

# Campaign Briefing

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# Thursday

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## Set a date for withdrawal! Support Composite 6

Conference has the opportunity today to assist the people of Iraq and simultaneously help our party enter the forthcoming election campaign on a positive agenda.

Composite 6 calls on the Government to recognise the overwhelming desire in the Party and the country for a clear and responsible exit strategy. Delegates are being asked by the Leadership to abandon the demand for early withdrawal of the troops. The Composite does not call for every British soldier to leave tomorrow. It does not even prescribe by exactly what date the withdrawal should be completed. Comp 6 is certainly no stronger than the existing policy of many affiliated unions or the current TUC policy.

Conference is being asked to support remaining in Iraq in an attempt to retain British influence on US foreign policy. The effect of this is not to bring pressure to bear on the US, but to reinforce US policy. Whatever its justification, this policy has already produced results which are the opposite to its stated intention.

It has generated a terrorism that wasn't there before. Only by distancing ourselves from the US shall we have influence. And we can distance ourselves by calling for an early withdrawal.

The situation in Iraq is not going to improve if the occupation con-

tinues. In fact it will continue to deteriorate. This won't increase support for Labour; but it will for those who condemn US policy, namely the LibDems.

Delegates must respond today to the overwhelming wishes of the British people to bring the troops home and to let the Iraqi people run their own affairs. The least Conference can do is to vote for Composite 6 and take the whole process forward.

Those promoting Comp 5 argue that the voice of 'free trade unions' in Iraq oppose early withdrawal. But the IFTU is not the only trade union organisation in Iraq. The call of TUC Congress urging trade unions to work with all trade union organisations in Iraq including those who oppose the continuing occupation should be heeded and supported.

## More of the same is not the answer

Conference has taken place in a context where Labour's electoral support has been declining as the occupation of Iraq continues. The latest opinion poll, on the eve of this conference, showed even a divided and disorientated Conservative Party one point ahead of Labour. Brent East was not a flash in the pan: each recent election has seen the Lib Dem share of the vote grow.

### Change of course

Going into what is likely to be a general election year, the leadership has illustrated at this conference that it has not learnt from Labour's poor election results in June. Tony Blair and others have demonstrated that the government intends to forge ahead with its unpopular foreign and domestic policies, rather than listening to the

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**TODAY**

12.30 Thursday, Belgrave Hotel

**CLPD & Labour Reform**

## The Way Forward

Ann Black [LR/NEC] • Billy Hayes [CWU]

Ros Stock [LR] • Mark Seddon [NEC]

Christine Shawcroft [NEC] • Pete Willsman [CLPD]

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## More of the same is not the answer

*continued*

voters and changing course. The unions have led the way in ensuring the Fourth Option on council housing and the public ownership of railways were passed. These positions would not have been put to conference without the support of constituency representatives on the National Policy Forum who stand up for the views of grassroots members, in particular those elected with the support of the Centre Left Grassroots Alliance. These policies must now be implemented. If they are not, it will make a mockery of the 'Partnership in Power' process.

### Oppose state funding

As has been the case over the last few years, unions are voting to the left of CLP delegates, who have come under unbearable pressure from party officials. This situation, along with the list of concessions extracted by the unions from an unwilling leadership at the Warwick National Policy Forum, explains why leading party 'modernisers' have been advocating an increase in state funding of political parties. The aim is simple: to free the parliamentary leadership from dependence on union funding. This move, which would greatly undermine the Labour-union link

and cut Labour's leaders off even further from the party's base, must be vigorously opposed when the Electoral Commission makes its recommendations in November.

### Listen to the grassroots

To re-enthusiase Labour voters the leadership needs to listen more to the views of party members. This can best be achieved by discussing more of the issues that party members submit to Conference. CLP delegates should take greater advantage of the new "4+4" rule and next year prioritise for debate more than just the one subject different from those chosen by the unions – as was done this year. Further rule changes are needed to ensure party policy more closely reflects members' views: for example, allowing CLPs and affiliates to submit amendments to the National Party Forum reports.

The health and vigour of conference, no less than the fate facing Labour in the polls, depends on members continuing to work in the party for the adoption of policies that more closely reflect members' views.

## Free the Mole Valley 1

On Tuesday, after the Leader's speech the delegate from Mole Valley declined to join the standing ovation and instead held up a small sheet of white paper on which he had written "I'M SITTING DOWN FOR PEACE".

He was arrested by three policemen and removed from Conference. The delegate's credentials were confiscated and he was dispatched to Labour's Colditz: the Late Accreditation Office. There he languished for many hours, being kept going by food parcels from the Red Cross.

### Mystery of the week

In the vote on rail renationalisation, John Spellar MP was seen putting a card vote into the ballot box. As he is here ex-officio, where did this vote come from?

### What is the point of Policy Commissions?

Especially after the NPF has completed its work for the Manifesto? Delegates have voted with their feet – at some Commissions, delegates barely outnumbered Ministers and Commission members. And some Ministers think they're still in the House of Commons treating delegates as the Opposition. Delegates make their genuine points and then they're hectoring and harangued by haughty Ministers who have forgotten who put them where they are today.

### Support the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy

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