

CAMPAIGN BRIEFING

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CHANGE DIRECTION OR LOSE ELECTION

**WRITES CHRIS McLAUGHLIN,
EDITOR OF TRIBUNE**

Too much has been asked about whether the Government has a chance of winning the next election and too little about whether it deserves to. New Labour is dead, though its legacy of privatisation of public services and obsession with the dominance of free-market principles over all others lingers toxically throughout Government. New Labour is dead not only because it was not Labour enough and not only because Tony Blair has departed the scene. It is dead because it was not Labour enough, because it is failing to deliver to voters, especially traditional supporters, anything to meet their expectations. The need for change has been long overdue. It did not need the clunking fist of the Glasgow East defeat to reveal that the electorate has had enough of New Labour. Those of the right of the Labour Party who advocate a continuation and deepening of Blairism are backing a kamikaze strategy which risks wiping out Labour for a generation.

The Government needs a change of direction. But without a change of policy there can be no change of direction, and no chance of winning the next election. The two are umbilically linked. The change in direction that is now being demanded by party members and trade unionists must be bold. The Prime Minister has nothing to lose, but might win the election, by embracing and campaigning passionately on a new programme which addresses the aspirations and needs of millions of people left behind by successive policies. Being "on your side" must be made to mean something, by addressing housing, low pay, rising food and fuel prices, the environment, insecurity at

work and tax rates at the top. Bread and butter issues such as transport, rail in particular, as well as proposals for increased runways, and the disastrous post office closure programme must be addressed urgently.

Much has been achieved in the Warwick II talks but it remains to be seen to what extent the Government gets fully behind the agreements made in those talks and to what extent unreconstructed Blairite ministers are prepared to carry them through. The Leader needs to allow himself to be guided by the party he leads, for it appears to be more in touch with the real issues than he appears to be. It just so happens that the mechanism, which can make this happen, is already in motion under rules urged on the movement by Gordon Brown himself. The changes in the decision-making process, which will be tested for the first time at the forthcoming Annual Conference in Manchester, were presented as a means of ending the 100-year stalemate between the Party and Labour in Government. They were heralded as means of involving the Party more and the members were asked to trust the leadership.

They did and at Warwick they and the unions delivered. The Campaign for Labour Party Democracy also delivered by ensuring maximum involvement in discussions on amendments to the six official policy documents.

The agenda, which emerged from Warwick, though not wholly intact, will, we can hope, help the Party re-connect with voters and revitalise the Government at a time when the Tories have failed to stamp their mark in the mind of voters. They certainly don't like New Labour but they don't really know either what David Cameron really stands for. Labour can fill this space with a new and revitalised body of policy.

The saga of Warwick II

This year, for the first time, following pressure from Unions and CLPs, backed by CLPD, the constituencies were given the right to submit textual amendments to the 6 final-stage NPF documents. CLPs were able to submit as many amendments as they wished. But, instead of going direct to the NPF at Warwick II (25/27 July), they went instead to one of eleven regional meetings (each consisting of 7 NPF reps – 5 regional CLP reps and 2 reps elected by the whole region). Altogether over 200 CLPs submitted a grand total of some 4,000 amendments. The large majority of these sought a change of direction towards more progressive policies. At the regional meetings the 7 reps were under no obligation to progress the amendments, but they were generally encouraged to pick them up and submit them to the NPF in their own names. Around 1,500 of the CLP amendments were picked up and progressed to Warwick II. Given that there was considerable duplication of amendments, it seems likely that the vast majority of the CLP amendments were progressed. In addition, the other members of the 190-strong NPF were able to submit textual amendments to Warwick II. Many took this opportunity, especially the trade unions and the four CLGA – supported members of the NEC (Ann Black, Christine Shawcroft, Peter Willsman and Walter Wolfgang). Altogether over 2,000 amendments were submitted to the NPF. (continued on p2)

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WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

MARK SEDDON, FORMER EDITOR OF TRIBUNE AND NOW DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT AT JAZEERA ENGLISH SUGGESTS AN ANSWER

'Politics is cyclical — discuss.' There is a clear and apparent danger in writing anything at least a month or so before it is due to appear, for so much can change. Who knows? By the time this appears, the Cameron bounce may have gone, voters may have discovered the real Gordon Brown, James Purnell will have joined the Tories and Labour will be on the road to recovery.

But then I am writing this in Beijing, on my way to North Korea, so anything seems possible.

Politics is indeed cyclical, and some of those cycles more profound than monthly fluctuations in the opinion polls. In post-war Britain, the political cycle — or rather its agenda — was dominated for the first quarter century or so by the Labour post war settlement and the Welfare State. The final quarter century has been defined by the Thatcherite inheritance and the Labour Party's virtual surrender to it.

So now as we hover on the brink of global recession and with the safeguards for the poor, the elderly, the working class and the middle class in tatters, it seems improbable that the Blairite agenda and face of Cameron's Conservatives may be the public choice in the next general election. If it is, then perhaps the explanation is that neither 'new' Labour nor the Conservatives have the answers for the economic and social turmoil we may soon find ourselves in, but that voters now intensely dislike 'new' Labour.

Political cycles of the long term or short term aside, Labour is currently heading for a historic melt-down at the next election. If there is any choice at the moment, it may be between losing well or very badly indeed.

It is time then to look to the future and to learn from some of our friends and allies. It is also time to finally bin 'new' Labour and all that goes with it.

