

CAMPAIGN BRIEFING

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KEEPING THE LINK: LABOUR AND THE TRADE UNIONS

**MICK WHELAN,
GENERAL SECRETARY ASLEF**

Without trade unions, there would be no Labour Party. Without the Labour Party many of the greatest achievements of the trade union movement would never have become enshrined



in law. Despite coming under attack in recent years from both the right of the Labour Party and the left of the trade union movement, the link between the Labour Party and the trade unions remains as vital today as it ever has been. The link ensures that the concerns of more than three million working people belonging to affiliated trade unions remain central to the Labour Party's programme. Of course the Labour Party will never do everything that trade unionists would like it to do, but it remains the only political party where trade unionists can play an actual role in determining policy and making sure that the concerns of working people are heard.

Without this historic link, there would no way of ensuring working people are elected to parliament, local and devolved government, and to the European parliament, from where much of the legislation protecting working people originates. From the Labour Party's point of view, the trade unions' financial support ensures that the Party remains a viable force to fight on the principles on which it was founded. Without this support the Labour Party would cease to operate in any meaningful way.

The trade union movement has long been the biggest driver of equality, helping to create a fairer and more just society which benefits all of us, not just those at the top.

Now, as the government takes an axe to public services, in a bid to reduce the deficit, the trade union movement is leading the fight to defend those most at risk. With clarity and purpose, the trade unions have set out an alternative economic case, one in which the poorest in society, the elderly, the young, the disabled and the unemployed are not forced to pay for the mistakes of others. In doing so the trade unions have forced the Labour Party to rethink many of its initial responses to the financial recession and the line peddled by government that 'we are all in this together'. In large parts the response of Ed Miliband and Shadow Chancellor Ed Balls to the government's austerity programme – that what we need is growth and jobs – now echoes the responses of union leaders to the crisis. That is to the credit of both the Labour Party and the unions, and is a message that must

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ANNUAL CONFERENCE ALERT 2012

**BY PETER WILLSMAN,
SECRETARY CLPD AND
MEMBER OF CONFERENCE
ARRANGEMENTS COMMITTEE
1981-1994**

Briefing on the rule change proposals from CLPs coming up at Manchester

At Manchester delegates will be debating and voting on (by card vote) several proposals to

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LIFE WITH ED – NEWS AND VIEWS FROM THE PLP

KELVIN HOPKINS MP

CLPD got it absolutely right in urging members to vote for Ed (M) as our number two to Diane Abbott in the Leadership ballot. Diane spoke for the left in the hustings and shifted the debate away from the ground where the heir to Blair felt comfortable. Since then the Party has felt more at ease with itself. Despite occasional hiccups, Ed has shown himself to be more of a unifying leader, at ease with the Party's centre and who can even listen to the left. Ed's speech at the Durham Miners Gala proved immensely popular, from the grassroots to the PLP. It reaffirmed the Party's trade union link and put him in touch with Labour's heart and heartlands.



Labour now has a substantial lead amongst the electors. Ed has overtaken Cameron in popularity, and the Thatcherite fifth column in the form of "Progress" has been exposed for what it is by our trade union brothers and sisters. Its millionaire backers are continuing to fund constituency selections for their favoured candidates, but at least Party members now have no illusions about its nature.

The best news is that the Tories have blown it and are unlikely to recover. The

billionaires' budget and savage spending cuts driving the economy into double dip recession (with the possibility of a decade of "depression" according to the IMF) has destroyed the Tories' credibility. My Tory constituency neighbour attacking the "posh boys" has also helped and the voters are looking to kick them out a.s.a.p.

There have been a number of similar step changes in public opinion in the past and, once they happen, the victor in that contest normally goes on to win the subsequent election. Michael Foot's big electoral lead was overturned by Thatcher's victory in the Falklands War before 1983, and Major's Tories were destroyed by the collapse of their disastrous ERM strategy in 1992. That step change has now happened to Cameron's Tories. But our own Party leaders now have to be asked "where's the beef" (with apologies to vegetarians for the carnivorous metaphor)? What indeed are our policies for the future? What is to be done to rebuild from the ruins of Tory Britain?

Mocking Cameron at the despatch box is great to watch and Ed has done well, but voters are asking on the doorstep what our policies are? Tory bashing alone is not enough and implying that smaller cuddly Labour cuts would be OK but nasty big Tory cuts are not is absolutely wrong. All cuts are deflationary when what is needed is reflation and in particular additional spending in areas of high labour intensity to bring down unemployment. Construction and the public services are just such areas, precisely those which the Tories are cutting.

The whole Party must now engage in the process of developing policies for victory next time, and those policies should be advanced and promoted at Conference, not simply decided by faceless apparatchiks behind closed doors. The leadership must listen to Labour's grassroots, to trade unionists and working people across the board, to families with children, to pensioners and to young people. And the Left must also be heard. Re-democratising Conference is vital in that process. Conference in recent years has become a dull and lifeless rally for the leadership, not a democratic policy maker for socialism.

Ed has shown himself to be a listening leader and a number of us on the left in Parliament have had discussions with him from time to time. (I personally never had a discussion with Blair or Brown, although I have to say this was a mutually agreeable arrangement!).

The voters have done with Thatcherism in all its forms. Neo-liberal capitalism has brought us close to disaster and worse is still to come. It is indeed time to bring forward a bold, democratic socialist programme to clinch Labour's victory at the next election.

KEEPING THE LINK

(cont. from p1)

be driven home by both the Party and the unions who can address their own members with a directness that politicians cannot. This is particularly true when it comes to reaching groups under-represented in the Labour Party, such as women and ethnic minorities.

Only working people can get the country back on its feet. The work undertaken by trade unions in raising the skills and educational achievements of the workforce, creating equality and diversity – which the CBI and the TUC agree increases productivity and profit – and looking beyond short-termism to create a genuinely sustainable economic vision is central to our economic recovery; as is a sense of cohesiveness that has nothing to do with the 'Big Society' and everything to do with fairness, both in the workplace and outside it. The Labour Party was founded on a desire for fairness, but only with the help and support of the trade unions will fairness ever become more than an aspiration.

When Margaret Thatcher attempted to sever the link between unions and the Labour Party with the 1984 Trade Union Act, which required unions to regularly ballot members on whether they wished to continue paying into their union's political fund, it was a direct attempt to cripple the Labour Party while reducing the influence of the unions on policy. Having tried and failed to break the link once before, the recent Kelly Report on party funding recommends changing the emphasis on unions to ask their members to 'opt-in' to the political fund, rather than the current 'opt-out'. This has the potential to devastate the Labour Party, and with it any hope the unions have of ever over-turning draconian anti-union legislation.

Not only should trade unions encourage their members to join and play an active role in the Labour Party, but members of the Labour Party, including elected members, must be actively encouraged to join a trade union. Only in this way will the Labour Party remain a viable fighting machine and trade unions continue to make the voice of working people heard.



BITEBACKS

'Economists on the left are warning that spending cuts lower growth and tax revenues, increasing deficits and creating a downward debt spiral. Their opponents argue that unless spending and deficits are cut, interest rates will soar, putting a further damper on growth. Evidence from Greece and Spain support the left. The failure of interest rates to rise following the US downgrade throws the right's arguments into question.'

(Irwin Stelzer, *Sunday Times* 21/8/11. NB: Stelzer is a right-wing neo-liberal American economist.)

TORY ECONOMIC POLICY ON FIRE – OSBORNE IS KAMIKAZE, BUT WHERE'S LABOUR?

MICHAEL MEACHER MP

With Osborne assailed from every quarter, from the IMF and the British Chambers of Commerce as well as from the Left, Osbornomics is toast. With the latest UK growth figures showing a very serious contraction of 0.7% in the second quarter on top of falls in the two previous quarters, the UK economy is now a disastrous 4.5% below its peak just before the financial crash. Manufacturing and construction are slipping back badly, and services have failed to grow. Bank lending to industry is now at the worst trend since 2009, with a £3bn fall hitting SMEs hardest. Britain is now the only country in the G20, apart from Italy, which is in double-dip recession. And to cap it all, Britain's indebtedness is still growing. Apart from that, everything's fine!



“Osbornomics is toast”

But where does Labour stand? It now has a regular 5-10 points lead in the polls, but that is driven largely by the unending stream of Tory mega-mistakes. To establish a real lead on the economy, Labour now needs to do 4 things:

First, Labour is still held back because, whilst the public despises Osborne's policies and hates the results, they still believe that all this austerity has been forced on the country because the last Labour government blew it with gross over-spending. Labour has allowed, and is still allowing, the Tories and their right-wing media friends to get away with this blatant canard ever since 2010. In fact the budget deficit at mid 2007 was just 3% of GDP and only rose to 11.6% in 2010 because of the bank bailouts. Indeed for three-quarters of its 13 years in office the Labour government ran a lower level of public expenditure than Thatcher did in her lowest spending year. Until this lie about the Labour record is firmly nailed, the Party will continue to fight its economic corner with one hand tied behind its back.

Second, Labour is at last – though far too late – recognising the need for a jobs and growth strategy. But if the Party is going to carry conviction and not just appear to be moving with the tide of wider opinion, it should acknowledge that its previous adherence to a ‘cut less far less fast’ policy was a badly mistaken adoption of a pseudo-Tory policy driven by very different motives (i.e. shrinking the state).

