

CAMPAIGN BRIEFING

CLPD publication for CLPs and Labour Party Members

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THE WAY TO WIN

TONY BENN

Our job as we approach the elections is to develop policies that are most likely to secure a fourth term for the government when the economic prospects are so uncertain and public support has been drifting away, as was proved by the European and local government elections this year. We all welcome the decision to launch a modest council house-building programme, drop part-privatisation of the Post Office and be ready to intervene much more directly in the market.

For the first time in my life I believe that public opinion is to the left of a Labour government and that people are looking to see their needs and aspirations reflected more directly in government policy which increasingly appears to be based on a claim to manage us better rather than represent us better.

If the policies to be announced in the next few months were to take account of this, it would not only make the prospects of an election victory brighter but would also help the government decide which priorities to adopt and bring back to active Labour politics those who have left it out of disappointment.

First, we must end our involvement in the Afghan war, which is both unwinnable and immoral in that it involved a clear breach of our commitment to the UN Charter. It depends for its continuation on massive American reinforcements which we cannot match. Ending our involvement would enable us to secure cuts in public expenditure without eroding public welfare.

Second, we should take the conscious decision to cancel the Trident replacement programme which will cost billions of pounds and is contrary to common sense. If the Americans, with more nuclear weapons than the rest of the world put together, cannot defeat the Taliban after eight years of



Photo: Iain Job

“If the movement were to campaign for these policies now and the government were to see their public appeal, Labour would have a very good chance of winning again.”

war, what use are they to us? We cannot use them, we do not need them, we cannot afford them, and we do not actually have them in any independent sense since they depend on American technology, which binds us closer to Washington.

It is now clear that the army does not want them, because the money goes to Trident submarines cruising the world's oceans with these unusable weapons, whereas British troops need body armour, helicopters and armoured vehicles in any future conflict in which they may be engaged.

Then we could cut ID cards, stop the creeping privatisation of the NHS, restore the powers that local authorities need to serve their communities, restore trade union

rights, safeguard civil liberties and bring pensions into line with earnings at a time when company pensions are shrinking.

Policies like these would have a dramatic impact on our popular appeal, restore morale in the Party and above all be relevant to our needs in a way that would put the Conservatives on the defensive.

If the movement were to campaign for these policies now and the government were to see their public appeal, Labour would have a very good chance of winning again.

Content Highlights 2009

- **Tony Benn:** The Way to Win
- Annual Conference Alert
- **Keith Ewing:** Arguments for a Charter of Members' Rights
- **Gaye Johnson:** The Case for a Code of Ethics
- **Jim Mortimer:** Key Lessons from Lindsey
- **David Gardner:** New Local Government Leadership Models: A Recipe for Autocracy
- **Mohammed Azam:** Kashmir — a Burning but Forgotten issue?
- **Peter Willsman:** PV and AV are the Problems not the Solutions (model resolution in support of FPTP) plus NEC latest
- **Ray Davison:** LRC Loses Way in PR Fictions
- Restore Conference Voting
- Tel's Tales — plus
- Bitebacks — Snappy Shots from a Political Sniper

PLEASE PASS THIS NEWSLETTER ON TO OTHER COMRADES TO ENSURE A WIDE CIRCULATION.

WHY WE WANT AND NEED A CHARTER OF MEMBERS' RIGHTS

PROFESSOR KEITH EWING

Earlier in the summer the Foreign Secretary jumped on board what had been a Tory bandwagon, arguing for 'open primaries' in parliamentary candidate selection as a response to the disintegration of political party membership and activity. This was a very ill-considered initiative, which will serve only to weaken still further the voice of the members in the affairs of the Labour Party, and reinforce the trends of which Mr Miliband despairs.

The dramatic and devastating loss in party membership has taken place over a period of little more than a decade. Its reasons are clear and well understood. The Labour Party has become a leadership party rather than a membership party, whose function seems to be to sustain the incumbent leader in office, whether Tweedledum or Tweedledee. No wonder people have voted with their feet, as the lively Party they once served has been sacrificed on the altar of personal ambition.

The only way to win people back is to offer them *a promise of a right to membership of a truly democratic party underpinned by strong ethical values* — a truly democratic party in which the membership and not the leadership makes the decisions, in which Conference is a forum for debate rather than controlled deference, and in which disagreement is welcomed as a sign of a healthy body politic, rather than a sinister

“If the Party had been governed by the wisdom of its members, many of the disastrous decisions of the last 12 years would have been avoided, from Iraq, to cash for honours, to ID cards”

threat to the party leadership.

It is for this reason that the **Charter of Members' Rights** is so crucial — an unequivocal commitment of the Party to its members. A guaranteed commitment to have a voice in every decision — in policy through open procedures rather than the nonsense that is the NPF; in candidate selection with no one foisted on a constituency by No 10; and on the right to decide who will be nominated to represent the Party (and its members!) in the House of Lords.

Apparently, there is no need for such a Charter, because all of these proposed measures are already provided for in the Party constitution. Well, I've read my copy of the Party constitution and I've read the copy on the website, and I can't find mention of any of this. The truth is that our programme is determined by the leader-

ship, not the membership, just as many of our representatives are selected by the leadership, not the membership.

We have no say. If the Party had been governed by the wisdom of its members, many of the disastrous decisions of the last 12 years would have been avoided, from Iraq, to cash for honours, to ID cards. In these circumstances, what is the incentive for anyone to join us? Who is prepared to be a paid up pom-pom carrier for the leaders' cheerleaders? Who is prepared to be door-step fodder for candidates they will be no longer entitled to choose?

So well done Mr Miliband, for failing so conspicuously to understand the reasons for people's disenchantment. It remains, however, your responsibility, along with that of others who occupy senior positions within the Party to provide people with reasons for re-joining. These responsibilities will not be discharged by the further erosion of the mythical rights of Labour Party members, nor by initiatives that coincidentally will devalue what is left of the now badly tarnished Labour brand.