For 'new' Labour was only ever an election strategy, and one that did help win for Labour, but which caused incalculable damage to the beliefs and values of what was once a political movement of active members in the process.

It is time to bin 'new' Labour because the 'new' Democrats were binned in the United States some time ago. That strategy of tri-

angulation, of pitching to the populist Right in order to win over swing voters, was abandoned some time ago. The defeat of Hillary Clinton in the Democratic Party Primaries, finally put the lid on a time and a place that many Democrats, including Barak Obama, would probably like to forget.

The 'new' Democrats were in truth pitched out of office in favour of George Bush and the Republicans. But the Democrats didn't stand around wringing their hands, looking wistfully back at the Clinton years and blaming the voters for 'not getting the message'. They got down to re-building their political base, horribly weakened by the Clinton years, years when the word 'activist' was a dirty word, years during which those activists were denounced for being 'extreme' and 'unrepresentative'. Does it all begin to sound horribly familiar?

When the history of the recovery of the US Democratic Party is written, I hope that Howard Dean and his army of supporters in MoveOn.org, will not simply join the appendices. The US Democrats are not just electable now because in Barak Obama they have a charismatic and appealing Presidential candidate; it is because the party's political base had been revived. Dean used the internet, he worked with the unions and with interest groups that supported the Democratic Party's agenda to re-connect with the blue collar vote in America. The party was no longer embarrassed to be associated with labour, and it began to move away from a fixation with gender and race politics back to the surer ground of class and bread and butter issues.

'Town hall' meetings, whether virtual or real, helped re-connect former activists to their party and recruited new ones. Funding — which had of course dried up from big business once it was obvious that the Republicans were going to win — was handed back to the activists and donations capped. But once the political message found favour with the party's natural supporters, those small donations turned into a torrent.

After the deluge will come a time when those who remain will have to re-build, perhaps almost from scratch. There will be other debates to be had about how this may be done in tandem with the trade unions and what relationship a much reduced Labour Party may have with other parties or groups that share some of its beliefs. For some this may seem the counsel of despair. Actually it is not, because as James Callaghan once observed, the Labour Party has very deep roots.

The saga of Warwick II

(from p1)

At Warwick, the Friday (25 July) was taken up by some 400 meetings between groups of NPF reps and ministers on specific policy areas, in an attempt to agree "consensus wording". The Saturday was given over to 'workshops', where the NPF reps discussed the agreed consensus wording and the outstanding amendments. At the same time, lots of side meetings with ministers were held to search for an elusive consensus. The side meetings involving union reps continued until nearly 6am on Sunday morning. Throughout this time individual reps with specific amendments were hunted down by earnest officials clutching "consensus wording". It has to be said that this process of 'cutting and sticking' was much more fraught and unprofessional than the well-ordered arrangements for compositing on the Saturday afternoons in the pre 'Partnership in Power' days. And yet, of course, devious Blairites are still trying to re-write history by pouring scorn on those good old days.

During the weekend several meetings of CLP reps were called by Simon Burgess, NPF Vice-Chair representing CLPs. The 6 CLP reps on the NEC were deliberately excluded from these meetings. This was somewhat insulting, given that most of the CLP NPF reps are only elected by a handful of unmandated CLP delegates at Annual Conference, whereas the NEC reps are elected by some 20,000 party members.

It would be fair to say that the 1,500 amendments that originated

(continued on p3)

New Labour and the Hand of History

"Under Thatcher social homes were built at an average rate of 46,000 a year. Under Blair it fell to 17,300, while almost half a million council homes were sold off."

Guardian, 27 November 2007.

The saga of Warwick II

(from p2)

from CLPs did set something of a progressive mood to the weekend and, no doubt, assisted the Unions to achieve a better result. Nevertheless, as was clear in Sunday's plenary, there were distinct limits on just how progressive the NPF was prepared to be. Following their agreements with Ministers, the Unions, as a block, agreed to abstain on all amendments covering Iraq/Afghanistan, the 42 days, Trident and anything that could conceivably be considered to "cut across" the union agreements.

On Sunday, in the final plenary, all outstanding amendments were voted upon. There were 161 NPF reps present at the start of the meeting. Of these some 65 were CLP reps from across all the sections (this included 5 CLP reps supported by the CLGA (the 4 NEC members and Carol Hayton, South East Region). There were some 50 TU reps present from across all the sections. 81 votes or more therefore represented a majority, and meant that an amendment was endorsed into the final document. 41 votes or more (25%) meant that an amendment went forward to Annual Conference as a Minority Position. In many cases the Platform contended that the outstanding amendments were covered by the 'consensus wording', but several movers pressed for a vote because they were not entirely convinced by this argument.

The voting on each of the 6 documents was as follows (NB: not all votes are included and, in some cases, the voting figures are estimates):

New Labour and the Hand of History

"British pensioners receive a pension equivalent to 17% of average earnings, the lowest in Europe – well below the average of 57%."

Sunday Times
18 November 2007.

