

YELLOW PAGES

Annual Conference 2015

TUESDAY 29.09.15



ASLEF
the train drivers' union

This bulletin is sponsored by ASLEF

Building a better railway to build a better Britain

“Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive,
But to be young was very heaven!”

That’s what William Wordsworth famously wrote about the French Revolution – and these are very exciting times, here in Brighton, for the Labour Party. Because in Jeremy Corbyn we have a Leader who believes in the values at the heart of the labour movement and who proposes to run on a platform, in 2020, which I believe will excite voters put off politics by the focus group obsession of the New Labour years. “The Labour Party,” said Harold Wilson, “is a moral crusade or it is nothing.” The Party lost its way when it forgot that.

Jeremy is proud to talk about public ownership. He understands that ordinary people are suffering in the Tories’ Age of Austerity which redistributes

wealth from the poor to the rich to bail out the bankers who caused the economic crisis in 2008. Jeremy wants to rebuild Britain as a fairer, more modern society, with a more productive economy that delivers for the many, not the few.

The railway industry is a perfect example of what has gone wrong and how it can be put right. It’s time to bring back into public ownership not just the railway but key parts of the British economy – such as the Royal Mail and the public utilities – which are natural monopolies and which properly belong to the British people. We can all see that privatisation hasn’t worked. On every measure put forward by John Major 20 years ago, rail privatisation has failed. Fares, and public subsidies, have soared – we now have the highest fares in



By Mick Whelan
General Secretary, ASLEF,
the train drivers’ union

Europe – while trains have become more crowded and rolling stock has, on average, got older.

I know why the privatised train operating companies like the franchise system – when they talk about “risk and reward” they know there’s no risk and lots of rewards. We need a Labour Government elected in 2020 committed to putting our fragmented, privatised railway back together as a modern, integrated, and publicly-owned system fit for the 21st century.

Council Housing: support Composite 6

The Tories’ proposals to extend the right to buy and the proposals announced in Osborne’s July budget will increase homelessness, bring hardship to millions of people struggling to provide a decent home for themselves and their families and threaten the social housing sector’s ability to deliver desperately needed, affordable homes for rent.

Over the past five years, the Government has promoted a chaotic housing strategy, driven by the flawed belief that the unfettered market will provide the best solution to the housing crisis. This strategy has exacerbated the crisis and the latest proposals will make things a whole lot worse.

The withdrawal of automatic housing benefit entitlement from unemployed 18 to 21 year olds will leave vulnerable young people at risk of homelessness.

The reduction in the benefits cap, at a time when housing costs are massively

increasing, will result in an increase in evictions. More of those who are reliant on benefits to meet their housing costs will be forced into cheaper, sub-standard, insecure housing.

The extension of the right to buy to housing association homes, funded by the sell-off of council housing, will drastically reduce the available stock of social housing. The Tories’ claim that every home sold will be replaced lacks credibility given that the current rate of replacement stands at only 11%. The ability of councils and housing associations to build more homes will be further restricted as social housing finances are undermined by the Tories’ requirement that social housing rent be cut by 1% each year for four years.

As Tory policies result in a massive reduction in the availability of council and housing association homes, more and more people will struggle to find a

decent place to live. They will be forced to rely on the private sector where rents are unregulated and increasingly unaffordable.

The Government’s proposals represent a clear failure to tackle, or even recognise, a crisis that leaves so many struggling to meet their housing needs: the proposals must not go unchallenged. The housing composite calls upon the Labour Party to oppose the Tories’ flawed policies. Please support Composite 6!

Carol Hayton, NPF member

Defend Council Housing
6pm, Tuesday 29th
Friends Meeting House, Ship St.
with: a Shadow Housing Team
member; Betsy Dilner, Generation
Rent; GMB Young London;
Paula Peters, Disabled People
Against Cuts; Eileen Short, DCH

Time for debate

Monday's sessions saw a much higher proportion of time given to delegates than was the case on Sunday: 94 minutes of debate out of 3 hours 15 minutes in the morning session; 61 minutes of debate out of 1 hour and 45 minutes in the afternoon session.