(Keith Ewing was a member of the Independent Commission on Accountability, Party and Parliamentary Democracy which reported in 2007, with recommendations for a Charter of Members' Rights, a Code of Party Ethics, and a Labour Party Ombudsman to deal with complaints and grievances by Party members).

BITEBACKS

'The great inter-war slumps were... the sure and certain result of the concentration of too much economic power in the hands of too few men.' (*Let Us Face The Future*, 1945 Labour Manifesto).

'House building is at its lowest since 1953; unemployment rose faster in the first quarter of this year than at any time since modern records began in 1971; real incomes have barely grown for all but the rich since 2003, and for the poorest 20% have fallen since the last election.'

(Larry Elliot, Economics Editor, *Guardian*, 25/5/09).

THE CASE FOR AN ETHICAL LABOUR PARTY

GAYE JOHNSTON, CHAIR CLPD

The Labour Party's ethical standing is currently at a low ebb. As all of us who canvassed, in 2009, are painfully aware we are currently distrusted and disliked by the majority of electors. This is largely attributable to the Parliamentary expenses scandal — although the financial crisis is a factor. We also continue to haemorrhage grass-roots members — many of them disgusted by official nods and winks given to breaches of Party rules and denials of equal opportunities. Examples include: attempted ballot rigging in the recent Erith and Thamesmead Parliamentary selection and the continuous breach, since 1996, of the rule requiring the annual circulation of leadership

nomination papers.

Our Party urgently needs a code of ethics. This would operate in tandem with the Charter of Member's Rights also proposed in this newsletter. Fortunately South Ribble Constituency Labour Party has supported a rule change to introduce such a code and this will be debated and a decision taken at Conference 2009 (cf. p.5).

The code would be drawn up by the NEC following widespread consultation across the Party. It would set down principles of behaviour that would provide an ethical framework for the operation of the Party at all levels. The code should set standards of integrity, tolerance and transparency

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KEY LESSONS FROM THE LINDSEY REFINERY DISPUTE

JIM MORTIMER

The settlement secured in the recent dispute at the Lindsey refinery, involving members of UNITE and the General, Municipal and Boilermakers' Union, has important lessons for the whole labour movement. It demonstrated that workers' solidarity can overcome the most formidable obstacles.

The dispute centred on the sacking of more than 60 workers by a construction sub-contractor. At the same time another sub-contractor was hiring labour. Many of the workers who were being sacked had been prominent in an earlier dispute. The union members felt that these sackings were in breach of an undertaking given in the settlement of the earlier dispute.

At the outset of the dispute the employers took an adamant position. Hundreds of workers withdrew their labour in protest. The employers dismissed them and said they could re-apply for their jobs, with the clear implication that there was not to be a negotiated settlement. The dispute was to be settled on the employers' terms.

The key factor that changed the situation was the solidarity displayed by thousands of workers not only at the Lindsey refinery but at refineries and depots in many parts of Britain. They withdrew their labour in support of the workers at the Lindsey refinery.

The employers agreed to negotiate with union representatives. A settlement was reached with a recommendation for a return to work, the restoration of employment to

the sacked workers and no victimisation to anyone involved in the dispute.

The settlement was secured despite what appeared to be substantial obstacles:

■ First, was the distinction between Total and its construction sub-contractors. It was a situation where it might seem that direct responsibility could be avoided. Negotiations in such circumstances can be difficult.

■ Second, there was both a British and a French interest among the employers. European law, as interpreted in European court decisions in recent months, has helped employers to escape responsibility for observing existing collective agreements and standards in host countries.

■ Third, British labour law, inherited from the Thatcher era but not repealed by New Labour, requires a ballot vote before lawful strike action. This is a powerful advantage to an employer intent on changing conditions without negotiation/or other unilateral action.

■ Fourth, British labour law, also inherited from the Thatcher era but not repealed by New Labour, makes sympathetic solidarity action by other workers extremely difficult.

It is a fact of British labour law that the restrictions on workers and their unions involved in industrial disputes are much more onerous than they were over 100 years ago after the passing of the Trade Disputes Act

“It is a fact of British labour law that the restrictions on workers and their unions involved in industrial disputes are much more onerous than they were over 100 years ago”

1906. It is surely time for change.

The workers who demonstrated their solidarity — and the trade union representatives, both lay members and full-time officials who voiced the wishes of the members — pointed the way forward. Solidarity was the key to success. Trade unionism is vital for the protection of workers' interests.

(Jim Mortimer — former General Secretary of the Labour Party and Chair of ACAS 1974–81)

BITEBACKS

‘The need for a review of the Posted Workers Directive is now in the common manifesto agreed by socialist parties, including Labour, for this June's European elections. At national level, an obvious solution is to give collective agreements legal recognition in British law (as many other EU countries do with regard to their own laws).’

(Richard Corbett, Labour MEP, *Tribune* 6/2/09).

‘By denying the existence of class conflict, politicians usually end up fighting on behalf of the prosperous, the articulate and the self-confident.’

(Roy Hattersley, *Guardian*, 24/1/09).

‘In my thirty 30 years of tackling institutional discrimination and exclusion, I have discovered that only the combination of unequivocal political will, leadership commitment and confrontation of all inequalities and unfair treatment brings about genuine lasting change.’

(Herman Ouseley, former Chair, 1993–2000 of the Commission for Racial Equality, *Guardian*, 24/2/09).

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for all the Party's actions. The Code would require that all units of the Party, its officers, staff and elected representatives abide by it. To ensure this there would ideally be an independent Party Ombudsperson appointed to investigate alleged breaches of the code and recommend remedial action. The code could be based on the Nolan Principles for Standards in Public Life. These include “selflessness” namely not using public office to obtain

personal or family benefits — particularly relevant following the expenses debacle. They also include “integrity” which means among other things conforming to Party rules, “objectivity” meaning giving equal opportunities to office and job seekers, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership by example in promoting these ethical principles.

Please support this constitutional change, which will work wonders to sanitise our Party's methods of operation and enhance its credibility with members and electors.