BRITAIN IN THE WORLD

Opposing military "humanitarian intervention" (Wolfgang)	5 votes
Phased withdrawal from Iraq and Afghanistan (Hayton)	5 votes
Show support to Venezuela and call for end of US blockage of Cuba and of military aid to Colombian military (Wolfgang)	6 votes
Middle East – welcome Carter's initiative and the International Court of Justice (9/7/4) (Wolfgang)	5 votes
Opposition to US Missile Defence System in UK, Poland and Czech Republic (Wolfgang)	6 votes
No replacement of Trident (Hayton)	5 votes

CREATING SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

Fur labelling (Mark Glover)	Endorsed
Opposition to Proportional Representation for local council elections (Stella Matthews)	Endorsed
Opposition to new nuclear power stations (Hayton)	5 votes
Moratorium on any further directly elected mayors (Willsman)	5 votes

CRIME, JUSTICE, CITIZENSHIP AND EQUALITIES

Standardise discrimination law and address gaps (Simon Wright)	33 votes
Wholly elected House of Lords (Alon Orbach)	Endorsed
Independent review of civil legal aid system (Jeremy Beecham)	41 votes (Minority Position)
National network of law centres (Willsman)	5 votes
Opposition to ID cards (Wolfgang)	5 votes
Expand democratic representation of police authorities (Beecham)	55 votes (Minority Position)
Reduction from 42 days pre-charge detention (Wolfgang)	6 votes

EDUCATION AND SKILLS

At least one-third of governors at academies to be parent governors (Willsman)	33 votes
Selection – amending balloting arrangements (Black)	31 votes
Independent research re academies (Hayton)	6 votes
Abolition of tuition fees (Wolfgang)	4 votes

HEALTH

Choice should not be used as a basis for creating competition in the NHS (Hayton)	5 votes
Moratorium on Foundation Hospitals (Wolfgang)	6 votes
Abolish prescription charges (Wolfgang)	5 votes
No further expansion of private sector in NHS. Contracts for ITCS to be ended (Shawcroft)	5 votes
Commissioning will not be outsourced to commercial companies (Hayton)	5 votes

PROSPERITY AND WORK

ESAs etc to be increased annually in line with average earnings (Black)	8 votes
Strengthening enforcement of National Minimum Wage (Daniel Zeichner)	28 votes
Revise Bank of England's inflation target upwards to protect jobs (Willsman)	3 votes
From 2010 restore link between pensions and earnings (Wolfgang)	5 votes
Windfall Tax on energy and oil companies hypothecated to alleviate fuel and child poverty (Willsman)	5 votes
Progressive taxation – 10p tax band; 50p rate over 100,000; remove ceiling on national insurance contributions (Willsman)	5 votes

The final amalgamated NPF document, emerging from Sunday's plenary, will go to Annual Conference, together with the two Minority Positions. It will be sent to Conference delegates in advance. An analysis of this document is available at www.scgn.org.uk

RED ALERT FOR CONFERENCE DELEGATES KEY RULE CHANGES AT MANCHESTER

SUPPORT:

Islington North and Luton South on restricting Labour's organisation in Northern Ireland.

Bringing peace to Northern Ireland through the Good Friday Agreement has been one of Labour's finest achievements. But organisationally in Northern Ireland, the Party has got itself into a mess. It has accepted expensive legal settlements in order to appease questionable challenges on equalities grounds. By defining the legal territory in which Labour operates as Britain (England, Scotland and Wales), this simple rule change will solve the problem and ensure the government's peace programme is not undermined.

SUPPORT:

CLPs' Democratic Rights

OPPOSE:

Gagging by the CAC.

In recent years the Conference Arrangements committee (CAC) has been taking a much harder line in relation to rule changes submitted by CLPs. For example, a considerable number submitted to this year's Conference have been ruled out of order on very dubious grounds. Aggrieved delegates may go to the rostrum and seek redress by challenging the Chair of CAC. Every delegate in the hall should do their best to support these challenges and oppose the gagging. It could be your CLP next!

SUPPORT:

Lancaster & Fleetwood and Westminster North on democracy in Young Labour.

This rule change would introduce much needed democratic reforms into the hitherto Byzantine structures of Young Labour. It should be given maximum support.

SUPPORT:

Calder Valley, Horsham, Newport West and Peterborough on wider choice of candidates for Party Leader and Deputy.

This rule change lowers the threshold for a valid nomination for standing for election for Party Leader or Deputy, when there is a vacancy, from 12.5% of Labour MPs to 7.5% (ie. from 45 to 27 MPs in the current Parliament).

This rule change could benefit potential candidates from all wings of the Party. It is designed to ensure that a candidate, who might win an eventual majority, is not prevented from even standing. For example, in the 2007 Deputy Leadership election, Hilary Benn only just managed to get the 12.5%, and yet he attracted a larger number of CLP nominations than any other candidate. And by the third round of voting, Benn had the support of 61 MPs, had more trade union support than Harriet Harman and had more votes from Party members than either Cruddas or Johnson.

Under the existing threshold it is not

possible to have more than 7 candidates, and even 5 or 6 are only possible when the number of nominations is fairly evenly distributed.

The proposed change allows for a wider choice and makes it very unlikely that a possible winner would be debarred from standing because he or she could not obtain enough initial nominations from MPs.

The following CLPs have rule changes that were thrown in the bin by the CAC and their delegates may be seeking a fair hearing — Twickenham, Hampstead and Kilburn, East Devon, Orpington, Meridan, Islington South & Finsbury, Beckenham, Ilford South, Gloucester, Lewisham Deptford.

OPPOSE:

NEC's rule change to alter the composition of the CAC by adding an NPF rep.