Third, Labour must not just chant the ‘jobs and growth’ mantra: it must spell out in detail how it will be delivered if Labour's conversion is to be seen as real and if the public is to be assured that Labour has a solid, practical and affordable plan to deliver it. That requires a strategy for a major revival of manufacturing, the rebalancing of the economy away from finance to industry, the wholesale restructuring of the banking and wider finance sector, and a radical programme to flatten unacceptable inequality not only for reasons of social justice but to ensure a level of aggregate demand within the economy at a steadier and higher level.

Manufacturing could secure a stable flow of affordable funding if the Big Five banks, after a run of historically unprecedented scandals, were broken up and made to focus on the needs of domestic industry for infrastructure, house-building and the foundations for the future low-carbon economy. The strategic sectors of British industry need to be protected from foreign acquisitions by major changes in the takeover rules and from the break-up of crucial supply chains by privatisations and wholesale sell-offs. And SMEs need both funding and technical assistance to move up to higher tech levels to better protect them from Asian competition.

The key to rebalancing the economy is to regain public control of the money supply. At present the banks largely invest their money in property, overseas speculation and elaborate tax avoidance contrivances, and only 8% goes into productive investment. That has to be radically reversed.

The banks have to be wholly restructured. They are over-weighty within the economy, dangerously too big to fail without colossal taxpayer bailouts, scandal-ridden, poorly managed, and not primarily focused on British industry at all. We need smaller banks specialising in infrastructure, knowledge and science industries, green economy, regional networks on the German Mittel-

stand model, SMEs, and innovation and technology. To ensure this happens, most of the banks should be in the public sector.

Lastly, Labour has so far followed the disastrous Tory policy of imposing the costs of the folly of the bankers' ramp exclusively on those of average and low earnings, while letting the rich completely off the hook. Since the richest 1,000 persons, according to the *Sunday Times* Rich List, made gains of no less than £155bn (yes, billions) over the last 3 years of austerity, this has been a monumental error. If these gains were taxed at the current capital gains tax rate of 28%, it would yield £43bn – enough, without any additional public borrowing at all, to fund the creation of up to 2 million jobs in the next 2-3 years. Alternatively (or in addition), if the £4 trillion owned by the UK's top 10%, which is 5 times the size of the country's entire accumulated national debt, were made subject, in the current desperate financial situation facing Britain, to a one-off wealth tax of 20%, that debt could be wholly wiped out. So why is Labour going so soft on the mega-rich? We'll never get their votes, but we need their (fair) contribution to get the jobs and growth strategy going on which the future of Britain now depends.



BITEBACKS

‘We do not need to be Einstein to see that the growing inequalities of wealth here and elsewhere in the world create a parallel universe of unequal power relations. Thus the wealthy and powerful, secure and protected, sitting on their nest eggs, can impose, with gleeful impunity, austerity on the impotent poor.’

(Ray Davison, *Of Power and Austerity*, June edition of *On Target*, the newsletter of East Devon CLP which Ray Davison edits.)

‘G. Brown notes that if bankers had paid themselves 10% less between 2007–10, this would have covered the £50 billion black hole in bank capital that the British taxpayer had later to provide to save our large banks.’ (Gordon Brown, *Beyond the Crash*, quoted in *Chartist*, July-August 2011).

JUSTICE FOR LUTFUR RAHMAN: THE CASE FOR REINSTATEMENT

ANTON WAHLBERG, NUJ MEMBER

Although Tower Hamlets has the wealth distribution profile of a least developed country, the borough has made big improvements in education, housing and other social services, both under Labour control and now under an ex-Labour executive Mayor. Even so, in the media it has become a by-word for corruption and incompetence, but that reputation owes less to reality than to perceptions fanned by a disturbing alliance of New(ish) Labour and old-style stitch ups, with conservative little Englanders epitomised by the *Telegraph* and *Mail*.

What they share is an evocation of the pernicious traits of Islamophobia in this country and other parts of the West. New Labour apparatchiks were so tainted with it that they suspended the candidacy of former Labour Leader Lutfur Rahman for alleged “Islamist” links. The affair reveals disturbing prejudices – and the cynical use of them in a campaign almost reminiscent of the Koch/Tea Party onslaught on Obama.

On the evidence of Tower Hamlets, all it takes to remove a rival in the Labour Party – at least a Muslim one – is to hint at “Islamist” links. That guarantees a reflex that is not only shamefully racist but also abandons all pretence to the standards of justice that we presume to hold in opposition to “Islamism” and Shariah Law.

Indeed, in one school of the latter, it takes four adult male witnesses trying – and failing – to pass a thread between the copulating

couple to prove adultery. In New Labour, all it takes is a rival with a dodgy dossier assembled from the worst of the Tory Press to unseat a democratically chosen mayoral candidate!

While currently Independent Mayor Lutfur Rahman’s reputation was restored even by the Press Complaints Commission, which ruled against the scurrilous articles that formed so much of the dossier, he remains outside the Party he has served for decades, while those who made accusations that were subsequently proven unfounded remain in. Throughout the process Party apparatchiks have assumed guilt with no opportunity for him to rebut the case.

Now the injustice, and damage to the Party, has been compounded with the summary expulsion of five councillors for allegedly supporting an independent supporter of the Mayor in the election. They were not given notice of the move, let alone an opportunity to rebut the charges, and quite rightly point to the contrast with the prominent Labour figures who actively called for the defeat of Livingstone in the London elections – with seeming impunity. In the meantime, a councillor who was arrested for assaulting fellow members and uttering death threats in the council chamber retained the Labour whip, while the police considered pressing charges. Even though they dropped them, the incident does little to enhance the prestige of the beleaguered council.

Many of the Labour group on the council team up with the Tories to thwart the policies of the expelled Mayor, policies which put most Labour councils to shame. He is building

1000 new socially affordable homes per year, in order to tackle the borough’s chronic overcrowding problem. He is bringing all council homes up to Decent Homes standard. He has reinstated the Education Maintenance Allowance, making Tower Hamlets the first council in Britain to do so. Under his leadership, the borough also became the first local authority to pay all workers the London Living Wage, a cause that Ed Miliband has passionately championed. He is setting up an Energy Cooperative that will offer an alternative energy supplier to residents, slashing hundreds of pounds per year from gas and electricity bills. He has not closed a single library, unlike Brent which has closed six, and, unlike Haringey which last year announced plans to cut youth spending by 75%, in Tower Hamlets spending on youth services is actually increasing.

While other parts of London were in flames during the riots, Tower Hamlets, whose youth have every reason to protest disparities of wealth in Tory Britain, stayed quiet.

This has gone beyond the rights or wrongs of individual Party members: increasingly at stake is Labour’s relationships with large numbers of politically active people of Muslim origin. The Party should set up a commission to inquire into the Tower Hamlets Party with a view to reconciling the various factions, reconstituting the Party and readmitting members who have been loyal to its principles and represent a large constituency of those on whom Labour depends for victory. Otherwise, it will be giving a gift to the deservedly flagging fortunes of Respect.

GLASGOW SCAPEGOATED FOR LABOUR’S FAILURE IN SCOTLAND

JIM MACKECHNIE, CLPD REGIONAL ORGANISER IN SCOTLAND AND FORMER GLASGOW CITY COUNCILLOR

As Autumn 2011 saw Scotland preparing for this year’s local authority elections, Party officials masterminded a massive cull of Glasgow City’s Labour councillors. Fifteen out of forty-seven sitting councillors were rejected for the panel of candidates. Another three were denied an interview as they had previously been placed under suspension – one for almost two years – for various alleged acts of misconduct. Some of those rejected

had decades of service as elected members. The vast majority were highly respected in the communities they represented.

Over the last year Glasgow City Labour Party (LGC) had seen a substantial change in composition, with a significant number of new delegates being elected by their CLPs. Most had no experience of panel selection. It appears that Party officials and other senior figures took advantage of this to impose a clear-out of ‘dead wood’ and those who were ‘not good enough’. This panic measure was prompted by the Scottish Parliamentary Election results in 2011 where the SNP won an absolute majority and Labour lost four constituency seats in Glasgow. Somehow the bi-

zarre view was taken that Labour councillors – especially those in Glasgow – had been responsible for this defeat by ‘not campaigning’. All the evidence, however, both from Party sources and independent commentators, shows that the backbone of campaigning teams is local councillors and their families.

After the 2011 election, the SNP started to claim that winning control of Glasgow City Council in 2012 would be ‘a stepping stone to independence.’ It was to be the litmus test of their growing success.

With the local council elections looming, the Party took the decision to interview all sitting Labour councillors. This is not normal

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LABOUR NEEDS A WATCHDOG

PROFESSOR KEITH EWING

Earlier this summer, I attended the selection meeting for a new parliamentary candidate for Cambridge. About 200 people turned up on a Saturday afternoon to the Assembly Hall at a local school.

The meeting was conducted in an exemplary manner. Five would-be candidates were on display, and all did very well, a future Cabinet minister amongst them. Each had a fair opportunity to speak and to account, and no one in the meeting was – fairly or unfairly – shut out.

