

Campaign Briefing

SUNDAY

23 September 2007

Published daily at Labour Party Conference and on line at
www.clpd.org.uk Tel. 07767 761338

Priorities Ballot: CLP delegates – don't waste your votes

This afternoon each CLP has four votes in the Priorities Ballot. We recommend that CLPs vote for the following vital subjects: **Housing, Equitable Taxation, Stop the BNP and Food Additives.**

The Party rules guarantee that the four contemporary issues the unions pick will be timetabled, along with the top four voted for by the CLPs.

This means that in order to ensure the widest range of issues are debated by this conference, (i.e. eight issues), CLPs *must* vote for four issues that are different from the four supported by the unions.

The unions vote as a block and have already decided on their four issues. These are Manufacturing (Unite/Amicus); Employment Rights (Unite/T&G & CWU); Remploy (GMB); and Equalities and Equal Pay (Unison) – so these four issues are certain to be debated. If a CLP votes in the ballot for any of

these four they are wasting their vote.

Council tenants need real choice through the introduction of a level playing field for direct investment in council housing as an alternative to privatisation. This "fourth option" has been agreed as party policy on three previous occasions, but still not implemented.

Equitable taxation: It would be both just and popular for the government to close the tax loopholes that are used by private equity executives and non-domiciles.

The BNP's electoral advance can be halted, but clearly this will require a different strategy than has been largely pursued to date. The BNP came close to winning a seat on the London Assembly in 2004, so Labour will need to significantly step up its campaign if they are to be stopped next year. Labour must ensure that the BNP's arguments are convincingly rebutted and defeated.

Additionally, it must oppose the legitimisation of racism promoted by tabloid myths.

The government should legislate to ban food additives in children's food which lead to health disorders and behavioural problems.

VOTE FOR:

1. Housing
2. Equitable taxation
3. Stop the BNP
4. Food additives

Don't vote for:

1. Manufacturing
2. Employment rights
3. Remploy
4. Equalities & Equal Pay

As these are guaranteed to be on the agenda from the unions.

Conference sovereignty – not pass-the-parcel!

Gordon Brown's proposals would end Conference's right to decide on policy resolutions. Future conferences would be debarred from debating and voting on contemporary motions. Instead there would be the much reduced provision for CLPs and affiliates to submit a 'contemporary issue' which would be referred elsewhere - if successful in the Priorities Ballot. Permissible 'issues' would be restricted to subjects that were not 'substantially ad-

dressed' in the NEC and National Policy Forum (NPF) reports to the Conference. An 'issue' would have to be 'ten words or less'.

'These proposals would complete the New Labour project ... New Labour do not want any decision reached that they do not control.'
Tony Benn Guardian 20 Sept.

Vital issues such as defending public services, equalities and a more peace orientated foreign policy need proper discussion at the party's sovereign body. Conference's role should not be reduced to that of a conveyor belt.

The past ten years has seen a

Continued over

No increase in CAC

It has been claimed that the Gordon Brown proposals to erode Conference sovereignty have been fully consulted on. This was certainly not the case in relation to one key proposal, which was neither mentioned in Gordon's consultation document, nor in discussions with the unions, nor requested by any of the 90 organisations responding to the consultation. This proposal, which popped up out of the blue at last Tuesday's NEC, would increase the CAC from seven members to eleven. The extra four would not be elected by Conference (some

Continued over

Conference sovereignty—not pass-the-parcel

Cont.

continued erosion of Conference sovereignty. During this time the membership has declined from 400,000 plus to some 180,000.

The consultation on these proposals was short - over the summer, when most local parties do not meet. Delegates would be forgiven for thinking that they are being

bounced during the honeymoon period - in the same way that Tony Blair bounced through the Partnership in Power proposals, which led to precious little partnership and no power for CLPs and members.

Additionally, the proposed ballot of individual members on the draft manifesto - being a take or leave it

'...passing over the last vestige conference sovereignty to a leadership-controlled party machine is a historic step for a party which has a proud tradition of forging nationally reforming policies from the ground upwards.'

Tribune editorial, 21 September

vote - would not allow real participation in policy making and consume vital financial and staffing resources. It would also disenfranchise the party's

three million affiliated members. A real extension of party democracy would be for NPF papers to be bought to Conference for discussion, with CLPs/

affiliates able to submit amendments which Conference would then decide on.

Vote against!

NEC supports Grassroots

At last Tuesday's NEC there was a refreshing move to support grassroots democracy. The meeting was considering a recommendation from party staff that the NEC should oppose the rule change from Halifax, Hazel Grove, Islington North and Montgomeryshire CLPs (Delegate's Report p9).

This rule change debar members of the Government/shadow cabinet from serving on the Conference Arrangements Committee (CAC). The rule change is timetabled to be debated late Tuesday afternoon.

Many members of the NEC agreed with the CLPs that the CAC should be totally independent and that it is difficult, if not impossible, for Ministers to wear two hats. By a large majority the NEC overturned the staff's recommendation and gave their full support to the 4 CLPs.

Contemporary motions: Conference gagged again!

This Conference has again had the concerns raised by a large body of CLPs and affiliates kept off the agenda. Only some half of the motions, out of the 150 plus submitted, have been accepted as 'contemporary'. But the overwhelming majority of motions that seek changes to leadership policies have been ruled out by the CAC. CLP delegates who made appeals to the CAC yesterday afternoon were presented with convoluted and conflicting reasoning as to why their motions cannot be discussed at this Conference. In stark contrast, motions that echo government's policies encountered no such difficulties. Conference is not given the CAC's rationale, nor is it given copies of the ruled-out motions - so has no way of assessing the CAC's judgement.

The motions from the four main unions - that the CAC would not dare keep off the agenda - are in the Priorities Ballot. But yet again they are surrounded by a large number of pro-government ones. Many key issues have been kept off the agenda, including: withdrawal of all British troops from Iraq, Trident replacement, US National Missile Defence bases in Britain, use of UK airports by US 'extra-ordinary rendition' flights, Chavez's democratic improvements in Venezuela, halting privatisation in the NHS.

The CLPs which submitted these important subjects have not suddenly forgotten how to draft contemporary motions. Strong arguments can be made to show that many of the rejected contemporary motions are certainly as valid many of those that have been accepted. What we are seeing is not procedural judgements but political ones.

The same bias also appears to have applied to the CAC's rulings in relation to emergency motions submitted to this conference. Emergencies have been submitted on the following subjects - Zimbabwe, Northern Rock and last Sunday's warning by France of the need to be prepared for military action against Iran. The latter emergency being the only political hot potato, it is not surprising it is the only one ruled out of order.

No increase in CAC *cont.*

1,000 delegates) but would come through the back door from the relatively small National Policy Forum (183 members).

This proposal goes against the accepted procedures within our Party and movement. The CAC is the Standing Orders Committee of our Annual Conference and it is accepted practice that an SOC is elected by its Conference and wholly accountable to it.

The Trojan horse proposal presented to the NEC completely goes against customary practices and undermines the CAC's independence and accountability. Following strong objections from the unions and CLP pressure groups we understand that the platform are having a rethink.

It is therefore likely that this wrong-headed proposal will disappear into the 'black hole' that Gordon talked about in his consultation document.

But delegates must be alert.

Vote down any move to increase the size of the CAC.

FRINGE MEETINGS

Labour Against the War
7pm Bournemouth International Hotel
Taking Liberties—the War Legacy

Agreed Ireland Forum
9pm Lampeter Hotel
Respecting identity in post-conflict Britain and Ireland