At present the CAC consists of 5 trade union reps and 2 CLP reps. At Annual Conference the CAC acts as the Standing Orders Committee (SOC). Like all SOCs, it is accountable for its actions to the Conference. Annual Conference is made up, solely, of delegates from affiliated organisations (unions) and CLPs. As a courtesy, members of the National Policy Forum (NPF) are allowed to attend Conference as observers. It is both inappropriate, and out of line with all existing practice, to give a seat on a SOC to an outside body that is not represented at the relevant Conference. This bizarre proposal, which popped up out of the blue at the NEC, should be firmly opposed.

New Labour and the Hand of History

'If the Government can magic tens of billions out of thin air for its financier friends, it can also afford proper pensions, rights for agency workers and a fully-funded public sector'.

Derek Simpson,
Joint General Secretary of Unite, *Tribune*, 4 April, 2008.

New Labour and the Hand of History

'City workers have been awarded £13.2 billion in bonuses so far this year'.

Guardian 26 May 2008.

YES TO ELECTION SPENDING CAPS — DEFEND LABOUR'S TRADE UNION LINK

BY BARRY GRAY, CLPD ASSISTANT SECRETARY

The White Paper on party finance and expenditure, published in June, indicates that, whilst the government at present intends to reintroduce local spending caps for elections, it continues to favour a more profound reform of political party finance that would weaken trade unions' involvement with Labour.

The proposal to reinstate legal limits on campaign spending in local constituencies would help reduce the Tories' current advantage of being able to channel vast sums of money to their target seats. Until 2000, there were strict rules capping a party's spending in a seat. Those limits were triggered as soon as the party formally named its candidate in the constituency. Unwisely, Labour's leadership pushed through legislation that, amongst other things, removed those limits. Since then the Tories have been able to select candidates early and finance them extensively, years before an election, from a multi-million pound marginal seat fighting fund. The government now recognises the local spending cap played an important role in ensuring that no party can seek to buy electoral success by spending vast sums of money above what is generally spent by their opponents

On other aspects of party and election finance, the White Paper is less helpful. The government tried, unsuccessfully, to reach a consensus between the main political parties on more substantial reform and is reluctant to legislate on these areas at present. However, the paper continues to promote the principal proposals advocated by the Hayden Philips' review of party funding

New Labour and the Hand of History

'Civic pride and good is hollowed out when common goods are dished out as private contracts. The end is a materialistic shell in which only cynicism, opportunism and personal profit can exist.'

Rosie Boycott,
Guardian, 26 May 2008.

New Labour and the Hand of History

'More of the Civil Service has been privatised under New Labour than under the governments of Margaret Thatcher and John Major combined.'

Mark Serwotka,
General Secretary PCS Union,
Guardian 11 June 2008.

— notably, the introduction of a donations cap accompanied by increased state funding of parties.

The Hayden Philips' review proposed that the current collective affiliation payments of unions would be replaced with individual affiliation payments, which would then be counted as individual donations for the purposes of a cap. Labour's affiliated trade unions have rejected this proposed move towards the individualisation of affiliated membership as it undermines the collective principle on which trade unions base their strength. Philips' proposed donation cap of £50,000 would also restrict the ability of trade unions to give additional financial support to Labour's campaigns.

The Tories want caps put on trade union funding of Labour. They also oppose increases in state funding as these would predominately assist the Liberal Democrats. Policy Exchange, reportedly Cameron's favourite think tank, published a report, in the Spring, documenting the degree to which political parties already benefit from public funds. The Tories will fight any proposal to reinstate spending caps as it undermines their financial advantage.

The Labour Party's federal structure includes both individual members and organisations. The former are grouped in Constituency Labour Parties, the latter consist of affiliated trade unions, socialist societies and the Co-operative Party. The structural inclusion of organisations within the party, in particular the union link, would be threatened should the proposals on donation caps and increased state funding reappear. In the meantime, a reinstatement of local spending caps can only help make local campaigning more democratic.

THE CREDIT CRUNCH — NEW LABOUR'S PART IN IT

CLPD EXECUTIVE MEMBER BERNIE MOSS EXPOSES NEW LABOUR'S ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITY IN THE PRESENT CRISIS

Since the Northern Rock bailout last year, Gordon Brown has assured us that the hard prudential decisions he has taken over the years will save us from the slump engulfing the capitalist world. Now Alistair Darling admits that the crisis is nastier than expected. Still, Yvette Cooper insists that the crisis is not of our making.

This is true of the inflation of energy and food prices that is straining budgets, which is ultimately due to growing demand in China and other emerging countries. But it is decidedly not true of the credit crunch behind the slump, for which New Labour, along with the US, bears pivotal responsibility. Essentially, the crunch results from the bursting of the speculative bubble in property and financial instruments that New Labour promoted to the detriment of our industry. Since 1997, despite protests from the unions and Labour Conference, we have lost one million manufacturing jobs and almost half of our industrial GDP. The slack has been taken up by the property, financial and related business sectors, which have been responsible for most of our growth since 2003.

The very policies of prudence that produced the longest period of continuous growth since records began have sown the seeds for a deep and prolonged recession. The key to these policies was a stable pound with a high exchange rate that fed property and finance by drawing in speculative capital from around the world. The strong pound was obtained, in the first two years, by keeping within Tory spending

(continued on p6)

Peter Willsman's

News from the NEC

(A report by Peter Willsman of some of the issues at the June and July NEC meetings. Peter is a CLP rep. on the NEC (supported by the Centre-Left Grassroots Alliance and is CLPD's Secretary).