The satisfaction I felt about the way in which the meeting had been conducted in accordance with the best practices of a democratic socialist party led me to reflect on what would have happened had the meeting been conducted differently.

Suppose any of the would-be candidates had been unfairly treated, and that an attempt had been made by an organised minority to control the proceedings? Or an attempt was made to silence any members who did not support a particular candidate?

What redress would there be in such a case? How would complaints of irregularity or unfairness be investigated? That led me

to think in turn about other aspects of Party management, particularly in light of the experience of the last 15 years or so.

How can members deal with the situation where a candidate is foisted onto a Constituency Party, or where there is an alleged irregularity in the selection of a candidate, perhaps in the counting of votes?

Is this beginning to ring any bells? It is true that it may be possible to bring a complaint under the rules to be dealt with by the disciplinary procedures of the Party, or that someone sufficiently motivated could bring a complaint in the courts.

But both of these procedures are flawed. The member's concern may not be that there has been a breach of discipline – there may not yet be enough evidence. And no one should be required to incur the expense of legal action to vindicate Party rules.

This is why the idea of a Party Ombudsman is so attractive – someone to whom members within CLPs and affiliates can turn when something is not quite right or very badly wrong. This would apply not only to selection foul ups, but to all aspects of Party activity.

A Party Ombudsman (like the Parliamentary Ombudsman) would be independ-

ent and would be someone to whom complaints of irregularity and impropriety could be referred, someone in whom all members would have confidence.

Consistent with the values of a democratic socialist party, the Ombudsman should be elected by the members in a membership-wide ballot, the election to be confirmed by Conference.

Once appointed, the Ombudsman would have wide powers under the rules to investigate complaints referred. It would be for the Ombudsman to decide which complaints to pursue.

If necessary the Ombudsman could initiate disciplinary action where appropriate, if his or her investigations revealed a breach of the rules. In conducting this work he or she would be accountable to Conference and subject to periodic re-election.

No one anticipates that the Party Ombudsman would be especially busy – it is unlikely after all to be a full time position. But Party members are entitled to see some clear commitments to Party democracy from the new leadership.

The Party Ombudsman would be a small – but important and symbolic – step in that direction.

GLASGOW SCAPEGOATED

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procedure but is permitted under the rules, but only with the agreement of the Scottish General Secretary and the NEC. Immediately prior to the commencement of the interviews, it was announced that Ken Clark, a former London organiser, had been appointed as 'Scottish Labour's Head of Local Government'. It is widely agreed that from that point in time, he ran the show.

As the outcomes of the Panel interviews became apparent, it was obvious that each councillor had been privately assessed on an individual basis prior to being interviewed. To this day nobody knows what the criteria were. Certainly the questioning at the interviews took an unusual track, downplaying council work and years of involvement with community groups, but probing about individual voter contact and campaigning. One interviewee likened it to going for a driving test for an ordinary car licence and being given the test for a HGV.

The axe appeared to be waved indiscriminately – left or right, male or female, old or young, Asian or white, senior councillor or backbencher – none was safe.

The outcome was that local Party members were denied an opportunity to re-select

candidates whom they felt were doing a good job. While the City Party could have tried to stand up to central Party control, they did not – probably due to the widespread inexperience in their ranks. Many of those subsequently newly elected will fit in well with the managerial ethos that dominates the Party.

The reaction of Glasgow MPs and MSPs was almost totally hostile to the cull. During this period the hustings for the elections of Leader and Deputy Leader of Scottish Labour were taking place and all the candidates who were questioned on the matter expressed their repugnance at what had happened.

The City Council Labour Group's majority was steadily reduced between October and the May elections. By the day of the election, defections had left Glasgow City Council officially designated as 'no overall control'.

Those who supported the cull claimed it was entirely justified as Labour resumed its previous absolute majority on the Council, securing 44 of the 79 seats. (Glasgow First fielded candidates in every ward, but won only one seat.)

The downside to this saga is that local Party democracy has been seriously eroded and precedents set for much more central control in the selection of local government candidates. In Glasgow, a whole tranche of experienced and dedicated councillors has

been lost, not because they lost the confidence of the electorate or their local Parties, but because of the well organised interference of paid officials of the Party.

(Editorial note: this is an abridged version of Jim's article. The full version will appear on CLPD's website. Please note also that Jim was not a victim of the cull and did not contest the May elections.)



BITEBACKS

'The existing rules set out the duties and restrictions on members of the Labour Party but recent experience of top down management of the Party has demonstrated that these rules, and the Party as a whole, would now benefit from a Charter of Members' Rights and an official code of ethics concerning the running of the Party. The enforcement of these rights and the investigation of complaints as to their breach will need to be underpinned by the work of an independent ombudsperson.'

(CLPD supporting argument for a rule change to create a Labour Ombudsperson.)

CLPD SPOTLIGHT ON THE NPF IN ACTION

CHRISTINE SHAWCROFT, NEC MEMBER AND CLPD EXECUTIVE MEMBER

The NPF delegates who travelled to Aston in June were repeatedly told by the Party leadership that there is a new commitment to making the National Policy Forum work in an open, transparent and democratic way. Previous NPFs have been marred by long and tedious platform speeches, making the weekend more of a listening shop than a talking shop, but the welcomes from the new Chair and the Leader and Deputy Leader were kept to a minimum leaving us to go off into workshops.

There had been rather a tight timetable to get submissions in for this meeting, although it was made clear that Policy Commissions were still accepting them. The ones that had made the deadline ran to four hundred pages. Several Party members had done sterling work trying to summarise submissions, which was greatly appreciated. In fact, the point was made several times that

whilst we appreciate that Party staff are snowed under with work, Party members are a resource which isn't being used, and that a proper division of work with people tasked with monitoring, summarising and drawing up alternative positions on each topic would help everybody.

The quality of the discussion in the workshops, certainly the ones I went to, was very high. Lots of interesting points were made, and good ideas came forward. We were promised that these would be included in redrafted documents for Conference. At the first afternoon plenary session we were given a choice for the next day: did we want to carry on with workshops based on Policy Commission documents, or would we like to have further discussions based on two topics for each Commission which had come out of today's deliberations? It was agreed to have the latter, which is how we managed to get a discussion on the future of Trident (notoriously unmentioned in the Britain and the World document).

To my surprise the next day all the par-

ticipants in the workshop opposed Trident, even one who had just stood for re-election on the Progress slate in his region. I was very concerned about the continual use of the word "deterrent". If we are to have an honest debate in the Party on the issue, we have to dump value laden terminology like that, and participants agreed not to use it in future. I also attended the workshop on housing in the private and social rented sector which represented a big shift in the Party's thinking on the issue, with commitments to looking at good practice in the private sector in places like Germany, and a new awareness of the need for affordable, well designed social housing.

At the final plenary, a paper on improving the NPF process was circulated, which suggested several reforms which have been put forward by CLPD over the years, including the right to put amendments to policy documents at Conference. Unfortunately this has subsequently been watered down by the National Executive Committee, so perhaps things aren't going to be so different after all.

PARLIAMENTARY RESELECTION – A SUITABLE CASE FOR TREATMENT

LABOUR MUST REJECT TRIGGER BALLOTS

NOEL FOY

(Noel worked for the Labour Party in Scotland until retirement, member of East Lothian CLP and chair of his local Branch, member of the GMB).

Who cares about Parliamentary re-selection? Not many it seems. And after all why should they? It's a minor problem, not worth bothering about. But pause for a moment: suppose there is widespread dissatisfaction with a sitting MP, suppose CLP members believe that without action their seat may be lost. How do Party procedures cope with this? The answer is badly. Re-selection, as it stands, is geared to one outcome only – re-adoption of the incumbent.

We all know how re-selection works. An Electoral College of Party Branches and affiliates decide by a simple majority whether or not to 'trigger' an open selection process (where other candidates, in addition to the sitting MP, may be considered) or simply confirm the sitting member as the Party candidate. Each Party Branch has a vote, as does each affiliated Branch. In most cases Branches and affiliates agree so job done.

But it does happen now and again that all or a majority of Party Branches vote for an 'open' selection process and the affiliates vote for automatic re-selection (as they invariably do).

For the sake of argument let's assume that Sweetborough CLP is doing re-selection of its MP. It has 283 members organised in six Branches. When voting closes all Party Branches have voted for open selection. However, seven affiliates vote for endorsement of the sitting member who is automatically re-selected. CLP members in this situation might feel aggrieved and say that local Party opinion should prevail. And they have a point.

Some have said that the answer is to bring Parliamentary re-selection in line with selection by introducing OMOV. This seems unlikely to happen. The option of raising the bar so that the incumbent must secure a two thirds majority of the Electoral College is a step in the right direction but does not go far enough.

Giving Branches votes in re-selection according to the number of delegates they appoint to the GC would be more democratic and give due weight to local Party opinion. Importantly, it keeps the link between affiliates and Constituency Parties but gives CLP members a greater say in the outcome.



BITEBACKS

'When you look back at the 1945 Labour Cabinet that constructed the welfare state, the contrast (between past and present Labour MPs) is almost obscene. The giants of Clem Attlee's government (Bevin, Bevan, Morrison) were all from working-class backgrounds... It was the trade unions and local government that had provided them with the ladders to climb, enabling them to end up as towering political figures and respected statesmen.' (Owen Jones, *Chavs*, 2011 p.105.)