SUPPORT THE RULE CHANGES FROM HENDON AND HYNDBURN AND FROM SOUTH RIBBLE CLPS (cf. p.5) WHICH WILL CREATE, IF PASSED, THE CHARTER AND THE CODE OF ETHICS.

PR AND AV ARE PROBLEMS NOT SOLUTIONS

**PETER WILLSMAN,
SECRETARY OF THE
CAMPAIGN FOR LABOUR
PARTY DEMOCRACY AND
MEMBER OF LABOUR'S NEC**

The public's disgust at the goings-on at Westminster is being exploited by the supporters of proportional representation (PR). They are trying to suggest that the electoral system is somehow to blame and they put forward PR as a panacea to solve the problems. New Labour is in a panic, and in their desperation to find something to take the heat off, many of its supporters are also opportunistically talking up the attractions of "electoral reform". All this ignores the convincing reasons why our party has supported first-past-the-post (FPTP) for all these years. It is because FPTP produces majority Labour governments. Peo-

ple join Labour because they believe majority Labour governments offer the best hope for a progressive future. In stark contrast PR means coalition governments and little or no chance of majority Labour governments.

Of course, none of this bothers the extreme Blairites. They have always supported PR precisely because they believe it would lead to the break up of the Labour Party, the destruction of the union link and the advent of US-style political parties, with state funding of parties, primaries for selecting candidates, and the dominance of moneyed elites.

Socialists apply a 'form' and 'content' analysis to political institutions. PR is a classic subject for such an analysis. PR is formally quite democratic, but in reality it is the very opposite. In reality party apparatchiks decide who is on the PR lists and therefore MPs are totally under central control. Backroom

stitch-ups between party leaders decide the arrangements for the coalition governments. FPTP almost always produces governments which the largest number of people voted for. PR produces coalition governments, in other words governments which no one voted for. And under PR minority parties often have greatly exaggerated influence within coalitions.

If, for the sake of argument, the voting shares obtained by parties at the recent Euro elections were applied to the House of Commons and, if a fully proportional electoral system applied, then UKIP would have 107 MPs and the BNP would have 40 MPs.

The Brownite wing of New Labour are aware of the threat that PR poses to Labour and to majority Labour governments and, instead, some of them are putting the case for the alternative vote (AV) to appease the chatterati. Under AV single member constituencies are retained. Each elector is allowed, but not required, to list all candidates in order of preference. Preferences are then redistributed until a candidate emerges who has 50% plus one of the vote.

The following points can be made about AV:

- It is possible for a more weakly preferred candidate to end up winning. AV would quite often produce Lib-Dem victories in constituencies that are either primarily Labour or primarily Tory.

cont. on p8

WINNING LABOUR GOVERNMENTS

MODEL RESOLUTION AGAINST PR AND CHANGING THE CURRENT FPTP ELECTORAL SYSTEM

This ... notes that the widespread public disapproval of many MPs' indefensible behaviour has been followed by calls for unspecified "change" in the electoral system for the House of Commons.

Such calls serve to distract attention from both the behaviour of the individuals concerned and also the unacceptable accounting practices under which they have been operating. These serious problems need to be addressed. They should not, however, be misleadingly linked to our current electoral system.

Proponents of "change" remain significantly reluctant to clarify or agree which alternative system they favour. The truth is that all the main alternatives to First Past The Post have serious democratic defects.

Pure Proportional Representation, for example, would almost certainly lead to a series of coalition governments, greatly enhancing the chance that the balance of power in Britain, as in Israel, would be controlled by minority and/or racist parties.

The *Alternative Vote* system, on the other hand, would not necessarily increase proportionality at all. It would, however, regularly and unfairly allow the positive

first preferences of many voters to be overturned by the second and lower preferences of other voters, whether liberal or racist.

Finally, the *Alternative Vote Plus* system recommended by Lord Roy Jenkins would divide MPs into 2 separate classes: a reduced number of constituency MPs representing larger areas with new boundaries, and a substantial number of "list" MPs with no constituency at all and very dubious accountability.

What these systems have in common is that they would increase the prospects of coalition governments, for which nobody had voted, formed on the basis of unpredictable post-election haggling without any reference to the electorate.

The prospects of winning majority Labour governments would be seriously reduced by the introduction of any of the above systems.

This ... therefore resolves not to be diverted from dealing with one set of political problems by pursuing the irrelevant "solution" of electoral reform for the House of Commons.

We therefore reaffirm our Party's policy in favour of the First Past The Post voting system for House of Commons elections.

(This resolution should go to Gordon Brown, Jack Straw and your Regional NPF Reps (via Regional Office if necessary)).

BITEBACKS

'I'm looking forward to co-operating with the President-elect in building a new global society in which the advancement of people — their homes, jobs, savings and pensions — is always put first. ... We have a choice about whether the global interdependence of this new economic era is a force for justice or the driver of even greater social inequality.'
(Gordon Brown, *Observer*, 19/11/08).

'If you totally screw up a bank, a Labour minister will grant you a pension of £700,000 for life. If you screw up a social services department, a Labour minister will sack you without compensation. It has taken a decade for the government to mimic Animal Farm.'
(Simon Jenkins, *Guardian*, 11/309).

NEW LOCAL GOVERNMENT LEADERSHIP MODELS — A RECIPE FOR AUTOCRACY?

DAVID GARDNER

Local government is busy coming to terms with the implications of the 2007 Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act. The new law contains many positive dimensions, which will extend community powers and enhance democracy at local level, but in one key area it has missed an opportunity.

The 2000 Local Government Act placed a straitjacket of three models for local councils' Executive arrangements — directly elected Mayor, indirectly elected Leader and cabinet or Mayor and council manager. Readers will be aware of the controversies surrounding elected Mayors triggered by a referendum. Evidence is mixed — some, including the three Labour London Mayors, have worked fairly well; outside London, however, they have had a more chequered history for Labour and in terms of local leadership. Even so, they have raised the profile of local leadership and twice as many people recognise the name of their elected Mayor than of the Leaders elsewhere.