New General Secretary

In June, Ray Collins, Unite AGS, was appointed as General Secretary following the decision by David Pitt-Watson not to take up the post. Bro. Collins has been a party

member since 1970 and a delegate to every Annual Party Conference since 1973.

Ray stated that he intends to be an advocate for party members and sees this as the central role of the General Secretary. He argued that when political parties allow their membership base to wither they lose touch and they lose elections.

Ray also made a commitment to work with affiliates and TULO to strengthen and enhance the link, ensuring that the voice of the wider Labour movement is a strong one

within the Party.

Ray emphasised that our Party is more than just a fan club for the Labour Government. He argued that the NPF's purpose must be to allow genuine debate and reach proper conclusions. It should reinforce democratic accountability, not undermine it, and it should reflect the differing strands of opinion in the Party. Ray stated that we have missed too many opportunities for positive engagement with our members and he sees it as a matter of urgency to improve the credibility and accountability of the Partnership in Power process. "We cannot win the next election without committed activists who feel they have a stake in the government and its manifesto."

GRASSROOTS ALLIANCE WINS FOUR NEC SEATS

CLGA candidates celebrated a four-seat victory in the recent NEC elections.

ELLIE REEVES	21407	ELECTED
ANN BLACK (CLGA)	20203	ELECTED
CHRISTINE SHAWCROFT (CLGA)	19988	ELECTED
PETER WILLSMAN (CLGA)	17131	ELECTED
PETER KENYON (CLGA)	16464	ELECTED
PETER WHEELER	16395	ELECTED
MOHAMMED AZAM (CLGA)	12895	

Ballot papers distributed 158868, ballot papers returned 31480, turnout 19.82%

Contemporary Motions remitted at Annual Conference 2007

Important motions from the major unions and from several CLPs (on the future of Remploy, on supporting the manufacturing industry and on extending employment rights) were remitted by Annual Conference to the Prosperity and Work Policy Commission. It was reported to the June NEC that the Unions and all the CLPs have been invited to the Policy Commission to discuss progress on their Contemporary Motions, and that

(continued from p5)

limits; by Brown's golden rule forbidding deficit spending over the business cycle; by further financial de-regulation that established an independent central bank; by setting a low inflationary target of two per cent and, indeed, by Brown's very mantra of stability, prudence and 'the end to boom and bust' that fostered an irrational faith in the free market.

Naturally, this ruined our manufacturing and high tech export potential that could have yielded higher growth and productivity; the latter remained very low. A resulting trade deficit of five or six per cent was offset by sales of financial and business services, inward investment and huge speculative capital flows.

New Labour's policies of privatisation also contributed to the blow up of property and finance; the refusal to build and improve more council housing; the reliance on costly private finance to fund public construction,

and the low wages, pensions and benefits and insecure jobs that left the average family without savings and indebted up to their ears. New Labour in this way handed the banks new fields of profitability.

The crunch began three years ago with the downturn of the inflated US property market and losses suffered by holders of hidden sub-prime mortgages that had been marketed to poor people at usurious rates. Since these holders included the largest world banks, the collapse of the sub-primes created a general fear of lending that affected the ability to borrow of other banks, homeowners, and even public authorities. The borrowing needed by businesses, consumers and homebuyers dried up, which further depressed house prices and consumption. The credit crunch thus led to the recession that has spread from the US to Britain and Western Europe.

What we are witnessing is the collapse of a financialised casino capitalism, based

on phantom rather than real values, that was aided by neo-liberal policies of deregulation and privatisation. This took its most advanced form in the US and Britain. Britain, in the opinion of experts in the US, OECD and G8, is the most exposed to the crisis, even more vulnerable than the US because of its greater dependence on finance and property. New Labour is not responsible for the capitalist crisis, but it has left us with probably the most serious one.

Immediate relief must be given by securing higher wages for the low-paid, a tax stimulus for low and medium earners and by lowering interest rates for homeowners, consumers and businesses. But the real solution may lie in much more radical restructuring: by the nationalisation of banking and credit and the provision of long-term investment in manufacturing, public housing and infrastructure; the kind of solutions that recall Labour's founding clause four.

several robust meetings have taken place.

Separate reports on the discussions on each of these Contemporary Motions will be tabled at Conference in Manchester in September and these reports will be individually voted upon.

NEC Resolutions from Ann Black and Walter Wolfgang

A procedural manoeuvre was employed to prevent any discussion at the NEC on these two motions. The one from Ann Black and Peter Willsman, on tax and benefit policy

and listening to members, was referred to the Joint Policy Committee. The one from Walter Wolfgang and Peter Willsman, calling for a fundamental policy shift, was referred to the “relevant Policy Commissions”. (*See below for the text of these motions.*)

Anti Trade Union judgements in the European Court of Justice

At the July NEC Peter Willsman questioned Gary Titley, the Leader of the EPLP, about the recent European Court of Justice judge-

ments in the Viking, Laval and Ruffert cases. These decisions gave a higher priority to the freedom of circulation of capital and labour across the European market than to the rights of trade unions to take industrial action or conclude collective agreements. These rulings highlight the fact that existing laws are inadequate. In his reply, Gary reported that the French are likely to be helpful on this issue during their Presidency, and that the Lisbon Treaty is also of help. It commits the EU to “a social market economy, aiming at full employment and social progress”.