'One of the maxims of the West Wing spin doctors was never, ever, accept the premise of your opponent's argument. Eds M and B are now unable to see an opposition premise without not just accepting it, but embracing it, hugging it to them and loving it to bits. All this, of course, creates the view among the voting public that Tory policies, however unpleasant, must be right.' (Christine Shawcroft, *Labour Briefing*, February 2012).

This is an issue that won't go away. There were problems in the last round of re-selections and there will almost certainly be problems in the next. And when it goes wrong the fallout is catastrophic for everyone involved. This is an issue badly in need of sorting.

LABOUR'S NEC: A TRADE UNION VIEWPOINT

JIM KENNEDY

I am the National Political Officer of UCATT, member of the Labour Party National Executive Committee, and Chair of the NEC Organisation Committee (Org Sub).

I also hold the grand title of Convenor of the NEC Trade Union Group and, although an impressive title, it actually means I'm the person who arranges pre-NEC meetings for the trade unions.

NEC trade union members work as a functioning and effectual group. Our primary responsibility is to ensure the effective governance of the Party. Be it disputes, selections or financial stewardship we, as a group, do our business with the due diligence expected of anyone who holds the privileged position of an NEC member. Since becoming Chair of the Organisation Committee, I have seen the integral support given by Party staff. They are often at the blunt end of others' actions; however, the intellectual contribution, the commitment and the accessibility they offer are often beyond the call of duty.

Just as CLP members of the NEC are answerable to the members who elected them, so are we. As a Trade Union Group we look at the direction of the Party, its structure, its finances and of course its policy-making. On policy, the unions were extremely disappointed in the remarks made earlier in the year about public sector cuts; the announcement was wrong and completely unnecessary, and the trade union members on the NEC expressed the anger our members felt in firm and unambiguous terms. On policy making we now have Angela Eagle as Chair of the National Policy Forum (or whatever it has been rebranded as by the time you read this), and all sections of the Party have welcomed the freshness and vitality that she has brought to the process. I think everybody had become tired and a bit cynical about the previous process and, without Angela's drive, it could have looked like we were trying to give the kiss of life to a dead body for the third time.

As a Trade Union Group we supported the TULO submission into the reforms required by PiP and actively pursued these within the NEC. All affiliated unions were signed up to the TULO submission and that was reflected in the representations we made both at the Organisation Committee and the NEC. We need to emerge with a democratic process which enjoys the confidence of the Party. I don't think our concerns are particular to us but are shared by the Socialist Society and CLP reps on the NEC. In fact there

is a real unity of purpose within the NEC on this issue.

As Chair of the Organisation Committee I see a wider unity of purpose, all sections of the Party moving forward determined that this will be a one term period of opposition only. I believe that unity of purpose has been created by the election of Ed as leader and assisted by the appointment of Iain McNicol as General Secretary.

Iain has been doing a tremendous job in difficult circumstances. His financial plans are tackling head on the problems we have had over a sustained period. It has been a baptism of fire and he has had to take some difficult decisions but we are seeing the reasons he was appointed by the NEC: he is resolute, cerebral, inclusive and, as he holds a karate black belt, a jolly nice bloke.

“Ed’s philosophy... recognises that Westminster cannot be reflective of society when 34% of all MPs went to fee paying schools”

Ed's philosophy and direction for our Party has started to resonate not only with the naysayers within our own Party but also with the wider electorate. Of particular note, and this is something that resounds with me, is his mission to increase working class representation in Westminster, something long overdue from a Labour leader. He recognises that Westminster cannot be reflective of society when 34% of all MPs went to fee paying schools. He recognises that although the Labour Party has a large percentage of MPs from the public and voluntary sector, it also has 27% of its MPs from a political background or occupation. And he recognises that just 4% of MPs coming from manual trades is unacceptable. Ed's appointment of Jon Trickett to oversee the question of working class representation will hopefully see the step change required to get more people from the manual trades through the selection process.

Finally, on selections, this is always an emotive issue. The decision of AWS or open selection will invariably disappoint someone. Decisions are deliberated and supported by contemporary data from the region and Party headquarters. We all need to ensure selections are fair and free from undemocratic interference. All candidates are entitled to a fair opportunity to present their electoral platform without undue influence of funding from outside our Party.



BITEBACKS

‘During the 1930s the Tory Government became committed to collective bargaining. This was seen as a way to increase wages and thus increase demand – classic Keynesianism. In 1938 the Tory minister for Labour actually spelt out this commitment in parliament. In 1945 the Labour government energetically took up the cause and actively pressed for collective bargaining. By 1946 collective bargaining covered 86% of the workforce. In 1980 the figure was 82%. However, by 1997 it was down to 36% and is 32% today. During the last 30 years there has been a huge transfer of wealth from labour to capital. This is reflected in the ballooning of personal debt.’

(Professor Keith Ewing, speaking to CLPD officers, January 2012).

‘They don't come much more blue-blooded than Sir William Robert Ferdinand Mount, third baronet, Eton and Christ Church, whose cousin is David Cameron's mother. He ran Margaret Thatcher's policy unit in Downing Street and has been a lifelong and loyal Conservative. Yet he has written the most explosively left-wing book in decades. No Polly Toynbee, Kevin Maguire or any of the coterie of the left commentariat would dare to write such an attack on current economics and the craven capitulation of our ruling politicians to unaccountable, unelected, unwholesome money men and nomenklaturists who control the British state and all our lives.’

(Denis MacShane reviewing Mount's *The New Few or a Very British Oligarchy*, *Tribune* 15/6/12).

‘The negative way in which Labour talked about social security (aka welfare) while in power helped to fuel its unpopularity. Ed Miliband recently spoke of the importance of the value of solidarity. A decent social security scheme represents the institutional embodiment of that value and is essential to help people cope with growing economic insecurity. Labour must defend it in the name of solidarity and security.’

(Ruth Lister, Labour, House of Lords, *Guardian* 19/5/12).

ANNUAL CONFERENCE ALERT

PETER WILLSMAN'S ANNUAL CONFERENCE ALERT,

(cont. from p1)

change the Party's Rule Book. Most of these will be from the NEC, but two are tabled by CLPs [Bridgend CLP and Islington North CLP]. The latter two were submitted last year, but under an obscure convention (known as 'the 1968 Ruling') have been delayed for a year. This one year delay applies to all rule changes submitted by CLPs and unions, but does not apply to rule changes from the NEC. The NEC can (and has!) agree rule changes one week and have them voted on by conference the following week.

Last year, in addition to the rule changes from Bridgend and Islington North, a further twelve rule changes were submitted by no less than a total of 28 CLPs. All of these were ruled out by the Conference Arrangements Committee (CAC). In some cases the ruling out was completely out of order and in many cases it was highly questionable. It is all too obvious that the powers-that-be do not want pesky CLPs interfering with their preordained rally, which is what Annual Conference has degenerated into. And this despite the protestations from Ed Miliband et al that they take CLPs seriously and want to listen to them. Unfortunately these fine words do not butter any parsnips.

Support rule change from Bridgend CLP

This is a very important rule change proposal and agreement on this basic principle would be a big step towards

restoring a more effective Annual Conference. Bridgend is proposing that CLPs and unions should have the right to amend NPF documents at Conference. It is absolutely right that Party organisations should be able to have their views tabled at our Party's Sovereign body. Bridgend doesn't specify when and how amendments should be submitted. In order not to frighten the powers-that-be too much, it could be agreed that direct amendments from CLPs and unions would only be allowed in the year that the final stage policy documents are being considered. It is already the agreed practice that, at this final stage, CLPs and unions can send amendments to the NPF. But this means that CLPs and Unions have to rely on the grace and favour of NPF reps in order for their amendments to be progressed. If the Party leadership is serious about giving more influence to members and CLPs then, at the final policy stage, CLPs and unions should have the right to submit their policy amendments direct to Conference for a decision. In order to establish this vital principle delegates must vote for the Bridgend rule change. The platform will say that this matter is "under review" and ask for the Bridgend rule change to be remitted into the long grass. Don't be bamboozled! Vote for Bridgend!

Support rule change from Islington North CLP

This important rule change seeks to make Annex Reports to Annual Conference from the NPF more democratic. Annex Reports gave an account of the action that the NPF had taken in relation to each of the Contemporary Motions/Issues that were considered by the previous year's Conference, consequent to the Priorities Ballot in that year. Conference could then assess to what extent the Contemporary Motion/Issue had been treated seriously by the NPF. It was a way of holding the NPF to account. But last year no Annex Reports were presented and it looks as if the 'powers-that-be' have redirected them to the long grass. But Conference should have a specific report about what has happened to the Contemporary Motions carried the previous year. Whether these were labelled 'contemporary motions' or 'contemporary issues' is neither here nor there. Annex Reports are an important mechanism of accountability. Minority reports within Annex Reports (as Islington

South propose) would be an even stronger mechanism of democracy and accountability. Delegates need to rescue Annex Reports from the long grass by supporting Islington North.

The platform will say that this matter is 'under review' and ask for the Islington North rule change to be remitted into the dustbin. Don't be bamboozled! Vote for Islington North!