The figures don't tell the whole story, though. 33 minutes of the morning's 94 minutes were taken up by the movers and seconders of the 4 composites. 24 minutes of the afternoon's 61 minutes were taken up by the movers and seconders of the composite, emergency resolution and rule change being "debated".

We need more time for debate if delegates are going to have a proper exchange of view and influence other delegates before the final vote.

Feel the benefit

Before he started slashing benefits and attacking the poor, Iain Duncan Smith was, of course, Leader of the Tory Party. He stood down after losing a vote of confidence – in part triggered after it was revealed that he had been employing one Betsy Duncan Smith (his wife) at a cost of £18,000 per annum to the public purse. It was not the expenditure itself that was the problem so much as the testimony of Dr Vanessa Gearson (IDS's Chief of Staff) to the House of Commons Select Committee on Standards and Privileges, which investigated the matter. Dr Gearson said she "saw no evidence of involvement by Mrs Duncan Smith" in any of the four areas of work she claimed to do: the diary, correspondence, financial arrangements and practical considerations. Dr Gearson went on, "it is difficult to accept Mr Duncan Smith's assertion that Mrs Duncan Smith was working for him in a parliamentary capacity from a fully functional office at their home."

That was the week that was! CLPD's review of the week

7.15pm, Tuesday 29th

Lecture Theatre, Friends Meeting House

Speakers:

Jim Kennedy (Labour Party Chair), Becky Long-Bailey MP,
Kelvin Hopkins MP, Clive Lewis MP,
Martin Mayer (Unite), Max Shanly,
Christine Shawcroft (NEC)

The challenges facing Labour Councillors

Earlier this year the Association of Labour Councillors (ALC) surveyed Councillors about the biggest challenges they face. Councillors identified cuts to Council budgets, the UK's housing crisis and the impact of the Tories' welfare reforms as being the biggest issues.

Councillors are also concerned about issues like the funding crisis in adult social care, Tory NHS reforms, their ideological Free Schools and Academies program and the refugee crisis. The ALC is seconding Composite 8 on the Refugee Crisis.

Other issues for local government include opposing Tory attacks on democracy through their draconian Trade Union Bill and cynical changes to Individual Voter Registration. The Government's introduction of Individual Electoral Registration (IER) has resulted in millions of people falling off the electoral register. We must all do everything we can to register voters by 1st December, in time for them to be included in the Government's planned boundary review.

Councils have had their funding cut dramatically since the Tories came to office in 2010. These reckless cuts to Council budgets endanger vital public services and hit the most deprived areas hardest. We must come together as a labour movement to oppose them.

Despite massive cuts to our funding we have demonstrated the positive difference voting Labour makes by championing policies such as building new affordable housing, paying workers the living wage, promoting green energy, helping people back to work, tackling payday lending and promoting the use of credit unions, regenerating communities and supporting local businesses, pioneering new ways of improving public health, using ethical procurement policies and challenging companies guilty of blacklisting.

Throughout Britain Labour Councillors are a key part of Labour's fightback against the Tory Government.

*Cllr Alice Perry, NEC member
representing Labour Councillors*

The opposite of the truth (*The Guardian's* dishonest spin)

Yesterday's front page lead in *The Grauniad* proclaimed that "Jeremy Corbyn suffered a major blow to his authority after ... a vote on the renewal of the Trident nuclear programme was overwhelmingly rejected." Hardly anything could be further from the truth. In the first place, Jeremy has made it clear that what Conference debates is entirely a matter for Conference, not for him. Second, Trident failed to be chosen for debate by the smallest of margins.

The trade unions had collectively decided on their four subjects and these reflected the Contemporary Motions they had submitted. The four trade union subjects were selected and the CLPs chose Housing, NHS, Refugee

Crisis and Mental Health, with Trident (Britain's Defence Capability) as runner up. Mental Health attracted 40,052 votes from the CLPs and Trident amassed 36,322 votes. The difference is less than the vote of some 7 CLPs... in other words – a mere whisker!

A free press?

The *Yellow Pages* are produced by volunteers – who are out today with our collection bags. Please be generous.

The *Yellow Pages* have a cover price of £3 for the week.

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