

Campaign Briefing

Saturday

20 September 2008

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

Priorities Ballot: don't waste your vote

CLPs are allowed to pick four issues for debate, and the Trade Unions another four. Every year, CLPs waste their votes by picking issues the Trade Unions have already picked, and waste the opportunity to raise important subjects. **Don't let this happen again.**

Congratulations to the many CLPs who raised the windfall tax as a contemporary issue – it could be the most important topic of the week. However, CLPs don't need to vote to prioritise it. All of the unions have already agreed as a block they will prioritise: Tackling Fuel Poverty (the Windfall Tax), Energy Regulation, Employment Rights and Workers in a Global Economy. So these will already be on the agenda and CLPs should not waste their votes on them.

There is uncertainty about the exact subject titles of other issues but we would urge strong support for the issue of **Georgia** – the Government's slavish support for the US line invites a new Cold War. And, in the week of the

biggest global financial crisis since 1929 it is vital that conference discusses **the Economy**.

The continuing importance of confronting repossessions and the need for social housing with a major council house building programme makes **Housing** a vital priority again. The ownership of monopoly **Water** companies who hold the public to ransom also needs to be addressed.

DON'T PRIORITISE:

- Windfall Tax ("Tackling Fuel Poverty")
- Energy (regulation)
- Employment Rights
- Workers in a Global Economy

...THEY'RE ALREADY CHOSEN!

VOTE FOR:

- Georgia
- The Economy
- Housing
- Water (ownership)

Dump the Blairite sirens

In the face of the recent media onslaught, stoked up by a few disgruntled New Labour MPs, the Party needs to focus on the progressive policy changes needed to win. In doing this it is important to make a dispassionate assessment of how we've got where we are.

Our Party's peak of political success since 1945 was under John Smith/Margaret Beckett in the Euro-elections in 1994 when we won 62 seats. Since then it has been downhill all the way. Under Tony Blair we had so-called triangulated neo-liberal domestic

policies, the destruction of the democratic structures of the Party and the illegal invasion of a sovereign country with an obscene number of casualties. After that support has ebbed away. The Brent East by-election recorded a 29% swing against us and our total vote in 2005 was less than in 1979 when we lost. Serious misjudgements by Gordon Brown (the 75p pension increase, the abolition of the 10p tax rate, the election that never was), together with the effects of the economic

Continued over

Socialist Campaign Group of Labour MPs

Rally:

Real Change Needed

Sat 20th 7pm Mechanics Centre
103 Princess Street

Speakers include:

**Diane Abbott MP • Tony Benn
Katy Clark MP • Jeremy Corbyn MP
Ann Cryer MP • Ian Gibson MP
Kelvin Hopkins MP
John McDonnell MP
Linda Riordan MP
Alan Simpson MP • David Taylor MP
Mike Wood MP**

Campaign Briefing is published daily at Labour Party Conference by the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy and the Socialist Campaign Group of Labour MPs.

Campaign Briefing

SUNDAY

21 September 2008

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Policy Seminars - vital questions to Ministers

Delegates are here to make policy not simply talk about it. Nevertheless, policy seminars and Q&As are an opportunity to put to ministers some of the following issues raised by CLPs in amendments to the NPF in July:

- **Building Prosperity:** progressive tax rates for the rich, trade union freedoms, secondary picketing, corporate liability for the death of employees, the level of state pensions and incapacity benefit.
- **Britain in the World:** Israel & Palestine, Georgia and US missile defence systems, Iraq and Afghanistan, Trident replacement, Venezuela, and Cuba.
- **Public Services:** Privatisation and internal markets, public ownership of Rail and the Post Office, Council housing, PFI, equal pay claims.
- **Crime & Justice:** 42 days detention, ID cards, legal aid and law centres, immigration and asylum.

And raise these in this afternoon's Q&A too!

Support Remploy workers

Delegates should support any moves by the GMB to achieve justice for Remploy workers. The Annex Report on Remploy is unacceptable and breaks promises by former Work and Pensions Secretary, Peter Hain. Remploy was established to ensure supported employment for disabled workers. Properly managed, this work can be economic and productive.