The third model of mayor with council manager was only tried in Stoke, the one authority where local people voted to abandon an elected Mayor. In removing this option, the new Act is probably quite sensible. The dangers of such concentration of power are obvious. In asking for a further consultation between a Leader and

Cabinet and a Mayor and Cabinet, the Act can be questioned insofar as not allowing greater flexibility but must be commended in promoting full public consultation — the test will be how many councils are genuine in their approach to the consultation.

“Labour has lost huge ground in local government over the last 7 years and we need active Labour councillors in all councils... This means having invigorating Labour local leadership working with active and motivated local Parties”

It could be argued that these provisions are rather cosmetic; the most salient change is that of crowning the indirectly elected Leader for a four-year term. Subject currently to annual election at the council Annual Meeting every May, henceforth, s/he will be elected once for a 4-year period; the argument being that this will provide stability in leadership equivalent to the Mayoral term.

However, it will leave a major democratic deficit both within the council, as all executive powers are vested in the leader and the cabinet s/he appoints, and within political Parties where councillors in the leading or control-

ling political group will only get to vote for their nominee once every four years in the rushed few days following the election.

While there is indeed a provision for removal by resolution of the council, in reality this will be very hard, especially where there is majority control. At least with elected Mayors, Party members all have a vote for the Party nominee. With leaders, only the council group, who may be subject to patronage and threats, have a vote. And with the huge allowances now provided to many Executive councillors almost inevitably at the beck and call of the leader, and with far too many councillors financially dependent on these allowances, and as the election is directly after the council elections, it will always tend to favour the existing Leader.

Leaders may also become more distant both from their fellow councillors and from the wider Party if they do not need to renew their mandate. However effective the council's scrutiny function or active and engaged the Local Government Committee, holding such leaders to account without the ultimate ability to replace them at the next Annual meeting will be very difficult.

The legislation is now enacted, so within the Labour Party we need to look to ensure Party rules either provide that Labour leaders do submit themselves at least to re-election at the group Annual Meeting

cont. on p10

KASHMIR — A BURNING BUT FORGOTTEN ISSUE?

In 1947 the Indian sub-continent was granted independence by the British, creating India and Pakistan, leaving the issue of Kashmir unresolved.

In the coming six decades, the Kashmiri people were to face the most horrific torture and misery at the hands of the Indian forces.

The United Nations Security Council, created to ensure that weak and suppressed people would be “given a voice”, first debated the Kashmir issue in 1948, at the request of India, and agreed that the peoples of Kashmir should be given a plebiscite to decide their own future. There have been 18

resolutions adopted since to this affect by the UNSC.

India and Pakistan have since been to war on three occasions causing thousands of unnecessary deaths. Around one million British Kashmiris living in Britain have supported the Labour party for decades and have been campaigning for the right of self-determination for the people of Kashmir.

In 1995 at the Labour Party Conference in Brighton, the NEC issued a statement in support of Kashmir and pledged to do whatever it could to ensure the Kashmiri

cont. on p8

BITEBACKS

‘Extending Party Democracy for Gordon Brown means AMNOV — all members no votes.’
(Ray Davison, 2009).

‘We never used to accept that our foreign policy ever had any effect on terrorism. Well, that was clearly bollocks.’
(Robert Booth, *Guardian*, 28/1/09).

‘The US was concerned about energy security and supply when it went to war... casting its eye around the world — there was Iraq.’
(Sir David King, former chief scientific adviser, *Guardian*, 13/2/09).

ANNUAL CONFERENCE A

KEY RULE CHANGE PROPOSALS ON THE AGENDA AT THE 2009 ANNUAL CONFERENCE IN BRIGHTON

Delegates at this year's Conference at Brighton will have an opportunity to vote on several vital rule change proposals that will be moved by constituency reps. These were submitted last year, but under an obscure convention (known as the '1968 Ruling') they are first referred to the NEC for its considered opinion and are not timetabled for debate and vote until the following year's Conference. This may seem a sensible procedure, but in practice it has not lived up to the intentions of its originators in 1968. The NEC was supposed to give thorough consideration to all proposed rule changes, but in fact the NEC hardly looks at them and every year invariably rejects all rule change suggestions from CLPs.

The CLP rule changes to be debated this year are:

■ OMOV for NPF

From Bedford, Bristol East, Castle Point, City of Durham, Greenwich and Woolwich, Haltenprice and Howden, Hereford and South Herefordshire, Hertford and Stortford, Islington North, Mid Bedfordshire and Nottingham South.

This rule change proposal concerns the election of the 55 CLP reps on the National Policy Forum (NPF). At present all these reps are elected at Annual Conference by Conference delegates from their respective regions. Bedford et al are proposing that instead the election

should involve every party member and be by one-member-one-vote on a regional basis. Most party members have no idea who their existing NPF reps are and, indeed, only have the haziest idea of the work of the NPF.

All this would change if every member had a vote. The NPF has taken over all of the NEC's powers in relation to policy formulation and it is therefore a key party body. It is vital that every party member should have a direct link to the NPF. Under the Bedford et al proposals the NPF would have a much higher profile. This would generate much greater interest in the NPF and a wider range of members would put their names forward for election. The NPF would therefore become more representative of the whole party membership and its decisions would accordingly carry more weight.

The Scottish Policy Forum already elects its CLP reps by one-member-one-vote.

■ From Hendon CLP and Hyndburn CLP

This rule change proposal provides for a Charter for Members' Rights and would establish the post of an independent Party Ombudsperson to ensure that the rights in the Charter were upheld. This would fill a gap in the Rule Book by clearly spelling out the range of rights that a paid up member should be entitled to. This would include the right of members to transparency in the policy-making process; the right to participate in local party governance and the right to freedom of expression (*cf.* Keith Ewing's article on p2).

