if you can’t find this out, ask a steward or contact CLPD. There is often a queue, so it is wise to get there as quickly as possible.

Biographies of the CAC candidates and information about obtaining the ballot papers at conference are usually issued to CLP secretaries and/or delegates in early September – and usually printed in the delegates’ report. CLP meetings or GCs should then decide how the vote is to be cast – the votes are recorded and published after conference. You can check if your CLP delegates followed their mandates in the last election, 2011, by logging onto Membersnet and viewing the 2011 delegates report, or by contacting CLPD on 01865 244459.

CLP delegates will also vote for their representative on the NCC. It is important that delegates are fully mandated by their CLPs. The candidates’ biographies are likely to be sent out in early September and may be sent direct to delegates rather than to the CLP – again, usually printed in the Delegates Report). The CAC will report on the timing, etc. of all these elections, and there will be a reminder in “the Yellow Pages”, CLPD’s daily

delegates briefing at conference.

The NEC has issued a Code of Conduct for internal elections which includes the following:

- Candidates are allowed to canvass delegates but must not distribute literature inside the conference hall. Contact with delegates must not be carried out in a manner likely to cause offence or be seen to be applying pressure to delegates.
- If one candidate is allowed to distribute literature at an official Labour Party event then that facility must be available to all candidates.
- Labour Party staff employed by the NEC shall not canvass or distribute literature on behalf of any candidate. (**Please immediately inform NEC members and the general secretary of any infringements or possible infringements of the Code**).

CLPD and the Centre-Left Grassroots Alliance – a platform that includes many campaigns on the centre and left of the party – are supporting Katy Clark and Peter Willsman in the election for the CAC, and Gary Heather for the national constitutional committee (NCC).

Tuesday or Wednesday – Voting on the NPF’s priorities for the year

This is a new initiative, and comes from the 2011 “Refounding Labour” consultation. The idea is for Conference to give a steer to the work of the NPF by agreeing several priorities. The NPF and its governing body, the joint policy commission (JPC), will present a list of possible priorities from which conference will choose in a ballot. At the time of writing, it is not yet clear if there will be such a ballot at the 2013 conference.

‘Referring back’ sections of the CAC reports and NEC reports

If any delegate wants to challenge a recommendation by the CAC, they can go to the rostrum immediately after the CAC chair has made a report and move “reference back” of the relevant section of the CAC report. This ensures a vote on the point raised, and, if carried, is effectively a defeat for the platform.

Delegates also have the right to force a vote on any point in the NEC report by formally moving “reference back”. Delegates should have the same democratic right in relation to NPF/Policy Commission documents and NEC statements but this has been denied, despite the following statement in the Partnership in Power documents in 1997:

“Conference can refer back to the JPC the relevant section of the NPF Report if it is felt not to represent the view of the Party”.

Instead delegates, who may only object to one or two sentences, are forced to move reference back of the whole document. This might suit the platform, but is out of line with the basic democracy that operates elsewhere in the party.

The platform is invariably very unsympathetic to the right of “reference back”. Nevertheless delegates should stand firm and insist on their democratic rights. Don’t stand by and complain that that you can’t get anything done at conference – do something about it!

Voting at Conference

Voting at Conference is normally by hand unless a card vote is requested by a delegate or by the chair (voting on rule changes is always by card – delegates need to keep their wits about them. Quite often the platform gets in a muddle, which makes the situation doubly confusing).

Speaking at conference

In recent years, the time allotted at conference to debates on party policy has been drastically reduced, as have the opportunities for CLP delegates to speak at the rostrum. 20 years ago, almost the whole of conference was given over to debate by delegates. Last year this was only three and half hours out of a total of 21 hours of conference! Those who received merit and long service awards were allowed to say a few words of acceptance 20 years ago, but not anymore!

A good way to get to the rostrum is to speak in favour of reference back or in support of rule changes – as these proposals are not initiated by party officials, it is easier to get a slot as there are no planted speeches to contend with! Yet it can be intimidating to speak in these situations – it can be intimidating to speak at conference altogether. Here are some tips. Additionally CLPD activists – some of the most well-versed party members in the workings of conference – can advise you in drafting a speech and how to get called. Get in touch prior to or during conference.

The makings of a good speech:

- Thorough preparation. Set out your aims and plan the structure.
- Assemble a few choice facts but don't overdo it – don't turn listeners off
- Write the speech out in bold clear writing
- Use short punchy sentences and short words.
- Find a startling beginning or a stunning conclusion – and work from there.
- Develop an easy and logical progression of ideas.
- Brief personal anecdotes can be helpful for illustrating a point.
- Properly rehearse the speech several times in front of friends.
- Time the speech to the precise minute.
- Remember everyone is nervous before giving a speech – it's only natural.
- At the outset say who you are and give your organisation.
- Indicate which resolution(s) you are speaking in favour of/against.
- Stand easily. Avoid making distracting gestures.
- Don't move about – the microphone has a short range.
- Ask three short questions/make three points, and raising your voice as you do.
- Vary the pitch.
- Pauses for effect are a useful tool.
- Clarity of speech, so the audience understands each word.
- Speak *to* listeners and not at them.

And avoid...

- Learning your speech by heart and reciting it.
- Speaking so quickly that your listeners can't follow
- Speaking in a monotone
- Haranguing and shouting
- Lengthy statistics.
- Patronising your listeners.
- Slang expressions.
- Jargon.
- Contriving to introduce humour or tell off-colour jokes.
- Apologising
- Name dropping

Movers and seconders of contemporary motions and CLP rule changes should get together and aim to make their speeches complement each other, rather than repeating the same points. But vital points are worth repeating in both speeches. Votes on rule changes are always by card vote. **At other times delegates have the right to demand a card vote and this right is set out in the CAC's advice booklet issued to delegates.** Sometimes this has been ignored by conference chairs, but delegates should insist on their right to a card vote!

Having difficulty? Consult CLPD

CLPD are always available to give advice. Check leftfutures.org for regular updates, and follow us on Twitter @CLPD_Labour. **Before** conference we can be contacted by phone – Peter Willsman on 01865 244459. You can contact Katy Clark on 01294 60 50 40.

At Brighton we'll distribute our daily "Yellow Pages" delegates' briefing outside the conference centre each morning – a must-read for all delegates and visitors! The Guardian's Michael White once described it as "indispensable". You can also phone us on 07969 696512 or 07918 170901.

Join the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy – return the form or join online at clpd.org.uk

Annual rates: £20 individuals; £5 unwaged and low waged (under £8,000); £3 introductory rate for under-27s; £25 couples (£6 unwaged); £25 national & regional organisations; £15 CLPs, TUs and Co-op Parties; £5 CLP branches.

Name (1) (2)

Address

Post Code Phone

CLP TU

E-mail Date.....

Return to CLPD Treasurer; 157 North Street, Luton, LU2 7QH

(CLPD has an email group; we also have a regional organiser in each region, alongside Scotland and Wales, to co-ordinate local activity).