Despite protection for supported employment under EU law, the government is determined that many disabled workers have to face free-market labour forces. As a result 28 Remploy factories have closed and Ministers have led the unions in a dance. GMB official for Remploy, Phil Davies has resigned his life-long membership of the Labour Party

due the government's intransigence.

The 'consensus' wording in the NPF document does not go far enough in protecting the remaining Remploy workers. Delegates should follow the GMB's lead if it chooses to oppose its acceptance.

ELECTIONS TO CONFERENCE ARRANGEMENT COMMITTEE

WE URGE CLP DELEGATES
TO VOTE FOR THE
FOLLOWING
CANDIDATES:

- ELCENA JEFFERS
- GEORGE MCMANUS
- MICHAEL MURPHY
- ROY PRESTON

'Undeserving Poor' - back to Victorian bigotry

"When he introduced his latest Welfare Reform Green Paper, Secretary of State James Purnell....proposed a series of major changes that will use forceful encouragement to push people with disabilities into work, remove benefit from those who are not considered to be adequately seeking work (building on the Tory 1986 Social Security Act) and fail to address the current complex welfare and benefit traps.... according to his guru, David Freud, there are a very large number of people who claim incapacity benefit who do not deserve it."

Jeremy Corbyn MP writing in
September's *Socialist*
Campaign Group News

Campaign Briefing

MONDAY

22 September 2008

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Working Time Directive: End the Opt Out Support GMB/UCATT/UNITE Emergency

By Richard Ascough – GMB Regional Secretary

(We understand an Emergency Motion has been accepted by CAC and that it will be timetabled today. The GMB has provided the following article.)

The case for the end of the opt out in the Working Time Regulations is over-whelming. In the debate on our Emergency, the government are likely to press a business-friendly argument.

The principle points of the union case against the opt out have been made for many years and are as follows:-

- The health and safety implications of long hours
- The counter-argument that individuals have a free choice is often not the case. Many employees are pressurised to sign the opt out
- The UK has the longest working hours in Europe

- The public were told that the opt out was only to be a short-term transitional measure.
- In addition there is real concern over the proposed changes to on-call working.

If the government refuses to respond to the fair and just case against the opt out, there will be a worsening of employees' working conditions. We should remember that the opt out was introduced by the Tories and was opposed by the Labour Party and TUC. If it was wrong then, it is certainly wrong now.

Some employers and their supporters in the media, argue that working over 60 hours a week is acceptable. No delegate at this Conference would take this view. It is time we returned to a Social Europe and not continue with this pro-business, anti-worker agenda.

SUPPORT THE EMERGENCY MOTION

Support contemporary issues on workers in a global economy concerning the European Court of Justice judgements – from CWU / Unite / TSSA and several CLPs

Elections to the National Constitutional Committee

We urge CLP delegates to vote for the following candidates:

Teresa Pearce (sitting member) — Rita Stephen

Shenanigans

The meeting of CLP delegates with contemporary issues on housing, following their success in the priorities ballot, shows just how unsatisfactory the new process is. Nine CLPs had submitted the following issues: "Government must lead and fund a council house building programme"; six others were included under the more general heading "housing", some of which were much more "on- message" and less focussed on council housing.

Delegates were called to see the CAC. Before they got into the room, a member of the Party staff sidled up to some delegates to urge them to support guess which text! After a polite introduction from Jack Dromey and Iain Wright, junior Housing minister, the chair proposes an "on-message" delegate to move. When this was challenged by a delegate supporting the majority policy position, the chair was upheld by 6-5 in a very confusing vote.

This sort of behaviour does not bode well for the new process, especially given all the effort the platform has made to sell it as a step forward for party democracy.

Delegates should be in their seats early tomorrow (Tuesday) to ensure they are ready for the rule changes from CLPs which are the first item of business.

Campaign Briefing

Tuesday

23 September 2008

★ PRICE FOR ★
★ THE WEEK: ★
★ £2 ★

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Reject the Housing Annex

“Whilst we welcome the concession made at Warwick to allow local authorities to bid for Social Housing Grant to build first class council homes this is not sufficient to justify taking our foot off the pedal now. Without substantial new funding the concession is largely symbolic.