■ From South Ribble CLP

This rule change proposal provides for a Labour Party Code of Ethics, which would lay down principles and standards of behaviour to be followed by all party members and elected party officers, all party employees, all contractors employed by the Party and by all party members elected to public office. This rule change would also fill a gap in the Party's Constitution and after the scandal of Parliamentary expenses it cannot come too soon! (*cf.* Gaye Johnson's article on p2).

■ Beverley and Holderness

This rule change proposal would create an extra seat on the NEC specifically for a constituency rep. from Scotland and a further seat specifically for a constituency rep. from Wales.

At Annual Conference there is an equal balance of voting between the industrial wing (the unions) and the political wing (the CLPs). But on the NEC, whereas the unions have 12 seats, the CLPs only have 6 (before the advent of 'Partnership in Power' the CLPs had 7 seats). Beverley and Holderness want to increase the CLPs to 8 seats, with the constituency members in Scotland and Wales each electing their own rep. Given that Scotland and Wales are separate from England, having their own governments, to also have their own constituency reps. on the NEC is eminently reasonable.

■ From Northampton South CLP

This rule change proposal would institute a cap on expenditure by nominees in party selection. Evidence is mounting of the often large disparities in selection between party members seeking selection as Parliamentary candidates. The recent deputy leadership election also saw huge sums being spent by

ALERT FOR DELEGATES

some of the nominees. A cap on spending is long overdue.

Rule changes from CLPs (submitted in 2008, but ruled out of order by the CAC).

Unfortunately, a considerable number of rule change proposals submitted by CLPs in 2008 have been ruled out of order by the CAC. When making its decision the CAC has employed a very controversial and catch-all interpretation of the '3-year-rule'. The rule states that when a Conference decision has been made on a rule change proposal, no further amendment to that "part" of the rules will be permitted for 3 years.

The key word here, of course, is "part". In other words, if a CLP amends a completely different "part" of a long clause in the Rule Book, compared to other parts that may have been recently amended, then that is in order. The CAC has ignored the significance of the word "part" and applied a catch-all interpretation. This is unacceptable and any challenge from ruled out CLPs, insisting that the Rule Book is correctly interpreted, should be given full support. It is difficult enough for CLPs to have their voice heard in this party, without the CAC gagging them.

Aggrieved delegates may go to the rostrum and seek redress by challenging the chair of the CAC. Every delegate in the hall should do their best to support these challenges and oppose the gagging. It could be your CLP next!

The following rule change is one of those that has been ruled out. NE Beds are pressing for it to be reinstated.

■ From North East Bedfordshire CLP

At present, in any one year, a CLP can submit to Annual Conference either a Contemporary Issue or a rule change proposal. NE Beds are proposing that in future CLPs should have the right to submit both each year. Rule changes relate to long term concerns about internal party organisation and democracy, whereas Contemporary Issues simply cover policy matters that arise in the weeks leading up to Annual Conference each year. There is no link between the two and no reason why CLPs shouldn't have the right to submit both. CLPs have little enough influence within our Party and their right to

amend the Rule Book is an important democratic right. There should be no restriction on this right.

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■ From Burnley, Mansfield and North East Hertfordshire

This rule change proposal would mean that government ministers (and members of the Parliamentary Committee when Labour is in opposition) would be ineligible to stand for the Party's National Conference Arrangements Committee. The CAC is the Standing Orders Committee of Annual Conference and to operate democratically, without 'fear or favour' it must be fully independent of the NEC and the Parliamentary leadership. The CAC is accountable to Annual Conference. Ministers/Parliamentary Committee members are accountable to the Leader. They cannot serve two masters and therefore could not be expected to be independent in the way that is necessary.

■ From Northampton South CLP

This rule change proposal would institute a cap on expenditure by nominees in party selection. Evidence is mounting of the often large disparities in spending between party members seeking selection as Parliamentary candidates. The recent deputy leadership election also saw huge sums being spent by some of the nominees. A cap on spending is long overdue.

KASHMIR — A BURNING BUT FORGOTTEN ISSUE?

cont. from p5

people were given their right of self-determination, but little visible progress has been made since.

Both India and Pakistan have since acquired Nuclear weapons; war on terror has become a threat; Britain has entered Iraq and Afghanistan to enforce democratic rights; many nations including East Timor have become independent; and yet Kashmir continues to burn.

“Gordon Brown and the Labour Party must take urgent action and show that they will speak for the oppressed Kashmiri people”

Will the Labour Party pledge made in 1995 become like the forgotten UNSC resolutions? Should it be seen as a political stunt to gain power? Will the Kashmiris be given the support they deserve, or are they less deserving than others? When will the West and Britain, in particular, pay attention to the Human Rights violations taking place in Kashmir? How many more Kashmiri women must be raped? How many more children will become orphaned? How many more political activists will disappear? How many more lives must be lost? How many more unmarked mass graves need to be discovered before we decide to take action?

The time to act is now. Gordon Brown and the Labour Party must take urgent action and show that they will speak for the oppressed Kashmiri people. Failure to pursue this “just cause” will end in misery continuing for the Kashmiris; peace in the region will be impossible to achieve and may indeed be the cause of instability of the world.

The Labour Party taking action by putting pressure on both India and Pakistan to resolve the Kashmir issue with the utmost urgency, will not only bring an end to the Human Rights violations taking place in Indian occupied Kashmir; it will honour its commitment made to the Kashmiris in 1995 and will once again prove that the Labour Party is the only Party that should be supported at the ballot box.

MOHAMMED AZAM, FORMER NEC MEMBER SUPPORTED BY CLGA AND THE SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE JAMMU KASHMIR SELF-DETERMINATION MOVEMENT.

PR AND AV ARE PROBLEMS NOT SOLUTIONS

cont. from p4

■ AV does not take account of the second preferences of all voters, only those of the least successful candidates. This was a point made about AV by Winston Churchill in 1931 — “The decision is to be determined by the most worthless votes given for the most worthless candidates”. In other words, an MP’s success could be determined by the preferences of UKIP or BNP voters. This situation could therefore well lead to the major parties adjusting their policies, for example on immigration, in order to appeal to the prejudices of these voters in the hope of picking up their transferred preferences.