GRASSROOTS ALLIANCE PRESSES FOR PARTY DEMOCRACY AND MAJOR POLICY SHIFT

The CLP reps on the NEC, supported by the Centre-Left Grassroots Alliance, tabled the following resolutions at the June NEC:

1. This NEC:

- (a) celebrates the Labour government’s achievements in lifting so many children and pensioners out of poverty;
- (b) endorses the statement in the Prosperity and Work policy document, published in May 2008, that “Labour’s tax and benefit package is designed so that the biggest gains go to the poorest 30% of people in our society” as reflecting Labour values in action;
- (c) regrets that the abolition of the 10% tax band, announced in the 2007 budget and confirmed in the 2008 budget, undermined this principle by reducing the net income of several million low-paid citizens, notably part-time casual workers, the young, the single childless, and early-retiring pensioners, in order to finance tax cuts for the higher-paid as well as targeted rises for older pensioners and families with children. This alienated Labour’s activists and core voters, both those directly affected and those who think it is morally wrong;
- (d) welcomes the changes in income tax thresholds announced by the chancellor on 13 May 2008 which partially remedied the losses arising from the end of the 10%

- tax band and gave additional help to all basic rate tax payers in coping with rising fuel and food prices, but
- (e) regrets that this still leaves around one million of the lowest-paid losers worse off and feeling let down by a government which they believed would protect them, and therefore calls for further measures which fully compensate all those who have lost out, including backdating to 1 April 2008;
- (f) asks in addition for discussions within the party starting now on whether next year’s budget will maintain the changed allowances or create new groups of losers by withdrawing them

2. This NEC also:

- (a) notes that while cabinet members say they were unaware of the impact of abolition of the 10% tax band until recently, ordinary members have been raising the issues for the past year. In particular Bethnal Green & Bow, Poplar & Limehouse and Rochester & Strood CLPs submitted resolutions to last year’s conference, but these were dismissed as “not contemporary” by the conference arrangements committee, and therefore not seen, officially, by any other body or party unit;
- (b) expresses concern that Partnership in Power is still failing to provide effective channels through which members’ views can be shared with each other and with government;
- (c) believes this would be partly

- remedied by publication of all resolutions submitted to conference, as was the case until 1997, whether or not the conference arrangements committee accepted them as valid contemporary issues, and of all submissions to policy commissions, so that members would feel less isolated and ministers would be more aware of early warnings from the grassroots;
- (d) asks the joint policy committee to consider urgently these ways of enhancing communication among all party members, and not just between individual party units and the centre.

(motion written and proposed by Ann Black and seconded by Peter Willsman)

In order to reconnect with our core-voters and forge a new progressive coalition, this National Executive Committee will from now on insist on a fundamental policy shift towards equality, fairness and social justice, involving a massive housing drive empowering local councils to build homes let at affordable rents, promoting Trade Union rights, investing in and expanding public services, ending privatisation, withdrawing troops from Iraq and Afghanistan and rejecting the proposal to renew Trident.

(motion written and tabled by Walter Wolfgang and seconded by Peter Willsman)

DISPROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION

Brian Donohoe, MP for Central Ayrshire, analyses the disastrous consequences of PR Scotland

Many years back, when I first heard about Proportional Representation, I thought it wasn't a bad idea in principle. But as I've seen it in action, particularly in Scotland, I've become very concerned. The main issue for me is that there are so many types of Proportional Representation (PR), and depending upon which type you choose,

DENNIS SKINNER SUMS UP

They tell me PR is back on the agenda again. The last time it became a live issue on the Labour Party agenda was prior to 1997. Then, the advocates of PR said it was impossible for Labour ever to win power again on 'first past the post'. They blamed the 18 years of Tory rule on the voting system.

Of course, 1997 changed all that and here we are 11 years later with a 3rd term Labour Government with majorities that should not have been marred by the Iraq War vote (only achieved by the 'sloppy embrace' with the Tories).

Now, the PR knives are out again and we are told that we cannot beat the Tories without help from 3rd parties.

Not only is the idea a bad one, but also we can see the results of PR in Wales and Scotland where the 'cockeyed' system of voting gave us a coalition in Wales and Scots Nats in power in Scotland, even though Labour won most seats on first past the post!

Finally, what a farce in the House of Commons on foxhunting when the PR Lib Dems divided 26 in favour and 26 against! They cancelled one another out and they call PR a 'fair' voting system!

you can affect how the voters are represented. And that means that PR is potentially open to abuse.

Voting in Scotland, as in the rest of the UK, always used to be on the 'first past the post' principle, where the candidate with the highest vote was the winner. Voters knew exactly who they were voting for and the voting system was simple and completely transparent. Nowadays, however, PR is being used increasingly in Scotland: for European Parliamentary elections, Scottish Parliamentary elections and Local Government elections. Amazingly, all of them use different systems, and that's just the start of the problems.

In the European elections, for example, you don't vote for a candidate but for a party, and voters have no influence at all on exactly who represents them. In the Scottish Parliamentary elections, there's a mixture of 'first past the post' and another form of PR, called the 'Additional Member System' (AMS). 56 MSPs are directly elected, but another 73 – that is, the majority of members – are elected from a list, according to a mechanism called the "d'Hondt formula". Once again, the exact outcome is out of the voters' hands. For Local Government elections, Scotland uses what many regard as the classic system of PR, called the "Single Transferable Vote" (STV), where you select an order of preference of candidates, instead of putting just one cross on the ballot paper. The final result under the STV system is calculated using another type of mathematical formula, so once again it's effectively impossible to know who you are voting for. And over the years, many different formulae have been developed as previous versions have fallen out of favour.