The CAC is out of order – Justice for CLPs!

An identical rule change (from Leyton and Wanstead CLP and from Rochford and Southend East CLP) has been ruled out completely illegitimately. The rule change sought to establish the new position of a Party Ombudsperson. This person would investigate all complaints of dubious and unethical conduct within our Party, including complaints against full time Party officials. A cynic might argue that this is precisely why Party officials might like to see this particular rule change redirected to the dustbin!

When submitting their rule change the two CLPs simply proposed adding a new clause 10 (establishing a Party Ombudsperson) to Chapter 1 of the Rule Book. And they asked for the existing clauses to be re-numbered. The rule change from the 2 CLPs was correctly printed in last year's Delegates Report. But in the version of the rule change shown subsequently to the CAC, the office had added "Delete the current Clause 10". They then used this deletion as the basis for recommending that the Leyton and Rochford rule change be ruled out! The office also argued that since "a very similar proposal" from South Ribble CLP was defeated in 2011 then Leyton and Rochford are caught by the '3-year-rule'. But South Ribble was proposing a Code of Ethics for our Party, not an ombudsperson. Also South Ribble was trying to amend a different chapter in the Rule Book. The '3-year-rule' states:

"when Party conference has made a decision on a constitutional amendment, no proposal to amend that part of the constitution or rules of the Party shall appear on the agenda for a period of three years".

A completely different chapter is clearly not the same part of the constitution!

The definition of the word "part" has a major significance because the CAC has

Key votes in Party elections

The National Constitutional Committee (constituency section)

■ Vote: **Mark James** (Greenwich and Woolwich CLP)

Conference Arrangements Committee general section

■ Vote for **Mick Murphy** (Unite)

■ Vote for **Jane Taylor** (Unite)

ruled out most of the 12 rule change proposals from the 28 CLPs by employing a blanket application of the word ‘part’. They clearly maintain that if there is, say, a gigantic clause, covering lots of different parts/topics, then even the most minor successful rule amendment, to only one small part of that clause, automatically means that nothing whatsoever in the whole clause can be touched for another three years! This has to be an incorrect interpretation. Unfortunately it suggests that the powers-that-be have a deep seated hostility, perhaps subconscious, to what they see as pesky CLPs having ideas above their allotted station. Had the originators of the ‘3-year-rule’ meant ‘clause’ they would have put ‘clause’ but they put ‘part’. Obviously ‘part’ was generally intended to be something smaller and more discrete than a whole clause. The CAC needs to give the matter more thought and stop treating CLPs so unfairly. This injustice must be addressed!

Our Party must end its neglect of the working class

Ed Miliband and the NEC are beginning to address this major issue and some proposals may be put to this year’s Conference. The NEC has commissioned a survey, which reveals that only 9% of Labour MPs have a manual working background, whereas 27% have a political ‘bag carrying’ background. As Iain McNicol has pointed out, if these percentages were representative of the public at large, then over six and a half million people would be working for MPs etc!

The Executive Committee of Unite has recently endorsed a political strategy that commits the unions to working in the Party to end this disgraceful situation. If it is not ended Labour will suffer an enormous electoral penalty. In the words of the Unite document – “we aim to end the discrimination against working class candidates, BAME and women candidates for public office. That only 4% of the MPs in Parliament are from manual occupations is a notable part of the crisis of working class representation. 55% come from public relations, politics and the media. This must change – we have it in our power to do so”.

Changes to Party policy making

Ed Miliband has recognised that the existing policy making procedures, dubbed ‘Partnership into Power’, are past their ‘sell by’ date. They were introduced during the dark ages of Blairism and had the appearance of being

democratic. But in reality they ensured that Annual Conference was reduced to a happy clappy rally and that policy making was centralised and in the hands of an unaccountable and neo-liberal clique.

The NEC is now proposing some improvements. The introduction to their latest document is encouraging – “we need real change to transform how we make our policy. So we will change Partnership into Power to give Party members more of a say and to reach out to supporters new and old.” What we are getting is hardly a transformation, but it is some steps in the right direction. These will include:

- An online ‘policy hub’. This will publish National Policy Forum (NPF) policy papers. Members (and the general public) will be able to suggest amendments, make comments and have a general argument. There will also be provision for members to engage with the Party’s elected reps on current policy issues outside the formal NPF process.

- A new power for Annual Conference to shape the work of the NPF via a ‘Policy Ballot’, which will identify key topics for consideration. These will then presumably be taken up in NPF policy papers. The ‘Policy Ballot’ will operate alongside and in addition to the existing Priorities Ballot at Conference.

- Every June the NPF will consider the policy arguments generated by the NPF policy papers that were published during the previous year (arguments that have taken place in Policy Commissions and on the Hub). The NPF will choose between different political positions on a simple majority basis. Final policy papers will then go to the JPC and then on to Annual Conference for a decision. There seems to be no provision for minority positions at Conference, which is contrary to the existing arrangements. Conference will simply vote on a take-it-or-leave-

it basis. This is a step backwards for Party democracy.

- In the year prior to a General Election each Policy Commission will produce a ‘final year document’, which will draw upon all the previously agreed policy papers from earlier years. At this stage CLPs and affiliates will be able to submit specific amendments for consideration by NPF reps. This is the existing arrangement. It would be much better if CLPs and unions could submit their amendments direct to Conference, rather than having to rely on the grace and favour of NPF reps.

- Once agreed by the NPF, and then by Conference, the ‘final year documents’ form the Party’s Programme on which the General Election Manifesto is based.

- The current six Policy Commissions will be renamed and reorganised to focus on Labour’s key priorities. All NPF reps will be able to attend meetings of one Policy Commission.



BITEBACKS

‘If we compare the present policy-making process with the previous long-established practice of decision-making by Annual Conference, there are several major advantages of the earlier system. It generated contributions from 100s of CLPs. The latest NPF consultation attracted responses from only 35 CLPs. Furthermore, at the Annual policy-making Conference, ordinary members could speak directly to power.’

(Ann Black in a recent report to members.)

SUNDAY’S PRIORITY BALLOT

USE YOUR VOTE, DON’T WASTE IT

CLPs must give guidance to their delegates about how to vote in this ballot. Above all they must be made aware that there is no point whatsoever in wasting a vote by supporting any of the same four resolutions supported by the unions in the ballot even if, as is likely, you support any or all of them. The union four are rightly guaranteed automatic inclusion for debate. To maximise range of debate and

to make sure issues important to CLPs get a hearing, CLP delegates must make their choices on different subjects from the union four, thus giving Conference the opportunity to debate four subjects from the CLP section of the ballot and thus eight subjects in all. Delegates are likely to come under illegitimate and even browbeating pressure from Party officials, including parliamentarians, to replicate the union four, thus restricting the number of issues. Don’t be fooled by this undemocratic malpractice. CLPD will be advising delegates of the four union choices in the Sunday edition of its Yellow Pages.

LABOURING FOR PEACE

SHEILA TRIGGS, FELLOW ACTIVIST IN THE WOMEN'S INTERNATIONAL LEAGUE FOR PEACE AND FREEDOM REVIEWS FOR US:

LABOURING FOR PEACE, BY GRACE COOKALL-GREENING AND ROSALIE HUZZARD.

This short and accessible book (just £5 from Housmans Bookshop) is the story of dedicated activists within the Labour Party working for peace over the past seventy years with the organisation Labour Action for Peace (LAP).

In 1940, when the Second World War had already begun, the Labour Pacifist Fellowship (LPF) was set up by socialist internationalists, within the Labour Party, who opposed the war. In our current political climate, it may be difficult for readers to grasp the strength of the support at that time for the principles of peace, socialism and disarmament among Labour Party members, including the pacifist MP George Lansbury

who was among the founders of the Fellowship.

In 1971 the LPF became Labour Action for Peace, (LAP), widening its base beyond totally pacifist members. But throughout its history, LAP activists have worked to promote policies of peace and socialism within the Labour Party. The different political issues of each period in this history including nuclear weapons, international relations, wars, the United Nations and Labour Party conferences and resolutions become easy to follow with the clear sub-headings that break-up the text.

Over the years, leading activists from Fenner Brockway, Frank Allaun and Robin Cook, to Ron Huzzard, Walter Wolfgang and Tony Benn, have taken to the LAP stage to try to mould the policies of the Labour Party. Their lifelong efforts have been heroic. But this book reveals the tragedy of a Party system where resolutions passed with overwhelming majorities at a Labour Party Conference – even in the days when conference resolutions were supposed to count – were ignored by the Party leadership when writing the subsequent Party manifesto. Peace policies in opposition were abandoned by the



BITEBACKS

'Charles Beard in 1947 described the national security doctrine of the US president as "perpetual war for perpetual peace".'

(Mehdi Hassan, *Guardian* 20/8/11).

'Two-thirds of Margaret Thatcher's first cabinet opposed buying the US Trident missile system and the chiefs of staff were not unanimous. But the Downing Street papers show that this did not stop the "Iron Lady" from going ahead with the deal behind their backs.'

(*'Missile Defence'*, *Guardian* 30/12/11).

Labour Party in office. This has been true in particular in the New Labour years.