Crucially, government has not provided a solution for embattled authorities with existing council housing who are either unable to meet the Decent Homes

Standard without additional resources or maintain this standard in future years.

The alliance between tenants, trade unions, councillors and MPs is starting to demonstrate benefits. We would be doing all our members and supporters a disservice by letting up on our efforts now.”

*Austin Mitchell MP
Chair, House of Commons
Council Housing Group*

Support Calder Valley and other rule changes

CLPs have submitted several rule changes this year, many of which will enhance the party's democratic structures but several NEC changes should be treated with caution.

Past practice has been for the platform to take the rule changes in a single debate with card votes on each rule change at the end, which can be confusing.

We urge support for the following rule changes:

- **Chap 1, Clause 1: Islington North CLP** is seeking to define the legal territory in which the party operates as Britain (England, Scotland and Wales). This will help advance the peace process in Northern Ireland – one of Labour's finest achievements – and avoid any more expensive

legal settlements to appease questionable challenges on equalities grounds. It will also avoid challenging our sister party in the Socialist International, the SDLP.

- **Rule 4b, 2b(i): Calder Valley and others** seek to lower the threshold of MPs' nominations for the post of Leader and Deputy **when there is a vacancy** from 12.5% to 7.5% (i.e. from 45 to 27 MPs in the current Parliament). This could benefit potential candidates from all wings of the party. **Note that it does not apply to contests against a sitting leader.**
- **Chap 11b: Lancaster and Fleetwood CLP** seek to extend democracy in Young

Continued over

More Shenanigans

“These are the CAC people we'd like you to vote for”, a Yorkshire NPF rep was overheard saying to a first time delegate from her city of Sheffield, discretely passing over a list of the conference platform's favoured candidates. Keen also to arrange suitably supportive speakers for the Crime & Justice debate, she also sounded out this delegate's views on equal pay and equalities before reporting back on her mobile phone.

We also hear that several NPF members in other regions were actively encouraging CLP delegates to support the union contemporary issues in the priorities ballot and so waste their vote. The manipulative role previously played by some Party staff seems to have been outsourced! But there is still some in-house activity. A Regional Director was heard encouraging a hapless delegate to vote against the Emergency Motion from the unions opposing the opt out from the Working Time Directive.

Mystery speaker?

Who was the female “delegate” described as from “Richmond Park CLP” who spoke in the debate on the Working Time Directive? She argued that the opt out was popular. Not, it seems, with delegates in the hall given that it only received 15 votes. Nor, it seems, was she the delegate from Richmond Park, who is male. So who was she?

“Indispensible”, and only £2 for 5 issues

Michael White described *Campaign Briefing* in his *Guardian* blog as “indispensible”. If you missed our buckets today, we will have them again tomorrow!

Rule changes—continued

Labour by ensuring elections for the Executive officers at YL conference.

Rule changes submitted by the NEC are less helpful to the party and need to be studied closely:

- **Rule 2C.2:** This stops CLPs getting the whole membership sub in a General Election year. Subs are being raised in line with inflation.
- **Rule 3A.1: Do support** this proposal to permit more delegates from CLPs where membership justifies it, as originally proposed by Bethnal Green and Bow CLP last year.
- **Rule 3A.1(b):** NEC member Ann Black has campaigned to do away with the interpretation of the rule which prevents CLPs sending a man to Conference if they were unable to find a women delegate the previous year. **We urge support.**
- **Rule 4C.3:** [This has been withdrawn as it was opposed by the unions.]
- **Rule 5D:** Will introduce a £25 per month levy on CLPs up to the 2014 Euro-election campaign which will bankrupt smaller CLPs and there is no guarantee this money will ever be used for this purpose given the dire state of the party's coffers.
- **Chap 6:** The changes to the disciplinary section should be **opposed** as they allow all-member meetings to initiate charges against members and could become a kangaroo court.