■ AV may not produce a more proportional result than FPTP. For example, under AV in Alberta, Canada, one party obtained 90% of the seats on 54% of the vote.

■ AV has been described as an “anti-incumbent” system, which accelerates trends. In current circumstances, it could well help the Tories.

■ Under AV tactical voting becomes part of the electoral architecture. AV encourages tactical voting in a structured and formalised way.

■ AV would make coalition governments more likely.

Labour’s long standing policy is clear. It was restated by Annual Conference in 1993. Party policy is to uphold FPTP for the House of Commons.



BITEBACKS

‘Norway, Sweden and other countries with a generous welfare state have the strongest work ethic. Britain, the US, New Zealand and Australia have the least generous welfare states and the lowest commitment to work.’
(*Guardian*, 28/1/09).

‘Rising unemployment was a very desirable way of reducing the strength of the working classes.’
(Alan Budd, economic adviser to Thatcher, *Tribune*, 7/11/08).

‘I do not view the labour movement as part of the problem; to me, and to my administration, labour unions are a big part of the solution. We need to level the playing field for workers and the unions that represent their interests.’
(Obama, *Guardian*, 2/2/09).

TEL’S TALES

SHENANIGANS

The selection process for choosing Labour candidates to fight next May’s London council elections is currently taking place. I’ve had lots of very disturbing stories of good councillors and potential candidates being left off the panel, which means they are prevented from going to wards to be considered. In quite a few places, the Regional Party has been involved.

There have always been a few good comrades treated unfairly, but this time it’s much more serious and much more systematic. I’ve been told that, in Barking and Dagenham, some 15 sitting councillors have been turned down for the panel.

One example, in North London, shows just how bad the situation is. A Party member, who has been a local councillor in the past for 12 years (including 5 years as Chair of Planning), with an exemplary record of never voting against the Group Whip and never criticising the Group or Party in public, has been rejected. He has served on his ward EC for most of the past 20 years, including as Chair, Vice-Chair, Secretary and Treasurer, and also as GC and RGC delegate, governor and community activist. He has campaigned in almost every national, local and local bye-election over the past 20 years.

The letter the member received gave the following reasons for his rejection: ‘did not demonstrate a serious commitment to the Labour Party; lack of motivation towards becoming a Labour candidate’. This ruling is completely indefensible. I did note that in his personal statement the member said: ‘I disagreed strongly with the invasion of Iraq and demonstrated and argued strongly against that war in all available forums’.

THE NOWHERE MAN

It’s amusing to see how the less than sparkling James Purnell is being lauded in the press as some sort of political and intellectual visionary. Twenty-five years ago they said much the same about David Blunkett. And I seem to recall that for a short time (a very short time) Charles Clarke almost got the same treatment.

Purnell recently stated: ‘we can’t afford to spend taxpayers’ money on people who play the system’. Now was he talking about rich bankers, errant MPs or benefit claimants? I think you know the answer. Long ago, I predicted in this column that, if the Tories regain power, young James would be one of the first Blairites to defect.

LRC LOSING ITS WAY IN PR FICTIONS

Ray Davison reviews: The Left Case for Proportional Representation. A Discussion Paper for the LRC by Michael Calderbank, Political Campaigns Officer, Electoral Reform Society Writing in a Personal Capacity.

This eight-page article aims to present the case for the LRC to adopt as policy support for the introduction of proportional representation for elections to the Commons and for local councils in England and Wales. It is a most curious piece of writing for several reasons, although I personally would not undervalue it for its soporific qualities. First, incredibly, it does not argue for any particular system of PR, among the numerous on offer, but just for the principle. For the carnivorous tippler like myself, this is the electoral equivalent of a pub with no beer or Sunday lunch with quorn and no beef. Everything about PR is in the detail of the system and a left case without this is inadequately made.

Second, Calderbank pays hardly any attention to what he means *politically* by a left case. Surely if there is a cogent case to be made, he must demonstrate how a particular proportional voting system can advance left-wing objectives such as promoting equal opportunities, opening blocked horizons, ending discrimination and exploitation and so forth. He may not see such notions as progressive or even left but his paper sets out no political programme of his own and he does not relate his PR arguments to any substantial political agenda. Instead, we are once again exposed to the tired and tedious preoccupation with fair voting of the Make Votes Count campaigners who do not seem at all concerned about whether what they call 'fair votin' would actually foster reactionary policies and immobilize political advance.

Although Calderbank refuses to back any particular PR horse, it is easy to see where his preferences are. He clearly does not like single member constituencies as they, in his view, restrict voter choice. In another curious moment of this asymptotic article, he argues that a Blairite in Islington would have no choice but to vote for Corbyn, whilst the Labour left in Stalybridge and Hyde would be restricted to Purnell. Thus, the reader is able to see that the writer favours multi-member constituencies. Calderbank also accepts that restrictions on voter choice and concentrations of Party power come from closed list systems of PR, providing us with a further indication of his preferences—an open list system. We are by now not far from identifying where his true persuasion lies: STV with open lists and the

possible refinement and complication of cross voting. This is the system which will challenge the brains of a sizeable proportion of the electorate, produce results like gasometer readings and take an eternity to finalize but for the boffinesque members of the Electoral Society, it is the stuff and nectar of their PR dreams of fairness.

Elsewhere, there are sections in this paper dismissing as myths of FPTP advocates the claim that PR helps the far right and gives too much power to party machines. In both sections the arguments advanced are terminally weak, amounting to little more than a statement to this effect. No supporter of FPTP would argue that that system does not produce BNP successes and mavericks and white suiters or that it can produce coalitions, but there is objective evidence that PR makes this much more likely and almost inevitable. ERS itself stresses that FPTP is 'unfair' to small Parties. As for Party machines, Calderbank concedes that closed lists and parachutings are undesirable but largely what he claims are myths of FPTP resist his assaults and survive as reasonable criticisms of PR.

