

Campaign Briefing

Tuesday

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Why we need OMOV for the NPF

On Wednesday morning Conference will debate the rule change from Bedford CLP and another eleven CLPs (Delegates' Report P15). This will introduce one-member-one-vote (OMOV) for the CLP Section of the NPF. Delegates will be aware that the major unions are supporting the CLPs. They will also be aware that there are manoeuvres afoot to scupper this step forward for party democracy. Part of this manoeuvre is a disinformation campaign. Party staff, who are employed to be impartial civil servants, are telling delegates some right cock and bull stories. To set the record straight the following are key arguments for OMOV.

- Policy making is one of the most important functions in the Party and is wholly devolved to the NPF. Policy is a major reason why members join. Every CLP member has a direct vote in choosing their NEC reps. They should also have a direct role in choosing their policy formulators.
- OMOV would generate much greater interest in the NPF and a wider range of members would put their names forward for the election. At present few members have ever heard of the NPF and do not know who their regional NPF reps are.
- Under OMOV the NPF would become more representative of the membership and NPF decisions would accordingly carry more weight.
- The first OMOV NPF election would run alongside the OMOV

election for the NEC CLP reps in Spring 2010. Both sets of candidates would be in the booklet sent to party members. There would therefore be no extra cost.

- Altogether there are 650 CLPs and some 250 do not send delegates to Conference because they choose to spend their limited funds on campaigning. So under the present system all the members in 250 CLPs are totally disenfranchised. Under OMOV not one single party member will be disenfranchised.
- OMOV will produce a more effective NPF with more progressive policies coming to Conference for CLP delegates to debate and vote on. This will give CLP delegates, and through them their GCs, more influence and power, not less.
- OMOV is already used to elect the constituency reps on the Scottish Policy Forum.
- There are 6 CLP seats on the NEC elected by OMOV. All of those elected are super active constituency workers. Exactly the same will apply to the 55 CLP seats on the NPF. It is mischief making to suggest that some how the unions will try to muscle in.
- The unions support OMOV because they want to hear CLP voices at the NPF that are representative of the membership. They do not believe that they are hearing that at the moment.

Further shenanigans

I am a first time delegate to Conference and had assumed that our regional officials were like Caesar's wife. Yesterday I was disabused of this belief. Out of the blue I was approached by a regional official who inquired who I would be voting for in the CAC election. "Our advice is to vote for Stephen Twigg and Margaret Carey". I had always presumed that that this was a free ballot. He then went on to inquire as to my thoughts on the rule change on election for the NPF on Wednesday. "We can't afford to send out the ballot papers by post. Why change a situation that works well?" This abuse of party democracy shocked me and should be investigated.

New (and now disillusioned) delegate

Campaign Briefing has also been told that in one region the Regional Secretary has been taking groups of delegates out of the hall to meet NPF Chair Pat McFadden. Pat has been trying to arms twist the delegates to not vote for OMOV on Wednesday. This undemocratic abuse highlights one reason why the election should be by OMOV rather than at Conference.

No such thing as a free lunch
Nor information. *Campaign Briefing*, is produced by volunteers, but we have yet to find anybody giving away paper and ink!
So when you see us tomorrow (and Thursday) with buckets in hand, please be generous. *Campaign Briefing* will have a cover price of £2 for the week.

■ **Vote for John Wiseman for the National Constitutional Committee** ■

For detailed and exclusive NEC and NPF reports, news and debates visit www.grassrootslabour.net

Housing crisis must be addressed

With 1.8 million on council waiting lists, the government's decision – at long last – to fund new council housing and change the rules to make it easier for councils to build is welcome. Unfortunately it is only for 3,000 new council homes. We need to go much further and faster. The biggest barrier stopping councils building new homes is the chronic under-funding of existing council housing. Proposed government finance is insufficient. Some councils are even selling off empty council homes to pay for desperately needed improvements to other homes. A moratorium on all privatisation and sell offs is needed.

Funding for existing council homes must meet the proven level of need. The NPF housing annex talks about 'social' and 'affordable' housing; what is needed is publicly owned council housing, with secure tenancies, lower rents and an accountable landlord. The annex welcomes public-private partnerships – which have been a disaster in the past, and will not create the new council homes we need. To deliver a sustainable future for council housing we must have fully-funded allowances, a level playing field on debt write off, and grants or allowances to bring all homes up to decent standards.

Defend Council Housing

“Massive spending on public works is going to be vital if we are to drive the country out of recession – which is far from over – and recreate full employment. Conference has voted time and again to re-establish and expand council housing. It is now time for the government to do just that and win millions of working class voters back to Labour's ranks.”

Kelvin Hopkins MP

Primaries would undermine Labour

In Totnes the Tories have selected their parliamentary candidate by using the American system of primaries. Press reports suggest that this has all the hall marks of a populist gimmick. Never ones to miss any passing bandwagon the Blairites are jumping on. But we need to consider the implications of primaries for our party.

Selecting local and parliamentary candidates is one important right that party members have retained. Remove that and many might wonder if there is any point in being a member. It would also be a further disincentive for the unions to be involved in the party. MPs would no longer be accountable to the party and the collectivity of the PLP would be undermined.

Inevitably, as in the US, the pattern would emerge where the size of a candidate's wallet would determine how successful they were in winning over those able to attend a primary within an electorate of some 60,000. Or in the case of a primary for London's Mayor it would be an electorate of several million. Candidates would need to be rich, this would exclude working class candidates. Labour MPs would soon become out of touch with our core voters. In the US half of the population now no longer vote.

A progressive party has to have a cutting edge. Often it has to be ahead of public opinion not trailing behind it.

REMEMBER GAZA – PROTEST AGAINST THE WAR CRIMES

Delegates may wish to support the protest at 8.30pm today outside the Labour Friends of Israel fringe meeting at the Grand Hotel, which is being addressed by Israeli defence minister Ehud Barak, who on 27 December 2008, ordered the aerial bombardment of Gaza. More than 1,400 people were killed and over 5,000 injured and maimed. His visit to Brighton comes just days after the UN released its report, detailing the war crimes committed by Israel in its attack on Gaza.

The sausage machine

The new Contemporary Issue process (introduced in 2007) is not going according to plan. The NPF was supposed to produce Annex reports that would then be adopted as policy. But Conference has been dissatisfied with the quality of many of the reports and has referred them back for further consideration. Yesterday all of the Annex reports went back into the sausage machine. Remploi has now gone back in for the third time. The Party's policy-making has stalled. This is yet another reason why we need OMOV for the NPF CLP section – so that we have a more representative and effective NPF that will produce better quality reports.

**ADVANCE
NOTICE**

**Conference
assessment
and the way
forward for
Labour**

6pm Wednesday – UMI Brighton Hotel

Chair: Gaye Johnston

**Speakers: Richard Ascough (GMB)
Ann Black (NEC) * Kelvin Hopkins MP**

Peter Kenyon (NEC)

Christine Shawcroft (NEC)

Cat Smith (Compass Youth EC)

Peter Willsman (NEC)

Entry: £1 (Concessions 50p)

For running conference news and gossip from *Tribune*, point your browser at www.tribunemagazine.co.uk/conference