TUESDAY FRINGE MEETINGS

Defend And Extend Abortion Rights

12.45pm, The Rain Bar, Gt. Bridgewater Street

Palestine Solidarity Palestine: The Way Forward

12.45pm, Palace Hotel, Oxford Street

Conference assessment and the way forward for Labour

6pm—Relish Bar, Great Northern Square

(Near corner of Peter St & Deansgate—behind Bar 38)

Chair: Pete Willsman (NEC)

Speakers: Mohammed Azam

Ann Black (NEC) * Kelvin Hopkins MP

Jim Kennedy (NEC, UCATT) * Peter Kenyon (NEC)

Christine Shawcroft (NEC) * Walter Wolfgang (NEC)

Entry: £1 (Concessions 50p)

The Right target T&G

A glance at Appendix I to CAC Report 3 reveals the strength of the Right wing among CLP delegates at this conference. The Right had a slate for the CAC elections on Sunday. This included four of the five union nominees, but did **not** include Mike Murphy of Unite (TGWU).

In place of Mike, the forces of darkness supported Andy Furlong, a hard right NPF CLP member in the East Midlands. Unfortunately, the CLP section at conference is becoming something of a rotten borough. Some 200 CLPs have not sent delegates and many of those that have fail to mandate their delegate. It is also not unusual for regional officials to mislead delegates by telling them that mandating is not permissible.

NEC Political Bias

It has always been custom and practice that the NEC Chair is chosen strictly by seniority. And where two have identical lengths of service, the choice is alphabetical.

Christine Shawcroft is now the most senior member. Last year she should have been nominated for vice-chair but was brushed aside with no attempt at any justification.

This is by no means the only example of political bias. Yet again Christine, Peter Willsman and Walter Wolfgang were denied a speaking slot on behalf of the NEC. But, of course “trusty” Peter Wheeler, was given a slot. Wheeler also has a daily column in the official conference newspaper. Shawcroft, Willsman, Wolfgang, and Wheeler are all members of the NEC's CLP section. Wheeler has the least support amongst party members having come bottom of the six elected. This despite being promoted as the NEC speaker at regional conferences.

Yet More Shenanigans

We hear there was a “political briefing” organised for West Midlands CLP delegates this week. How generous of Robert Fello, MP for Stoke South, to give his time to explain the historic role of the trade unions in the founding of the Labour Party! And how imaginative of Brother Bob to suggest that the contemporary issues priorities ballot was a good opportunity for CLPs to demonstrate support for the unions (and thus waste their vote)!

Brother Bob also questioned the need for extra debates. After all, he said, debates involve unhelpful division.

Campaign Briefing

Wednesday

24 September 2008

★ **PRICE FOR** ★
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★ **£2** ★

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Change direction or lose election

After conference Labour faces its greatest challenge for more than 10 years. Between 1997 and 2005 the party lost 4½ million votes and the situation since then has got worse. The root of the electoral decline has been the New Labour agenda that maintains the legacy of Thatcherism. The rejection of progressive taxation, the privatisation of public services, the curtailment of civil liberties and participation in George Bush's military ventures have all taken a severe toll on Labour's support.

The past fortnight's manoeuvrings by Miliband and his Blairite acolytes have found no support at this conference. This is hardly surprising since the unions and most party activists reject the Blairite policies that are responsible for the party's current problems. The government's Autumn 're-launch' plus the new measures announced by Brown yesterday; from nursery education to health checks, are all welcome. But we must go further if we are going to build support sufficient to win a fourth term.

The CLPs showed their support for change in the amendments they submitted prior to the Warwick NPF conference, whilst the unions have done so this week. Where the procedures still permit conference to make a decision it has voted for change, as with the support given to the motion calling for the scrapping of the

opt-out from the working time directive. Conference cheered Tony Woodley's and Michael Meacher's demand for a return to public ownership and it approved the further examination of several issues including the windfall tax and equal pay for women.

There is agreement across the party that it must stand for a progressive agenda, rooted in improving living standards and public services, fighting inequality, promoting civil liberties, combating climate change and promoting international peace. However the problem is that the Leadership's rhetoric is not sufficiently matched by tangible policies and in a few cases, such as Iraq, policy is at odds with it.

Progressive agenda

With the current convulsions of capitalism it is evident that the market does not have the solutions. Bold radical initiatives are both necessary and are popular.

If the government fails to make the policy changes that conference has been urging the party risks defeat at the next general election and a Tory government, committed to cutting public spending and hitting the poor, will take over. CLP and union delegates leaving conference will want to keep up the pressure for policy changes.

