

YELLOW PAGES

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Let's hear from the PLP

Jeremy's victory on Saturday meant that Conference started on a high for most of us. It was noticeable (especially at the rostrum!) that there were many delegates and visitors who were experiencing our Party's sovereign body for the first time. They are eager to learn. This created a sense of excitement.

Many policy seminars were quite well attended, as were many training sessions and, of course, fringe meetings were lively and well attended. CLPD had some 250 at both our fringes. Last year our meetings were, not surprisingly, somewhat euphoric. This year the participants were more focussed. There was also a determination to achieve some worthwhile change in our Party and in society in general.

Party members are wanting to engage and are looking for ideas and direction, so that we can take the fight to the Tories. It was recognised that this requires all of us to have a commitment to a considerable degree of unity. At the same time it was recognised that we are developing a coherent and effective policy programme.

As we saw throughout Conference, Jeremy is energetically responding to party members' enthusiasm – as, for example, in the ten pledges setting out the framework for Labour's campaign and a Labour Government. This framework will be the basis for policy making at the National Policy Forum. Conference was told that it was intended to hold a full NPF within the next few months. The NEC will examine ways to give more power and influence to party members and to reform party structures accordingly.

At Conference CLPD also made progress with its party democracy agenda. The victory on Tuesday of the Sheffield Heeley rule change was particularly noteworthy: future Annual Conferences will be able to vote in parts on documents, without having to accept

them on a take-it-or-leave-it basis.

The many rule changes put forward at the last minute by the NEC were something of a curate's egg. But the fact that the sitting leader will automatically be on the ballot paper in future leadership elections was particularly welcome, as was the agreement to have an effective women's conference with a direct input into party policy making.

There was also a down side to Conference. Despite the many calls for party unity, it was not clear that the Party's "moderate" wing is taking this seriously. At the NEC we saw an attempt to railroad through a fundamental change in the Party's structure. It seems clear that this was essentially the "moderate" wing attempting to control two further seats on the NEC, in response to the progressive wing's gaining two CLP seats. The putting together of 15 disparate rule changes into a "package" and then having one vote on the whole lot is not only unprecedented in the UK labour movement, but also throughout Europe.

Yet again the hard right Labour First caucus held its rally in an upstairs room of a pub. Thus allowing them to claim their meeting was "packed and overflowing".

Some 20 years ago *Yellow Pages* shared its pitch outside Conference with productions from Labour First. It is notable that this year the hard right ideologues have returned. This was very much a mixed blessing.

During the week Jeremy continually emphasised his commitment to building party unity. Many delegates stressed that this required a similar commitment from the PLP, for example an ending to the undermining of our party Leader. There are some positive signs that the PLP are taking this seriously. It was certainly clear that Conference is committed to this objective. Jeremy is clearly up for it, let's hear from the PLP!-

CLP delegates given the brush off

First, a delegate informed Conference that NEC members had told him that the NEC had not agreed that Conference should vote on all of their rule changes as a package. The delegate then asked the CAC Chair if this was the case, but his question was ignored.

Another delegate made the point that reference backs moved by delegates on points related to the CAC report should be voted upon individually and not as a package. Again, this point was dismissed by the CAC Chair without providing any justification.

The 2016 Conference Delegates' Report states very clearly that a "**part of a report**" can be referred back to the CAC. Delegates do not have to accept or reject the entire CAC report .

To make matters worse, when the delegate called for a card vote the Conference Chair would not allow it. This is a blatant deviation from party rules. The Delegates' Report specifies that "votes will be by a show of hands unless a delegate requests a card vote." The delegate's request should have been respected.

It would certainly aid conference democracy if there was better guidance for delegates on how conference works **and proper conference standing orders**.

*Cllr Gary Heather,
Islington North CLP*

A delegate's view

Richard Price, Leyton & Wanstead CLP

As a veteran of trade union conferences going back to the 1980s, but a first time delegate to Labour Conference, the first thing that strikes me is that, despite gaining an ongoing verbal commitment to "4+4", this is still not a genuine working conference. Just two delegates from the floor were allowed to contribute on Composites 1-4, rendering real debate almost meaningless.

There is also a serious democratic deficit. At crucial points on Sunday, Monday and Tuesday, the CAC and the platform ensured that grassroots democracy was extinguished, whether it was the spurious ruling out of order of the East Devon rule change, the unconstitutional refusal of card votes and the insistence that the dog's breakfast of a "package" of NEC rule changes had to be taken as one vote.

Throughout Conference, there were heartfelt calls for unity and stern lectures that without power none of our great aims can be achieved. But the sense I got from the Progress/Labour First wing of the Party is that civil war will be ongoing, that they don't accept the validity of Jeremy's second landslide mandate, and that they will fight, fight and fight again to preserve the Party from socialism.

The most surreal moment? The sight of a section of delegates wildly cheering in favour of nuclear weapons.

CLPD AGM 2017

11.30am, Sat. 25th February
Friends House, 173 Euston
Road, London NW1 2BJ
For more information, go to:
www.clpd.org.uk

The Saga of East Devon (Part 1)

Having only just rested after her seven hour journey up from East Devon, the delegate was stunned to hear that the CAC had binned her CLP's much needed rule change. This seeks to give constituency branches & TU branches the right to interview and nominate candidates ahead of the parliamentary long list.

The CAC had been rewriting party history by claiming that the Collins Review was a constitutional amendment – when instead it was a conference report and thus completely irrelevant to the 3-year-rule.

Most folk would have been left devastatingly demoralised and gone off for a pint in the Baltic Fleet... but not the East Devon delegate! Her indefatigability shone through as she took to the rostrum on Sunday morning, the minute after the CAC had moved their first report. Delegate after delegate echoed her campaign

for justice, democracy but above all due process! The Chair of the CAC refused to take a separate vote on the issue, but instead invited the East Devon delegate to meet the CAC...

The Saga of East Devon (Part 2)

The East Devon delegate went up and down the escalator like a Weston donkey throughout Sunday afternoon and yesterday morning, hoping to track down the CAC. It wasn't until just before the end of conference yesterday that the delegate managed to scrape an appointment. At the start of this meeting, the Chair of the CAC informed the East Devon delegate that the final decision had already been made, and that her fellow delegates would indeed be denied the chance even to read her CLP's modest proposal. Despite this, the delegate gave an impassioned yet precise case as to why those in the conference hall should be given their right to hear this rule change. She was 100% correct in the fact that the 3-year-rule makes no reference whatsoever to conference reports such as the Collins review.

Yesterday at the NEC

●Dennis Skinner is retiring from the NEC at the end of Conference and was given a standing ovation.

Dennis responded by giving one of his impromptu and rousing speeches.

●The new NEC Chair is Glenis Wilmott, Leader of the Labour Group of MEPs. Andy Kerr of CWU is the new Vice Chair.

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