Labouring for Peace is a positive testimony to numbers of activists and MPs who have made the decision that the Labour Party continues to offer the possibility of a socialist and peaceful alternative in international and domestic policies. The challenge for them has been how to make this happen. Whether or not you agree with their analysis of the road to peace within the UK, this is a fascinating and salutary history.

YOUNG LABOUR NEEDS AUTONOMY

DOMINIC CURRAN FROM LABOUR STUDENTS PUTS THE SPOTLIGHT ON THE CONSTRAINED WORLD OF LABOUR STUDENTS

It has been an eventful year for those involved in our Party's youth and student sections, yielding some success for those who seek to increase their autonomy and democratise their internal workings. Under Refounding Labour, last year's Party Conference gave Young Labour most of the rights of a socialist society, a measure welcomed by young members. Furthermore, in the run up to the Labour Students' National Conference in February, a really well organised campaign sprang from almost nowhere calling for OMOV in elections to the National Committee and winning many democratic concessions within the organisation.

Furthermore, in a real landmark for the Party's youth section, Young Labour held its first ever policy conference in June. At the conference a real centre-left consensus emerged with a desire to confront neo-liber-

alism with real social democratic policies to deal with youth unemployment, the housing crisis and child poverty.

What is clear is that in Young Labour there is much potential and energy to create the vibrant and independent youth section that would be a real asset to the Party in campaigning and reaching out to young voters. I went to the European Young Socialists' summer camp in Croatia in July and was really impressed by the strong and well organised young socialist groups from all over Europe that provide their mother parties with a stream of committed and experienced young activists. These youth organisations are what Young Labour in Britain should aim to be like.

One of the things that limit Young Labour in fulfilling this potential is its lack of autonomy. Despite the various rights won for Young Labour in Refounding Labour, real autonomy is still some way off. Currently Young Labour's constitution is merely a chapter in the Party's rulebook, rather than being a standalone document for an autonomous organisation. We currently have the absurd situation that if young members want to change how Young Labour oper-

ates, they have to get a rule change passed by Party Conference rather than decide it for themselves.

A key demand for improving our youth section is to give real autonomy to young members so they can decide how their organisation is constituted and in what activities they wish to take part. This would not necessarily mean becoming a socialist society but merely becoming a fully autonomous youth section. A way of achieving this would be for Conference to pass a rule change to transfer responsibility for the majority of Young Labour's internal constitution to the youth organisation itself. If this were to happen then young members would have a far greater level of autonomy in their organisation, allowing Young Labour to develop as a more effective youth section.

Other issues such as the lack of access to membership lists continue to hold back Young Labour and the remedying of this situation must remain a key demand of young activists. But winning a greater measure of autonomy would be a huge leap forward in improving the Party's youth section.

REVIEWS

**COLIN BURGESS,
THORNBURY & YATE CLP**

**DEXTER WHITFIELD'S
IN PLACE OF AUSTERITY,
RUSSELL HOUSE,
NOTTINGHAM, 2012**

Let me start by saying that this book is not an easy read, but one that all Labour Party and trades union people should buy, read, and keep by them as they struggle to resist the restoration and consolidation of capitalist class power.

Whitfield says that he had four key objectives in mind when writing the book:

a) to develop a theoretical framework to better understand neo-liberal transformation of public services and the welfare state;

b) to expose the myths of commissioning, localism, big society and empowerment;

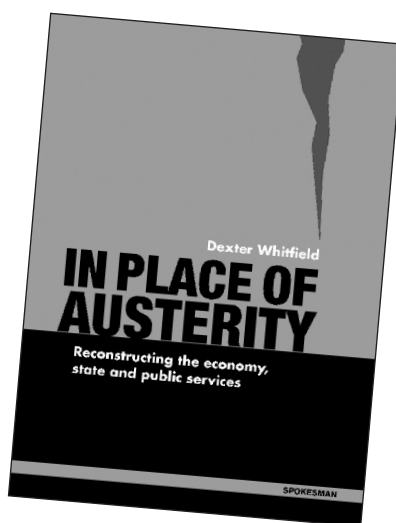
c) to promote action strategies that can stop, slow down and/or mitigate the negative consequences of these policies;

d) to advance a framework of policies for the reconstruction of the economy, state and public services.

The purpose of this review, then, is to assess from our point of view the extent to which we can feel that he has succeeded. To do this you have to take Whitfield's first key objective seriously because it informs the other objectives.

From his considerable previous work on the social reality of our times, Whitfield has indeed abstracted four empirical generalisations: financialisation, personalisation, marketisation, and privatisation. These four he joins rather loosely together into a model of the neo-liberal public sector transformation. Starting from the demand for public goods, the model runs through the increased financial control of the public's activities and the personalisation of consumerism, with its input of neo-liberalism and corporate/business interests. Economic activities then run through the marketisation of, for example, the NHS and the resulting commercialisation of services and labour, embedding business interests and restructuring democratic accountability and user involvement. These processes culminate in the full-blown privatisation of public property. The real consequences, intended or unintended, of these processes, wrapped up and obscured by liberal-democratic ideology, are capitalist accumulation by dispossession and the disempowerment of the public.

The model is massively documented with data, and is itself useful in gathering together



the fragmented glimpses beneath the surface of everyday life. The model satisfactorily exposes the liberal-democratic myths around the Big Society. The underlying state/monopoly capitalism is creating as a cloak a "corporate welfare state" as the citizens' welfare state is privatised. However, there is still some way to go before a useful theoretical framework is produced. In the meantime, the work of David Harvey (2010/11) *The Enigma of Capital*, the only theoretically based author that Whitfield quotes, gives the perspective within which his theory should be viewed.

"The objective is to establish a fundamental return to values of collective solidarity, public interest and social justice"

The centre part of the book is devoted to reconstruction strategies. "Reconstruction" he says, "has three inter-connected parts – new economic policies, alternative policies for public services and [citizens'] welfare state, and a new public service management". These need to be understood as a whole. This is an example of what our previous Labour governments called "joined-up thinking". If Ed Miliband based his strategy on these suggestions, it is possible to believe that he would find enough support to stay in power long enough to be able to put these thoughts into practice. The objective, Whitfield says, is to establish a fundamental return to values of collective solidarity, public interest and social justice, rescuing them from speculation, greed, exploitation and self-interest. The reconstruction strategy needs to be based on seven core principles, including democratic accountability, social

justice, public investment, high quality services and employment, universal provision and sustainable development. On reconstructing the state, Whitfield bases himself on the United Nations.

Unlike most alternative strategies, this is well researched and although much work needs to be done in re-developing the institutions to ensure that any possible devils in the detail are kept minimal, with the necessary political will, the suggestions offered here are practicable. We need to take up these strategies and run with them. Another world is possible!



BITEBACKS

"Big society" rhetoric is all too often heard by many as aspirational waffle designed to conceal a deeply damaging withdrawal of the state from its responsibilities to the most vulnerable.' (Faith in the Public Square, Rowan Williams, quoted in *The Observer* 24/6/12).

'It is a fallacy to assert that a sovereign government, with its own currency and its own central bank, is ever short of money. How do we think major wars were financed? If a Labour government is returned in 2015 with a programme for restoring output and employment it will have no difficulty in finding the money. Labour needs to stop pandering to public prejudice, and become the Party of full employment.' (Michael Kennedy, Former economic adviser at the Treasury and British embassy, Washington, *Guardian* 24/1/12).

'Thank heavens for the bonus culture that enables UK banks to recruit top people. Imagine what a shambles they would be if they were run and staffed by greedy unprincipled muppets.' (David Guest, *Guardian* 29/6/12).

'One former executive described how Apple relied upon a Chinese factory to revamp iPhone manufacturing just weeks before the device was due on the shelves. A foreman roused 8,000 workers inside the company's dormitories. Each employee was given a biscuit and a cup of tea and within half an hour started a 12-hour shift fitting glass screens into bevelled frames.' (Network to Get Products Made, *The New York Times* 29/1/12).

TEL'S TALES

NEO-LIBERAL BLINKERS

David Cameron was quick to claim credit when General Motors decided not to close the Ellesmere Port car plant. If the Tory government were not so blinkered it might reflect on the fact that General Motors would no longer exist, were it not for the bail out by Obama as part of his governments' economic stimulus and growth policy.

NEXT GENERAL ELECTION? – GETTING THE FACTS RIGHT

The hacks in the media are wrong to say that the LibDems are trapped in the coalition. The recent Fixed-Term Parliaments Act rules out a snap election. An election before 2015 can only be called if there is a two-thirds majority in the House voting for a dissolution of parliament, or if an existing administration is defeated on a no-confidence vote and a new administration cannot be cobbled together within 14 days. Thus, were the LibDems to break with the Tories, Cameron would have to soldier on as a minority government. If this were defeated, in a confidence vote, he would not be able to dissolve parliament. Instead, Cameron would have to resign and the Queen would have to send for Ed Miliband. Only if our Ed were unable to form a government would there then be a general election.

As Prof. Vernon Bogdanor has pointed out, there is a case for Labour trying to get the LibDems to simply switch sides. From the LibDems' point of view this might well have the major advantage of saving many of their parliamentary seats. If they stay with the Tories they will lose most of their MPs. But after a more popular Lab-Lib (minority?) government they could do quite well in 2015.