“PR makes BNP successes and mavericks and white suiters much more likely and almost inevitable”

Another big assumption of this article and of Make Votes Count in general is the claim that FPTP produces 'wasted' votes. Thus, we are told that, in the general election of 2005, over 19 million votes cast made no difference whatsoever to the outcome — 70% of all votes cast. Well we all know about statistical fiddles but this one is off the radar. Of course, it will be the case that in single member constituencies with simple majority voting, there will be losing votes but these votes have been counted. It is clearly just a strategy to call them wasted. More importantly, there will be a winner who commanded more votes than any other candidate and that person is a dog wagging its tail! There are points in this section about targets and swing-voter concentration which are well made and it is clear that the way Parties focus their efforts on marginal seats can be very alienating for second and third parties in safe seats but FPTP supporters often make the same points.

At a certain moment, Calderbank makes a crucial point: 'It is understandable', he

“If there is a left case for PR, it has got to demonstrate a cogent political argument that there is a link between 'fair' voting and political progress”

says, 'that some Labour Party members are reluctant to give up a system that has rewarded their party with three consecutive majorities...' Well never was there a greater expression of the obvious and we accept that these victories were 'disproportionate' but Labour Party socialists are in the business of securing Labour governments, preferably left-leaning ones, because that way lies progress and 'fairness'. Electoral systems are part of political struggle and not some academic abstract exercise. If there is a left case for PR, it has got to demonstrate a cogent political argument that there is a link between 'fair' voting (properly conceptualised and defined) and political progress. This paper does not produce such a case and seems very close to the right-wing case most of the time. The LRC should send it back for amplification.

BITEBACKS

'As always with this government in its attitude to the most deprived, the focus is on sanctions and punishments, not on remedial help and training for the hardcore jobless.'

(Robert Taylor, *Tribune*, 5/12/08).

'Tragedy is that ministers for decades have swallowed hook, line and bath plug the message of their advisers that an unemployment income below subsistence level at £64.30 a week is needed to force the idle into work.'

(Rev Paul Nicolson, *Guardian*, 22/8/09).

'When unemployment benefit started in 1912 it was seven shillings a week—about 22% of average male earnings in manufacturing. By 2008, however, as a result of tying benefits to the price index while real earnings increased, the renamed jobseekers allowance had fallen to an all time low of 10.5% of average earnings.'

(Jonathan Bradshaw, University of York, Tony Lynes, London, *Guardian*, 15/5/09).

ANNUAL CONFERENCE TO REVIEW 2007 CHANGES

In summer 2007, shortly after he became Leader, Gordon Brown submitted a document (“Extending and Renewing Party Democracy”) to the NEC recommending a number of changes to Annual Conference procedures. Both the NEC and later Annual Conference accepted these changes. The main thrust of these proposals was to replace “Contemporary Motions” by “Contemporary Issues”.

Before the advent of New Labour, every CLP and Union could send motions and amendments to Conference and the whole agenda of Conference largely revolved around these motions. Tony Blair changed all that. Conference was downgraded to little more than a glorified rally, with only four

“Before the advent of New Labour, every CLP and Union could send motions and amendments to Conference... Tony Blair changed all that. Conference was downgraded to little more than a glorified rally”

motion subjects allowed onto the agenda for debate and vote. A further restriction was introduced in that these motions could only be “contemporary motions”, in other words they had to cover an issue arising after the end of July in each year.

Gordon Brown went even further. In 2007 Motions disappeared altogether. Their replacement, “Contemporary Issues”, cannot be voted on. They are debated and

then remitted to the Policy Commissions of the NPF for further debate. The Policy Commissions then report on the progress of their deliberations to the following Annual Conference. These reports can either be voted on or remitted again to the NPF for yet more discussion and then another report the next Conference. Perceptive readers will have concluded that these new arrangements are far from perfect. For this reason, in 2007, the Unions insisted that in 2009 there would be a review. The 2009 Annual Conference should therefore be presented with a range of possible options and amendments to vote on.

A number of CLPs and Unions have made submissions to the review and the following are among the main changes they have proposed:

- That Conference must have the opportunity to express its clear view on matters of major political concern. This can only be done by voting on motions. Motions should therefore be reinstated.
- The artificial criteria of ‘contemporary’ (restrictively interpreted as August onwards) should be dropped. CLPs and Unions should have the right to submit a motion on any matter of major political concern.
- The spirit of the ‘4 plus 4’ rule for the Priorities Ballot at Conference should be properly honoured at every Conference — 4 subjects from the Unions and an additional 4 separate subjects from the CLPs.
- At Conference there should be provision for voting in parts in relation to the lengthy NPF documents, instead of the current undemocratic practice of conference having to vote on a whole document on an “all-or-nothing” basis.

KEY VOTES AT BRIGHTON

Vote for the Centre Left Grassroots Alliance supported candidates in the following elections:

CAC Constituency Section

Gaye Johnson (Hyndburn)

Gary Heather (Islington North)

NCC (CLP section)

John Wiseman

NEW LOCAL GOVERNMENT LEADERSHIP MODELS — A RECIPE FOR AUTOCRACY?

cont. from p5

(and thus will resign if someone else is preferred) or to extend the franchise to ensure a genuine debate on policy and style of leadership with a One Member, One Vote ballot of all members within the local authority area for the Labour Group leader.

Labour has lost huge ground in local government over the last 7 years and we need active Labour councillors in all councils — there should be no no-go areas. This means having invigorating Labour local leadership working with active and motivated local Parties engaged in their communities. Further professionalisation of councillors and cocooning them in for four years without the prospect of challenge will not make this easier. It is a retrograde step for public and Party democracy; at least we should aim to redress this in terms of the Party’s rules. Vesting everything in a single person does not necessarily cement the Party’s links with the people unless (as arguably is the case with the elected Mayor) they have themselves been elected by the people.

David Gardner was Labour Party Head of Local Government and a former councillor.

