

NEC Rule changes

Leadership Election, a Wreckers Charter - OPPOSE

This proposal would legitimize and facilitate attempts by mavericks and malcontents to undermine the party leader as repeatedly happened under Gordon Brown's leadership. The amendment provides that "where there is no vacancy, nominations may be sought by potential challengers each year prior to the annual session of party conference". By placing the onus on "challengers" and failing to provide any timetable, the NEC are risking a media frenzy every time 2 or 3 disgruntled MPs issue a challenge to Ed or any future Leader.

Most party members recognised in the last parliament that, whatever the alleged shortcomings of Gordon Brown, triggering a leadership election in the run up to a general election would only serve to increase divisions in the party. In recent years, in spite of a rule that required nomination papers to be formally issued each year, that practice was not followed – Tony Blair vetoed it. The lack of a formal procedure opened the door to mischief makers like Hoon and Hewitt. Surely it would be preferable to return to a routine process. That would focus attention on the Leader's support rather than a handful of opponents.

Forced Transfer of Local Properties – OPPOSE

This would force the transfer of premises held by local Labour parties to the national party and appears to empower the NEC to close down parties that refuse. These assets were typically acquired with funds raised locally, or through bequests from deceased activists.

This change will cause alarm in many local parties since this would enable the national party to raise secured loans (mortgages) which could jeopardise the assets on which local parties depend. Although it appears to safeguard local parties' use of the premises and income derived from them, it still seems to enable the national party to sell the property and use the proceeds. NEC speakers may argue the opposite and give assurances but it's the words in the rule changes that matter.

Ending the delay before rule changes are timetabled (Lancaster & Fleetwood CLP)

Since 1968, rule change proposals from trade unions and from CLPs (but not from the NEC) have been subject to a year's delay before being timetabled. This was intended to enable the NEC to examine the proposals in detail and at length and then make a considered response to the following year's conference. This convention was well intentioned but in practice the NEC only gives cursory attention to proposals and, usually, a one line response.

Since conference is almost 4 months after the normal closing date for proposing rule changes, the NEC has time carefully consider proposals without another whole year. The delay serves only to annoy and frustrate the unions and CLPs. It is well past its "sell by" date.

NEC Elections: Vote for Mark James

- CLP delegates are urged to vote for Mark James as CLP rep to the National Constitutional Committee today. Mark is currently a councillor in Greenwich having previously served on Kent County Council and been a member of the Kent Police Authority.
- With 28 years Labour membership, Mark says, "I have the experience to hear cases without fear or favour, while respecting the rights of party members not to be subject to frivolous allegations whilst maintaining the integrity of our constitution."
- Ballot papers can be collected from the Ballot area in the exhibition area.

Hard right captures NEC place

Yesterday, the *Guardian* described new NEC member, Luke Akehurst, as “a controversial blogger”. This is an under-statement. Luke is the joint secretary, along with Maggie Cosin, of the shadowy hard right Labour First organisation, which operates below the radar in the unions and party apparatus. He has publicly stated that during Labour’s second term, the action of which he was most proud was the invasion of Iraq.

During January 2009, Luke went on record attacking the NEC's Code of Conduct for party officials, stating - 'the daft code of conduct stops Labour staff doing their job. They should not be neutral referees. They should be able to promote the candidates and policies of the elected leadership of

the party against their internal critics. Back in Morgan Phillips' day there was none of this nonsense about neutrality, the party staff explicitly had a role in giving the left a kicking.'

ADVANCE
NOTICE

Conference assessment and the next steps for Labour

6pm Wednesday – Bar 38, Peter St

Diane Abbott MP - Mohamed Azam
Ann Black - Billy Hayes

Kelvin Hopkins MP - Mark Seddon
Christine Shawcroft - Sam Tarry

Peter Willsman

Entry: £1 (Concessions 50p)

NEC election expresses hope for change

The desire for Labour values represented by the Leadership election was also reflected in votes for the NEC. Support for centre-left candidates for the CLP section of the NEC rose this year to over 53%, having more or less steadily increased each NEC election since 1998, when the current election rules were introduced and the centre-left secured 46% of the vote. This provides a good base on which to build more progressive policies.

Diane – party’s third choice under OMOV

In terms of the popular vote in the Leadership election, Diane Abbott did not come fifth, but in fact third amongst the first preferences of those who took part. Across the electoral college 35,259 individuals (10.4% of total) cast their votes for Diane. This was ahead of Ed Balls on 34,489 (10.2%) and Andy Burnham on 28,772 (8.5%).

Labour Investment v Tory Cuts

More than three hundred attended yesterday’s fringe meeting “Challenging the cuts consensus” to hear Ed Balls speak about opposing the Tories’ public spending cuts. As in his widely acclaimed Bloomberg speech, Ed explained the necessity to increase public investment to re-establish a healthy level of economic growth. The Tory cuts risk inducing a further recessionary dip or at best condemn the economy to a sustained period of low growth – not a recipe for reducing the deficit. Frances O’Grady, TUC Deputy General Secretary called for a campaign against the cuts and Ken Livingstone pointed out that if Labour wins the economic argument about investment it will win the next election.

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.

Shenanigans

Every year angry CLP delegates complain to us about the way regional briefing meetings are being used to shepherd delegates in a pro-platform direction. On Sunday, at the South West delegates’ briefing, Exeter MP, Ben Bradshaw, spoke from the top table. He said that “we recommend” delegates vote for the four trade union subjects in the contemporary motions’ Priorities Ballot but admitted that Housing might also be considered as a subject to vote for. One perceptive delegate pointed out that CLPs would be better advised to vote for four separate subjects to the Unions in order that Conference could have a wider range of debates. A regional official promptly slapped him down – “we don’t want to overload Conference with too many resolutions”.

Bradshaw then went on to list CAC and Auditor candidates that “we recommend” delegates vote for. At the South West reception last night four out of five regional victors in the NPF CLP ballot were announced from the platform and called up to receive congratulations. The other victor, who also happened to be the sole candidate supported by the Grassroots Alliance, was treated as a non-person.

Conference quirks

Yesterday, during the debate on housing and Building Schools for the Future, the first two speakers spoke about everything apart from the subjects in the composite – surely grounds for ruling them out of order. They’d been handed portable speeches and were determined to deliver them. Then the third speaker was from the same organisation as the mover – normally the basis for closing the debate, effectively summing up. And there seems to be another rule for Council Leaders - one was allowed way over the three minute limit. The party also appears to have a new Socialist Society in the Federation of Small Businesses, with their Chair given full speaking rights!