Apart from, in my view, being unfair, these different systems of PR are extremely confusing. Indeed, a recent report for the Electoral Commission concluded

that most voters in Scotland are at best ill-informed and at worst confused about the Single Transferable Vote and the Additional Member System. One must ask: how fair is a voting system that leaves so many people confused? And why have so many PR systems been developed over the years? The answer can surely only be that either PR doesn't work, or that whoever is making the rules wants to refine the system in order to achieve the result they want: perhaps it should be called the 'Mugabe formula'!

I don't know about you, but I'm in favour of an entirely transparent voting system, where we know who we are voting for, and where there can only be one interpretation of the result.

Quite apart from the complex mathematics and the danger of PR being open to manipulation, there are other major considerations for Scotland. For example, the use of PR in the Scottish Parliamentary elections – for the reasons I've outlined above – has actually resulted in a dilution of the political challenge to Westminster: Is that really what the voters of Scotland want? Furthermore, the increasing use of PR has resulted in an erosion of the importance of the party on the ballot paper. Instead one is forced into choosing a list of individuals. As a member of the Labour Party, I am worried that this will defocus political debate.

My final point is this: although under the traditional 'first past the post' system, I can be elected to Westminster with less than half the vote, those who voted for other candidates are by no means left out in the cold. They may not have voted for me, but I still represent them. In fact I rarely call myself the 'Labour Member for Central Ayrshire', but simply the 'Member'. I represent my entire constituency and I want to hear from anybody who needs my help.

So my prescription for change is to return to the traditional method of voting, and to concentrate our efforts on persuading more people to go to the ballot boxes. If we are really to achieve fair representation, we need to persuade all those non-voters of the importance of their historical right to choose their elected representative.

New Labour and the Hand of History

'Ministers remain deeply reluctant to distance the Government from the failures of the Blair administration. But until they do they will fight the opposition with one hand tied behind their backs.'

Roy Hattersley, *Guardian*,
20 December 2007

The above reflects the personal opinions of Brian Donohoe MP. None of the above is implied as Labour Party policy, nor does the article represent the views of the First Past the Post All Party Group, of which Brian Donohoe is Joint Chairman.

THE ALL MEMBERS MEETING: CLPD MEMBER STEVE TYLER EXPERIENCES THE TASTE OF DEMOCRACY IN A NEW LABOUR CONSTITUENCY

I walked up to a rather dilapidated old Victorian house with a faded red door, above which a sign reads 'Constituency Labour Party'. I enter and a musty smell of damp and decay fills the air.

The room has a large table at one end and chairs are positioned around in a semi-circle. On one wall a large pin board has New Labour literature displayed, Centre Left material is absent, not considered suitable for reading. On the other wall a framed photo of a young Neil Kinnock hangs, the smile on his face hiding false promise of the future.

The Executive Committee members sit together at one end of the room, fresh from their pre-meeting discussion. Mostly retired civil servants, white, middle class, living in the best areas within the constituency, next door to nice Tory voting neighbours. All are New Labour/Neo Conservatives; like-minded, their combined voting power ensures that they, and they alone, have total control of the constituency.

A few other ordinary members turn up; most will, like nodding donkeys, go along with whatever the Executive decides. There will be no subversive left wing chat at this meeting.

Standing up, I ask what was discussed at the pre-meeting, and for that matter at the Executive Committee meeting the previous week (the dates of these meetings are kept secret).

A hushed silence fills the room. The Executive looks at each other in dismay that such a question should be asked.

The silence is suddenly broken by a member breaking wind rather loudly. Laughter all round. I sink back into my chair; the question is forgotten.

First item on the agenda is to find volunteers amongst the ordinary members to deliver the constituency newsletter. This particular document contains much detail

New Labour and the Hand of History

'The reason that we went into Iraq was to establish a permanent military base in the Gulf region.'

Jimmy Carter, former US President,
Guardian 9 June 2007.

New Labour and the Hand of History

'Income inequality is currently at its highest level since the late 1940's.'

Institute of Fiscal Studies,
Guardian, 21 January 2008.

about the threatened closure of a local fringe theatre, along with other matters of interest to those who live in detached houses with nicely manicured lawns. Local working class community issues are invisible to this New Labour constituency party.

A young man enters, a new member, the Executive pass judgement by murmuring to each other "not one of us", "what does he want?", "maybe he's one of those", "one of those what?", "you know a socialist", "if we ignore him he won't come back". The young man hides as best he can in the corner of the room.

Prior to the party's Conference, the constituency delegate, chosen from amongst the most loyal New Labour members, is briefed by the Executive to toe the party line at Conference and to clap loudly and often during the leader's speech. Whilst this charade is going on, I pass on to a fellow member some Centre Left literature. This is done most discreetly, like two naughty school boys exchanging dirty photos under the desks in class in order to avoid being seen by the teacher.

A guest speaker arrives, like some sort of evangelist preaching from the gospel. He has come to make a speech on "The Joy of New Labour". The Executive is held in rapture, I nod off.

