

# Campaign Briefing

# Wednesday

29 September 2004

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## Iraq debate fix?

Iraq was chosen for debate in a democratic ballot of delegates – but attempts are being made by Downing St to thwart the will of Conference. Two CLPs agreed the text of the composite on Iraq calling for a date for the withdrawal of troops. The composite was signed off by the mover and seconder. It was accepted as in order by CAC and party staff. It was printed and placed on the Conference Agenda. And yet now the delegate from Walthamstow CLP – the seconder - has been leant on to withdraw his CLP's name from Composite 6.

The Foreign Secretary used his position to gatecrash the Iraq compositing meeting. His arguments on Iraq persuaded some CLPs to withdraw their motions. The dele-

gates Regents Park & Kensington and Walthamstow were made of sterner stuff (at that stage) and thus the composite calling on a date for withdrawal was agreed. The question must now be asked. What assurances were subsequently made to the Walthamstow delegate to persuade him to withdraw from the composite?

Composite 6 must be debated. It represents the views of 73 per cent of Labour voters. If the CAC reports the illegitimate withdrawal of Composite 6 a reference-back should be vigorously supported. Delegates will need to be in their seats from the start of Conference this morning to vote for any reference back.

## Blair sticks to guns

Tony Blair yesterday confirmed his intention to stick to two wrong – and electorally unpopular – policies. Firstly, continued occupation of Iraq and hanging on the coat-tails of George W Bush's foreign policy. Secondly, 'reform' of public services and the welfare state.

With Conference continuing to be

overshadowed by the terrible events in Iraq, Tony Blair set out his case for an illegal war, for maintaining occupation and why Britain must stick firmly to its alliance with the United States. His framework for viewing international policy since 2001, as applied to Iraq, ignores

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## No end to selection

Conference will debate the health and education section of the NPF report today. This part of the Report is notable for its omissions as well as its inclusions. The Warwick NPF accepted the expansion in the number of specialist schools but the report gives no indication how schools will choose the pupils with the appropriate aptitude in the event of over-enrolment. And with eight specialisms, there cannot be a school for every subject in each area. More specialist teachers are needed for every school.

## Abolish grammars

The NPF report implies the transfer of control of schools from local authorities to Whitehall leading to the loss of local accountability. Neither is there any commitment to abolish grammar schools with their iniquitous process of selection, leaving most children in the area with a poor education. The grammar schools are left untouched on the spurious basis that their abolition could cost Labour seats in those areas. No thought appears to be given to the votes gained from the parents of pupils who would not be consigned to a second rate system in the same areas after the abolition of grammars schools. While Labour may be opposed to selection in principle, with the aim of parents choosing

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## No end to selection

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schools, in reality all parents want their local school to be of a high standard.

## Two-tier workforce

Better Public Services (Comp 4) makes criticism of the lack of progress on eliminating the two-tier workforce where jobs are transferred from public sector to private firms on lower pay and poorer conditions.

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## Blair sticks to guns

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the increasing violence of the US led occupation, thousands of dead Iraqis, torture at Abu Ghraib and the failure to restore water and power. Instead he, like George W Bush, now links the Sept 11th attacks to Iraq and blames the current chaos in Iraq on a "perversion" of Islam whilst insisting that the United States is Britain's key ally for pursuing a "progressive" international agenda. Forced to admit there were no WMD, the goal posts were shifted to regime change – never accepted by the UN as justification for war. The truth is the war on Iraq has made the world a far more dangerous place.

On domestic policy the leader continued to promote a reform agenda for the public services centred on "choice" and "opportunity" – terms associated with two-tier provision, PFI and the private sector. The positive commitments he listed for a Labour third term reflected trade union pressures. But side by side

with these was the continued elevation of so-called "choice". Voters don't want to choose between bad and good hospitals and schools. They want local services to be reliable, adequately funded and fully staffed. His threat to drive people off incapacity, unemployment and other benefits to fund retirement pensions will not raise sufficient funds for pensions – hence the state pension was only to be the 'core' of pension provision – but will mean an attack on other vulnerable people. A welfare state "re-shaped" in this way certainly will be a lot different from the 'old' 20<sup>th</sup> century version, and will no more deliver an 'opportunity society' than tuition fees have delivered equal access to education.

His boast to remove more asylum seekers sat uneasily with the assertion that no one should play politics with race. The far right will only grow in strength unless anti-asylum myths, and all other expressions of racism, are confronted head on.

Yesterday's speech – at the last conference before the election - reflected the pressure of unpopularity. Sadly for the party, this unpopularity will merely grow if the government refuses to address its core causes.

**europaean social forum 2004**  
**for another Europe in another world**  
Stop the war • for global peace and justice  
• no to racism • for public services not private profit • for equality and diversity  
• for a sustainable planet  
Three days of international debate, celebration and protest  
15-17 October 2004, Alexandra Palace with closing march and rally in Trafalgar Square  
[www.fse-esf.org](http://www.fse-esf.org) for details

**Sinn Fein**  
**Working for Irish Unity**  
1pm Wednesday, Royal Albion Hotel, Old Steine  
**Speaker: Alex Maskey MLA, Sinn Fein**

12.30 Thursday, Belgrave Hotel  
**CLPD & Labour Reform**  
**The Way Forward**  
Ann Black [LR/NEC], Billy Hayes [CWU],  
Ros Stock [LR], Mark Seddon,  
Christine Shawcroft [NEC], Pete Willsman [CLPD]

**Socialist Campaign Group and Labour**  
**Representation Committee**  
**Rally and Social**  
7.30pm - midnight, Ramada Jarvis Hotel, Kings Road  
**Chair: John McDonnell MP**  
**Speakers and entertainment include:** Tony Benn, Billy Bragg, Jeremy Corbyn MP, Kevin Curran GMB, Jeremy Dear NUJ, Maria Exall LRC, Neil Gerrard MP, Steve Gribbin, Kat Fletcher NUS, Billy Hayes CWU, Alice Mahon MP, Bob Marshall-Andrews MP, Michael Meacher MP, Linda Riordan PPC, Mark Seddon NEC, Christine Shawcroft LRC, Alan Simpson MP, Tony Woodley TGWU