BITEBACKS

‘The government’s intentions have been to cut benefit costs by introducing coercive work conditions of entitlement, an echo of the 1834 Poor Law Act.’

(Professor Peter Townsend (RIP) London School Of Economics, Letter to *Guardian* 25/3/09).

‘The government is handing vast sums of taxpayers’ money to the banks so they can finance PFI schemes to build NHS hospitals which will hand their shareholders a 16% per annum return for decades — paid for by the taxpayer.’

(Professor Harry Keen, President NHS Support Federation, *Guardian*, 18/2/09).

Peter Willsman's

News from the NEC

A REPORT BY PETER WILLSMAN OF SOME OF THE MAIN ISSUES AT RECENT NEC MEETINGS. PETER IS A CLP REP ON THE NEC (SUPPORTED BY THE CENTRE-LEFT GRASSROOTS ALLIANCE) AND IS CLPD'S SECRETARY.

Parliamentarian's expenses scandal

At all of the NEC's debates on this issue I have argued that the key consideration for any action should be the criteria set out in the Party's Rule Book, in particular 'bringing the Party into disrepute'. This is what applies to rank and file members when they are deemed to have transgressed even in quite minor ways. Unfortunately this key consideration has been somewhat lost sight of, with the result that the process has been far from a level playing field and, in my view, unfair. The NEC set up a 3-person panel to consider all appropriate cases but only the General Secretary and the Chief Whip had the power to refer individuals to the panel. We then saw the backbencher, Ian Gibson, referred to the panel, but not those cases that in my view were considerably worse (many involving senior MPs). Not to mention those Labour Lords who have also been exposed for very serious expenses' abuses. I voted against the recommendations in relation to Ian Gibson.

At the July NEC it was agreed to revisit the arrangements for referring cases to the panel. In future this decision will not be left to the General Secretary and Chief Whip,

but will be widened out to include senior NEC and PLP members. And former MPs, who are now endorsed PPCs, will be subject to the same process as sitting MPs.

But the decisions in relation to future referrals will, it seems, be largely based on the findings of the official non-party inquiry being carried out by Sir Thomas Legg (due to report in the Autumn). But, as I have said, the key consideration for all cases should not be Legg, but should be the Rule Book's criteria of 'bringing the Party into disrepute'. Some of the cases, both in the Commons and in the Lords, are sufficiently serious for the Party to commence disciplinary action within the procedures laid down in the Rule Book.

Afghanistan

At the July NEC I raised the military action with Gordon Brown. I suggested that what is happening seems to be more of a civil war between the Pashtuns in the South and the Tajiks and Uzbeks in the North. We are propping up the latter and our actions are making the situation worse. In reply Gordon said there cannot be a military solution, rather the aim was to create the conditions for stable government. He argued that over half of international terrorism can be traced to the Pakistan/Afghan border area.

Winning the next election

At all recent NECs, Gordon Brown has forcibly argued that the Party must unite and fight around a clear strategy. Namely, that there is a stark dividing line between us and the Tories. We are investing to protect

jobs and services. The Tories are reverting to the policy that they always adopt at times of economic crisis, which is looking after the rich and making the poor pay. As under Thatcher, a Tory government would adopt policies that would deepen the recession, increasing unemployment and adversely affecting millions of people. Gordon stressed that at all levels of the Party we must get this message across. If we do, the voters will respond.



BITEBACKS

Trident is a waste of money, say ex-military leaders (Field Marshal Lord Bramall backed by two senior generals): 'Nuclear weapons have shown themselves to be completely useless as a deterrent to the threats and scale of violence we currently face or are likely to face, particularly international terrorism... Our independent deterrent has become virtually irrelevant, except in the context of domestic politics.'

Retired army general Lord Ramsbotham said that he no longer believed that Britain's nuclear deterrent was truly independent. 'It is a cold war weapon. It is not a weapon for the situation where we are now'... He added that the government's decision to renew Trident was driven more by political considerations than by the true requirements of national defence.

'We are carrying forward the Blair agenda in education to where he would have wanted to take it.' Michael Gove (*Guardian*, 25/4/09).

'Yesterday it emerged that 94% of adopted Tory candidates in 220 of the Party's most winnable seats... do not believe that international development should be a priority for protection from spending cuts. Only 34% think health should be a priority to be kept immune from cuts.' (*Guardian*, 1/7/09).

DOUBLE RED ALERT:

DON'T FORGET TO READ THE WILLSMAN GUIDE TO CONFERENCE 2009 EDITION NOW AVAILABLE AND BETTER THAN EVER THIS YEAR

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).

ANNUAL CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHTS

**SATURDAY 26
SEPTEMBER 4.30 PM,
THE UMI BRIGHTON
HOTEL (on seafront near
Conference Centre)**

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).

**SUNDAY 27 SEPTEMBER
10.15AM, THE UMI
BRIGHTON HOTEL**

CLPD rally and delegates' briefing with chair of CLPD Gaye Johnson and Tony Benn, Ann Black (NEC), Prof. Keith Ewing, Kelvin Hopkins MP, Peter Kenyon (NEC), Alan Ritchie (UCATT), Mark Seddon, Christine Shawcroft (NEC), Cat Smith (Compass Youth EC), Gavin Strang MP, Peter Willsman (NEC — special briefing for delegates).

Entry £2 (conc: 50p).

**WEDNESDAY
SEPTEMBER 30,
THE UMI BRIGHTON
HOTEL, 6.00PM**

Conference assessment and the next steps for Labour. Chair Gaye Johnson, 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 £1.00 (conc: 50p).

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 electoral college involving MPs, CLPs and TUs. Pre-

viously 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 socialist 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' and, ironically, 'extending Party democracy'.

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.

 **BITEBACKS**

'Governments committed to deregulation and to the encouragement of speculation and high personal borrowing were elected repeatedly in Britain and the United States for a crucial couple of decades.'
The Right Reverend Rowan Williams, Archbishop of Canterbury, (*Guardian*, 9/3/04).

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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CLP..... Region

TU..... Date

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.