Suddenly I wake with a start. For a moment I think I may have inadvertently wandered into the Conservative Association meeting up the road, but no it's only two elderly members deep in discussion about that "nice David Cameron", "maybe it would not be so bad if he became our next Prime Minister", one commented. "After all", the other replied, "Tory and New Labour policies are one and the same". How true, I thought, how very true. Time for tea and biscuits. I make my excuses and head out of the door towards the Railway Tavern for something stronger, to take away that bitter taste of 'The All Members Meeting'.

HOT GOSSIP (VINDALOO RATING)

'Saturday September 28. Woke up to one of those rare and totally gob-smacking revelations that newspapers very occasionally produce, namely that John Major had a four year affair with Edwina Currie [former Conservative MP]. It was one of those 'cor, fuck me' jaw-dropping moments. How on earth did he get away with it?'

Alastair Campbell, *The Blair Years*. p.641

RED ALERT: DON'T FORGET TO READ THE WILLSMAN GUIDE TO CONFERENCE 2008 EDITION

The indispensable handbook for all delegates and anyone else who wants to understand what is really going on at Conference (available free of charge from 10 Park Drive, London, NW11 7SH or download from clpd.org.uk).

New Labour and the Hand of History

'Gordon Brown needs to win back the 12% lead he had when hopes of change followed the change of leadership. It won't be done by flying a union flag over every privatised school and hospital.'

Tribune editorial, 28 March 2008.

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New Labour and the Hand of History

'The English education system is sliding back into Victorian times, with today's schools almost as segregated by social class as they were in the 19th century.'

Extract from a new book,
The Education Debate,
Guardian 29 January 2008.

ABOUT CLPD AND ITS GAINS FOR PARTY DEMOCRACY

CLPD was formed in 1973 by a group of rank-and-file activists with support from about ten Labour MPs. The first President was Frank Allaun. The main motivation for the Campaign was the record of the Labour governments in the sixties and the way that Annual Conference decisions were continually ignored on key domestic and international issues. The immediate cause was Harold Wilson's outright rejection in 1973 of the proposal to take into public ownership some 25 of the largest manufacturing companies, covering the major sectors of the economy.

CLPD's first demand was, therefore, for mandatory reselection of MPs so that they would be under pressure to carry out Conference policies and be accountable to Party members. This demand was achieved in 1979/80 through the overwhelming support of CLPs and several major unions, especially those unions where the demand for reselection was won at their own annual conferences (eg. TGWU, AUEW, NUPE).

CLPD also sought to make the leader accountable through election by an elec-

toral college involving MPs, CLPs and TUs. Previously Labour leaders were elected by MPs alone. This demand was achieved in January 1981 and was a great victory and advance for Party democracy, although some MPs saw it as a reason to defect and form the SDP, now defunct.

CLPD additionally promoted a range of reforms to give Labour women and black members greater representation within the Party. The main demand for a woman on every parliamentary shortlist was achieved over the period 1986-88.

CLPD will sometimes promote seemingly non-democracy issues such as the significant extension of public ownership, defending the welfare state and the first-past-the-post electoral system (PR equals no Labour Government). All such policies derive from our commitment to egalitarian values and socialist advance.

The major focus of CLPD's work in recent years has been to win back the power for ordinary rank-and-file party members which has been surreptitiously transferred to the centre under the pretext of 'modernisation'.*

*To find out more about CLPD, visit our website at www.clpd.org.uk. CLPD can usually provide speakers for meetings, especially if requests are made well in advance. To arrange this, ring Francis Prideaux on 0208 9607460 and leave a message for him if you get the machine and not the man himself.

New Labour and the Hand of History

'Research conducted by academics on behalf of the education charity The Sutton Trust, reveals that poorer students are being put off applying to university for fear of getting into debt.'
Guardian, 23 January 2008.

Annual Conference Highlights

SATURDAY 20 SEPTEMBER
10.30am, Jury's Inn Hotel

CLPD Rally and Delegates' Briefing

with Mohammed Azam, Tony Benn, Ann Black (NEC), Tony Dubbins (Chair of TULO), Kelvin Hopkins MP, Peter Kenyon (NEC), Christine Shawcroft (NEC), Gavin Strang MP, Peter Willsman (NEC) (Special briefing for delegates), Walter Wolfgang (NEC).
Entry £2 (Conc: 50p).

SATURDAY 20 SEPTEMBER
12.45pm, Jury's Inn Hotel

Grassroots Umbrella Network Reception and Briefing for Delegates

Food and drink available. Here delegates can meet each other, meet members of the NEC, TU General Secretaries and MPs. Free for delegates (£5.00 others).

TUESDAY 23 SEPTEMBER
6.00pm, Relish Bar, Deansgate

Conference Assessment and the Way Forward for Labour

Chair Peter Willsman (NEC), Speakers Mohammed Azam, Ann Black (NEC), Katy Clark MP, Kelvin Hopkins MP, Jim Kennedy (NEC-UCATT), Peter Kenyon (NEC), Christine Shawcroft (NEC), Walter Wolfgang (NEC).
Entry £1.00 (Conc: 50p).

JOIN CLPD

To join the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy please fill in the form below and return with a cheque payable to CLPD to: CLPD Secretary, 10 Park Drive, London NW11 7SH.

I/we enclose £..... subscriptions/renewal/donation

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Annual rates: £20 individuals; £5 unwaged and low waged (under £8,000); £25 couples (£6 unwaged and low waged); £25 national & regional organisations; £15 CLPs, TUs and Co-op Parties; £5 CLP branches.