

Campaign Briefing

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news@clpd.org.uk

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Conference shows way for Labour to win

Conference this week has demonstrated that Labour has picked itself up since the General Election and is determined to put forward a new, clear and positive alternative programme for government. The achievements of government have rightly been acknowledged, but now so too have some of the mistakes. Attention is being paid to restoring the lost trust that saw five million supporters stop voting Labour since 1997.

Ed Miliband's election as Leader sends a strong signal that the party is moving on, policy will be changed, from the approach to the economy and public services to foreign relations. Ed's Leader's speech set out a progressive direction - Labour will do things because they are right. The invasion of Iraq was wrong, as were attacks on civil liberties and the lack of controls on banks.

Moral approach

This moral approach will strengthen the party's opposition to tabloid hysteria against Muslims and immigration that has fed the far right's advance. Some media commentators are saying Ed's speech was equivocal, so it is important the commitment to change translates into hard policy, particularly the economy where commentators demand a move to the right. Those still wedded to New Labour will do themselves no favours if

they undermine Ed in the way the Blairites attacked Brown in the run up to this year's election.

Conference this week also had restored some of its previous powers to frame policy, thanks to pressure from the trade unions. Five contemporary motions" have already been discussed and voted on, resulting in policy moving in a progressive direction.

Internal democracy

However, there remain considerable weaknesses to our internal democracy. This year, rule change proposals from CLPs have been manoeuvred off the agenda or not afforded proper discussion. Having acknowledged such weaknesses during his Leadership campaign, Ed needs to ensure progress is now made. On Sunday Conference launched a review of policy making - "Partnership into Power" - CLPs and affiliates should make robust contributions to the consultation in an effort to move the review beyond mere tinkering about.

Our new Leader has made general commitments to more democracy and openness. But democracy begins at home. The old control freakery is still lurking in our Party's apparatus. Conference itself needs to be reformed so it is properly the

Party's sovereign body as set out in the Rule Book. At present huge chunks of Conference are taken up by speakers who are not even delegates. Actual delegates at the rostrum are almost an occasional add on in what is, in reality, a media extravaganza. Trade union delegates get a bit of a look in but CLP delegates are relegated to third class citizens at their own Conference.

Economic policy

After Conference, a central issue confronting the party will be the detail of its economic policy. Cameron and Osborne are endangering a sustained recovery. There is no economic truth to their claims that you can cut your way out of a recession. Axing public services and jobs risks a double dip. Investment needs to be increased to restore growth. Ed Balls' argument against the Tories' framework of cuts makes him the most appropriate Shadow Chancellor. The bond between the unions and the Party at all levels needs to be strengthened so that the labour movement is in the strongest position to defend jobs and services from Tory attacks.

Finally, there needs to be some rethinking about AV. The Tories are likely to call for second preference votes for Lib Dems, which would make it much harder for Labour to regain power.

Support housing composites

says Defend Council Housing

The broad united campaign of tenants, trade unions, councillors and MPs against privatisation and for investment in council housing, has won consistent support at Labour conferences since 2004.

Ed Miliband recognised this when he said “the last thing we want to see is less council housing or for it to be sold off”.

Now the coalition government’s cuts to housing benefit and to housing services, and attacks on secure tenancies, threaten to drive up evictions and homelessness. In a survey of landlords, 54% expect to increase evictions. These cuts will do nothing to build the homes we need. Conference

needs to come out loud and clear against these attacks on tenants – council and private – against means-testing or time limited tenancies and instead demand a mass investment programme to improve existing and build new council homes.

Today’s conference debate should be a springboard for campaigns to:

- Stop housing benefit cuts
- Defend secure tenancies
- Invest in new and improved council housing

Please join the lobby of Parliament on 11 October at 12pm.

(See www.defendcouncilhousing.org.uk for more information)

Campaign Briefing can be downloaded from our website. Go to www.clpd.org.uk/conference.htm

“Don’t do a Ramsay” says Ed B
Yesterday Ed Balls issued a coded warning to the Party’s deficit obsessives. He reminded Conference that Ramsay MacDonald had also argued that there was no alternative to cuts. MacDonald went on to make the cuts (in a Tory dominated coalition) and this caused economic devastation for a generation.

Rail against the cuts!

By Simon Weller, ASLEF National Organiser

It’s been such a good week in Manchester you can forget that outside the alternative reality of the conference hall the Toff and the Toady are still occupying Downing Street. But it does put a spring in your step to know that two days after the New Labour faction was defeated, a YouGov opinion poll showed Labour ahead of the Tories for the first time in three years; that Labour has attracted 36,000 new members; and that Mandelson is in hiding.

Our next task is to get shot of the Tories and the Poodles before they do too much damage. One area they will attack without reservation is public transport, because they have no loyalty towards it. It’s not something you use if you’re a Cameron or a Clegg unless you’re forced to. And then you’d go first class, of course, because, as the Tory Nicholas Wintererton put it, there is a ‘totally different type of people’ in standard class.

Public transport, to the Tories, is something you have to endure if the Roller is being serviced and the missus is out in the Jag. They will cut it without mercy – which could prove a prime area for organising a grass-roots anti-Tory consensus.

Their cuts will not only mean a decline in services and abandoning electrification, more carriages and high speed rail. Passengers will be charged more for a worsening service as the Tories intend to lift the cap on regulated fare increases, so their mates can charge what they like rather than being limited to 1% above inflation.

Our job is to turn passenger dissatisfaction into political opposition. Let’s rail against the cuts!

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