ONE RULE FOR ALL

I am not calling for tighter disciplinary rules within our Party. On the contrary, I think they should be more light touch. But I am calling for even handedness. For example, in Tower Hamlets rank and file members are constantly facing expulsion for any deviation from total support for Labour. But what about Party donor Lord Sugar telling people not to vote for Ken?! And what about well connected blogger, Dan Hodges, writing "Ken Livingstone is right; it's him or Boris Johnson. That's why I'm voting Boris"?!?

LURKING IN THE SHADOWS

In recent months there has been a lot of talk about the very well-heeled Blairite Misnomer organisation (also known as 'Progress'). The right wing slate for the Party's NEC was even dubbed 'the "Progress" slate'. But this is a misreading of the situation. The slate was a Labour First – 'Progress' slate. It is the long established, but shadowy, Labour First that pulls the strings. The two successes on their slate were from Labour First, whereas the 'Progress' reps on the slate disappeared without trace.

Labour First goes back to the bad old days of Frank Chapple; its guru is John Spellar, who was Chapple's loyal bag carrier. For years senior officials and general secretaries of both the Labour Party and some Unions have operated in the Labour First underworld. In the unions they call themselves Members First and, presumably, the new right wing group called 'Scotland First' comes from the same stable. On the few occasions that they emerge blinking into the daylight, they pretend that Labour First is only a mailing list. Pull the other one!

THE CONSERVATIVE AND UNEMPLOYMENT PARTY

In the old days the Tories were called The Conservative and Unionist Party. A better title would be 'The Conservative and Unemployment Party'. Once in office the Tories always force up unemployment as a deliberate strategy. This is in order to strengthen capital and weaken labour. A big wig at the Bank of America Merrill Lynch has spelt this out very clearly – "A decrease in government employment, in government wages, and in unemployment benefits can have positive effects on the economy because it makes the labour market less tight and weakens unions' power" (*Investors Chronicle* 7/10/11).

ITS THE POOR WOT GETS THE BLAME

We have heard about Boris Johnson walking off with a cigar case, about Nick Clegg as a student setting fire to two greenhouses and about celebrity chef Antony Worrell Thompson, caught by security cameras on five separate occasions putting only some items through the self-service check out machines. Nothing much seems to have been done about any of this. But a 'rioter', who walked off with £3.50 worth of water bottles, was jailed for 6 months.

Michael Gove claimed thousands in dodgy expenses; then when found out he apologised and paid the money back. A mother-of-two from Manchester slept

through the riots, but accepted as a gift a looted pair of shorts. She was not given the option of returning them; instead, she got five months.

WATT A PRAT!

Peter Watt, Labour's former General Secretary and Blairite, disgraced himself by going public with bitter criticisms of Gordon Brown during the 2010 General Election campaign. Recently he has been gobbling off on a website with his views about benefit claimants. According to Watt, "they don't work, but never seem to be short of a bob". The *Sunday Times* pointed out that this is just the sort of talk Tories want to hear from the PM, although the newspaper suggested that it was probably a bit too right-wing for Cameron. But clearly not too reactionary for a former top official of the Labour Party.

BE COOL: READ LEFTFUTURES

The most discerning Party members – and by definition this includes the readers of Tel's Tales – should check out the website Leftfutures.org. If you don't have a computer then use the free ones at the local library, like I do. Leftfutures is pretty much a daily Tribune, with links to lots of other good stuff. The regular pieces by CLPD member Michael Meacher on economics and inequality are always worth reading. How about this for a statistic! – out of 27 EU countries, only Estonia has a higher level of poverty among the unemployed than the UK. This is because the benefits paid here are among the lowest in Europe. Over the last 40 years unemployment benefit has been cut by 50%, as a proportion of average earnings, to just 10%. Over the same period, the total remuneration of FTSE chief executives rose by more than 1,000%. The ignorant Peter Watt needs to read Leftfutures.



BITEBACKS

'As early as 2000 the gap between New Labour promise and its practice was set out in the *New Statesman*. I thought the New Labour project was to make our ideas into the dominant ideas of the society, in an enterprise of advocacy and persuasion and example, not to take the dominant ideas we found lying around after the Thatcher years and make them into our ideas.'
(Tony Wright, *Doing Politics*, Biteback Publications.)

SEDDON'S WORLD

LAURA DAVISON, NATIONAL UNION OF JOURNALISTS OFFICIAL AND MEMBER OF FOLKESTONE AND HYTHE CLP, REVIEWS MARK SEDDON'S *STANDING FOR SOMETHING – LIFE IN THE AWKWARD SQUAD* (ILLUSTRATED BY MARTIN ROWSON), BITEBACK 2011.

What really makes this book is Mark Seddon's ebullience, charm and good humour as he delves around in the seamy backside of national and international politics and journalism. It's part travelogue, part journal, part sketchbook, the brilliant Martin Rowson cartoons adding extra pizzazz.

The book is disarming in its honest account of cock-ups and failures, not all Mark's fault, which litter his recent history. His travels and travails take us through his Al Jazeera days in New York and on insightful visits to Libya, Poland and China among others. From the international incident in the lavatory of the North Korean general, to confronting Blair's toilet backstage in his

Conference dressing room, you get a sense of the enormous fun to be had alongside the serious business of political dissent.

Beyond the anecdotes there is analysis of New Labour control freakery and its ultimate hollowness, from someone who has seen it through – joining the Party aged just 15. Mark describes himself as an outsider but many people in the book seem to take the view that it's better to have him inside the tent where he can be supervised than



This brilliant cartoon is reprinted here with Martin Rowson's very kind consent. It looks even better in Mark Seddon's book and there are several other great cartoons and a foreword by Martin as well. Get yourself a copy post haste.

out. He certainly gives the inside track on the workings of the NEC and the time he spotted Rupert Murdoch being schmoozed in Downing Street. His view of David Cameron is summed up in the anger he feels when the Tory leader with typical low nastiness calls Dennis Skinner a dinosaur.

The book's star character is really the legendary Gay Hussar restaurant. It hosts theatrical dinners and plotting meetings with style and even provides pull out-beds for the tired and emotional who take shelter there. There are certainly a lot of spirits, of all kinds, on show. The book also gets its own back on people who left Mark with the bill.

The book concludes at the pivotal moment in August 2011 when the coalition government was forced into a judicial inquiry following the shock news of the hacking of Milly Dowler's phone. The evidence that has emerged from the Leveson inquiry will fill many books, but it would be interesting to hear Mark's take on it and how he sees the way forward for British journalism. When Leveson reports there will be an opportunity to change fundamentally the political and journalistic consensus so terrifyingly captured in the final pages of the book in Martin Rowson's cartoon of a puking Rupert disgorging Thatcher, a slavering Blair and finally a tiny infantile Cameron. We need people like Mark around to make sure this moment is seized, both from the inside and out.

DAVID BEERE OF BANBURY CLP SAYS WHAT LABOUR NEEDS IS FRENCH LESSONS

Politicians often claim they don't follow opinion polls. Footballers often claim not to look at the match reports on a Monday morning. But we all know the truth of the matter.

It is, of course, true that opinion polls can mean all sorts of things, but they do mean something – even if it is not what you think!

However, it could be that Labour should cast an eye on some polling that was done during the French Presidential campaign. It might come as no surprise to learn that 'Left sympathisers' would support a marginal rate of income tax of 75% on those earning, well receiving (!), €1m a year. But the percentage support (90) is sensational. The policy won 50% from sympathisers of the 'Centrist' Democratic movement, whose leader, Bayrou, backed Hollande in the second round. There was 69% support from FN sympathisers. Only with sympathisers of Sarkozy's UMP did support fall to 20%.

Other ideas of Hollande that found favour

with the public were enacting laws against excessive prices (81% approval), an income tax rate of 45% above €150,000 income (80%) and reducing the retirement age to 60 for those with 41 years of contributions (75%).

In case you think that support for Hollande's policies ends at Dover then contemplate the following levels of support for the policies shown below in a very recent Yougov poll. The percentages shown are those showing total support.

- Reducing the deficit: 85% approval
- Redistributing wealth from the richest in society: 70% approval
- Creating jobs and reducing unemployment: 95% approval
- Creating economic growth: 95% approval
- Introducing a top rate of 75% income tax for those earning over £1m a year: 56% approval
- Reducing the state pension age to 60 for those who have worked 41 years or more: 63% approval
- Establishing a state owned bank that will lend to small and medium sized businesses: 74% approval
- Building 500,000 houses a year including 150,000 council houses: 64% approval
- Introducing a tax on financial transactions by investments: 61% approval

These levels of support are from all voters and go up with Labour voters. So progressive, social-democratic proposals such as these resonate with the electorates on both sides of the channel and refute the arguments of those ever ready to advocate timidity in policy development. *La lutte continue* and... Hollande won.



BITEBACKS

'Of the monarch's opinion of Blair, Bedell Smith claims: Elizabeth II once said: "I think he's in the wrong party".' (*Sunday Times* 8/1/12).

'Rightwing Tory backbencher Nadine Dorries said: "Unfortunately, I think that not only are Cameron and Osborne two posh boys who don't know the price of milk, but they are two arrogant posh boys who show no remorse, no contrition and no passion to want to understand the lives of others – and that is their real crime".' (Quoted by Tom Clark and Patrick Wintour, *Guardian* 24/4/12).