The new procedures at this year's

conference leave a lot to be desired. Contemporary issues are of limited value for CLPs and unions to raise their concerns. The criteria that the CAC insists are met are unrealistic. The new annex reports have not resolved issues satisfactorily and if an annex is not accepted the issue is returned to the NPF, leaving important policy questions just being moved around in a circle from conference to NPF to conference As conference can make a decision on emergency resolutions, these are now important vehicles for pursuing policy change.

Support OMOV elections to the NPF

Next year's annual conference will be considering 12 rule change proposals that call for an extension of democracy into the elections of CLP representatives to the NPF. (See this year's Delegate's Report pg 18) Currently the bulk of party members are excluded from this election as the vote is restricted to annual conference delegates. A one member one vote (OMOV) ballot, as with the elections to the NEC CLP section, would rectify this deficiency.

"Indispensible", and only £2 for 5 issues
Michael White described *Campaign Briefing* in his *Guardian* blog as "indispensible". If you missed any issues, or would like copies for your local party/TU, please send a cheque for £3 to CLPD at the address overleaf.

The way forward

Delegates set out their priorities for the next year at the CLPD fringe meeting to assess the outcomes from Conference. NEC member Peter Willsman, referring to the next year's appraisal of the Contemporary Issues process promised last year in Gordon Brown's "Extending Democracy" review, set out a number of matters for discussion. He said that the limitation to "contemporary" should be abolished. CLPs and unions should be able to submit any issue they consider important. The 4 + 4 rule on issues to be debated should be interpreted as originally promised, to permit eight topics to be debated and not five as in this, and most, years. Peter also said that 'minority positions' should be allowed on Annex Reports to permit delegates to discuss a choice of options.

NEC member, Jim Kennedy from UCATT, described what his own union had set out to achieve from Conference, recognising that their relative size and the political situation had made them realistic in their aims.

Ann Black, who was congratulated on being elected Vice-Chair of the party, said she hoped to introduce improvements that would help CLPs - such as issuing information earlier to allow timely and proper debate and mandating of delegates.

Kelvin Hopkins MP set out a range of priorities that were popular and would lead to a fourth Labour victory. These included a 2% reduction in the interest rate, a massive house-building programme and free long-term care for the elderly.

Abortion Rights

Public Briefing Meeting ahead of further votes on abortion this autumn

**Tuesday 7 October—7pm,
House of Commons, Committee Room 10
www.abortionrights.org.uk**

Look Back in Anger

Lorraine Monk, delegate from Twickenham CLP, last came to conference five years ago. Until this morning, Lorraine was the only delegate who challenged the CAC – when her CLP's rule change was ruled out of order. "Five years ago there were more challenges to the rostrum," she says "but there are just as many things to complain about now."

"For example there are a disgracefully small number of contributions from the floor and we have to listen to an endless number of platform speakers. Delegates seem increasingly to have been lulled into the false notion that they are at a convention rather than active participants at the party's sovereign body."

Second class citizens?

First thing yesterday morning, after a series of platform speakers had strutted their stuff, Keith Vaz, the Chair, said there was time for a few contributions. But as the CLP delegates approached the rostrum he said they must be very brief because "we are already running late". A little later some 14 rule changes were moved affecting the future of the party, but only a mere 4 speakers from the floor were permitted. The reason why CLP delegates are treated in this offhand way is because Conference is not governed by the interests of the rank-and-file, but by the TV schedules to suit the "super stars".

Mystery Solved

We reported yesterday that a mystery woman, wrongly described as from Richmond Park CLP, attacked from the rostrum the emergency union motion on the working time directive. Yesterday, she popped up again, this time described as from Richmond (Yorks) and proposed a rule change to increase union affiliation fees almost fourfold. What have our brothers and sisters done to deserve this?

Support the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy

Annual rates: Individuals - £; un- and low-waged (under £8,000) - £5; Couples - £25; un- or low-waged £6; National & regional organisations - £25; CLPs, TUs & Co-op - £15; LP branches - £5. Send your cheque (payable to CLPD) to: CLPD, 10 Park Drive, London NW11 7SH. [Ref CB2008]

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