REBUILDING TOTTENHAM

KATE OSAMOR AND MARTHA OSAMOR (MEMBERS OF TOTTENHAM CLP)

Broadwater Farm is an inner city estate in Tottenham. Built in the early seventies, it consists of 1063 dwellings that at present accommodate more than 2000 people from different ethnic and social backgrounds. Senior citizens, single mothers and ordinary families share a physical environment that has become increasingly inadequate due to structural and design faults.

It was a hard to let estate, so the council adopted a policy of concentrating single parents families, single young black youths, elderly white tenants and a large number of people from all over Haringey that had been previously labelled 'problem families'. Depicted by the media as a 'nightmare estate', it acquired a reputation as a dumping place for problem and homeless families, a haven for crime and burglary. Under false pretences real social problems were disguised and ignored. Lack of proper services, high unemployment rates, poverty and deprivation were replaced by prejudice against the local residents. Ordinary people were either forgotten or neglected.

On 4th August Mark Duggan, a 29-year-old black man from Broadwater farm, was shot by police in Tottenham. Police stated that they were attempting to arrest Duggan on suspicion of planning an attack, and that he was in possession of a handgun. Duggan was shot by police and died from a gunshot wound to the chest. The police who shot Duggan were part of the Specialist Firearms Command (CO19), accompanying officers from Operation Trident, a London Metropolitan police unit responsible for gun crime within the black community.

On 6 August 2011, Duggan's relatives and local residents marched from Broadwater Farm to Tottenham Police Station. The demonstrators wanted information from police about the circumstances of Duggan's death. A chief inspector spoke with the demonstrators who demanded to see a higher-ranking officer. The demonstrators waited over five hours and no senior ranking officer came to address the demo. The scene turned ugly and the rest is history.

There have been many stories about Mark Duggan but few go beyond a superficial account, creating an atmosphere of fear, terror and crime for their readers. The media, as usual have chosen to sensationalise several unfounded, unsubstantiated stories about the estate rather than find out the truth. Reality is not deemed to be trustworthy.

When the media focus their cameras on the Arab spring, they tell us of innocent people being shot in Syria and Libya and the need to go and support the rebels against the oppressive dictatorship.

But when black people want answers to a clear miscarriage of justice about bad police and bad law enforcement, the media decide to report only the negative. Imagine in our very own backyard a young black man was shot dead and the family was given no explanation.

Before the 2011 summer of unrest the people of Tottenham were under increasing police pressure, and an alienated environment was created between the local community and the police. Community representa-

tives were denied access by the police and the IPCC to put the community's point of view forward. The community has felt that the policing was and remains both of an oppressive and racist nature.

The shooting of Mark Duggan was one in a series of illegal procedures and methods not just in Tottenham but also in Brixton, Manchester, Bristol, Toxteth. The people of the inner cities seemed to have been targeted for a concerted attack by the repressive forces of the state.

As soon as the death of Mark Duggan became known to the wider community, it would only be a matter of time before the shared feeling of justified anger and bitterness would explode onto the streets.

How do we move forward and rebuild Tottenham?

Despite all these barriers, grassroots people have proven through positive and united community action that we can make a positive impact on the lives of Tottenham residents. For example, we have now the Save Downhills Campaign, the Broadwater Farm Defence Campaign and Wards corner campaigners. The process of community development and involvement is paralleled by increasing uneasiness on the part of the police and the media who, acting under their own prejudices, will not accept the achievement of grassroots communities. They media see it as a threat to its exclusive power and authority and as an unacceptable symbol of people's power.

HANG ONTO THE BRANCHES

DAVID GARDNER, CHAIR OF GREENWICH AND WOOLWICH CLP AND VICE CHAIR OF THE LABOUR DEMOCRATIC NETWORK

Anyone who has read about the implementation of Refounding Labour or the recent (quickly withdrawn) letter to CLPs on reorganisation post-boundary changes, cannot fail to see a pattern of advice which is about aggregating or moving away from our Party Branches as the core unit of the party. Given the principal (and most laudable) objective of Refounding Labour and the subsequent rule changes is to ensure the Party is genuinely rooted in – and representative of – our

local communities, now is actually **the time of the Branch**.

In all my experience, in Parties across the country – from being a Party Branch Secretary at the age of 15 through to being a CLP Chair currently – is that the Branch is at the heart of the Party – and the health and strength of the Party locally is more often than not down to the strength of the Branch. We all know, of course, that Branches vary hugely. Some like mine in Charlton (London) are inclusive, dynamic, campaigning, and representative and have great debates but are also very rooted and effective at elections. Others struggle – through lack of members or activity, through councillor

(cont. on next page)



'Tottenham forms the core of the borough of Haringey, where a fast-rising total of well over 10,000 people are claiming jobseekers allowance. In Tottenham itself, recent government figures show that there were 54 people for each registered employment vacancy. Spending cuts have led to Haringey closing 8 of 13 youth clubs with reductions in community police numbers soon to come.'

(Guardian letter 8/8/11).

HANG ONTO THE BRANCHES

(cont. from previous page)

capture (where local councillors dominate to ensure they are reselected!), or through a lack of policy debate or sometimes through the opposite problem of being brilliant at resolutions but never reaching out. And, thus, a first class CLP is also critical to provide a framework, support Branches in building their capacity and offering a wider experience and opportunities to members – as well as their formal constitutional role.

Many will be familiar with the Enfield Southgate CLP story. Won brilliantly by Stephen Twigg, the high point for so many of us on that famous early morning of 2 May 1997 was watching Portillo's crestfallen face. This CLP was the first out of the blocks to take advantage of the new flexibility in the rules. Out went Branches and their "boring rituals, meetings and minutes", in came CLP general meetings. Despite initial enthusiasm, a sense of locale was lost; capacity at Branch level was replaced by a CLP machine but people did not necessarily travel. The Party hollowed out; in 2002 local elections Labour lost Enfield when we made gains elsewhere in London. Southgate held just one ward. Then, to great surprise, Stephen Twigg lost in 2005 with a big swing of nearly 9% to the Tories when we held on to the equally marginal Enfield North next door (under 1% swing!). We had lost much of that capacity at ward/Branch level to campaign – a single team cannot cover a Constituency and people will not always travel.

My father is active in a highly marginal Constituency in the South where we hold the council but lost the Constituency in 2010. There, they have been "instructed" by the region to canvass only as a Constituency not as Branches and to work only in a handful of target wards. This has also led to hollowing out as people do not travel.

Branches are not only vital to ensure we have proper democracy in the Party, that local councillors are accountable and all members can be involved in debate and decision making, but they are vital to being rooted in our local communities; vital to the ultimate strength of our CLPs and, above all, to our effectiveness in winning elections.

One MP famously told a Fabian event at Conference that she would like a moratorium on meetings for a year. Other MPs (I suspect not many) would gladly move to a US-style machine where the organisation is built just around the campaign and has no teeth. But Labour is a proud democratic socialist party, as acknowledged by Refounding Labour; we have suffered from being too "command and control". We cannot just sit back and allow the Coalition to ruin the country and expect that voters will come running. We need a Party that is visible and active in every community, where Labour is seen to really make a difference and be rooted. That means active, inclusive, dynamic and local Branches. I am absolutely passionate that this is a vital ingredient to rebuilding Labour and ensuring we are a strong and democratic, credible national force.



BITEBACKS

'First-Past-the Post is not perfect, but having watched Berlusconi's antics over the years, I suggest that, notwithstanding all its faults, it is best to stick with it.'

(Harry Shindler, Rome, *Times* 23/12/11).

NOT TO BE MISSED

2013 CLPD AGM

Saturday February 23,
11.30am,
Conway Hall,
Red Lion Square.

*Report of 2012 AGM available on
CLPD website.*



BITEBACKS

'Many Party members supported the general thrust of Refounding Labour because it promised more of a role and influence for the grassroot foot soldiers. Unfortunately the NEC's Organisation Committee's pilot scheme on parliamentary selection is only one development that is pointing in the opposite direction. The selection of a PPC is probably the most important decision local Parties and members have to make. And in some cases it is a decision that will not be made again for some twenty or thirty years. It is therefore a decision that needs thorough consideration and full involvement by the membership. Unfortunately, the Pilot is rather the opposite of this. It is somewhat of an "act in haste, repent at leisure" system.'

(Peter Willsman, Leftfutures, where the full article can be read.)

CND FRINGE MEETING

Cut Trident – not jobs, health and education



Speakers include:

Nick Brown MP
Jeremy Corbyn MP
Katy Clark MP
Julie Morgan AM
Neil Findlay MSP
Christine Shawcroft, NEC

Chair:

**Kate Hudson, CND General
Secretary**

Time, date and venue:

6–8pm,
Monday 1st October
Arora Hotel, Princess St

Entrance Free
Refreshments available

Organised by CND, Labour CND
and Labour Action for Peace

TUC CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHT
CLPD Fringe meeting at TUC 2012 Brighton

Why every trade unionist should be active in the Labour Party

Tuesday 11 September, 6.0pm, UMI Brighton Hotel
(on sea front close to conference centre)

Speakers:

Lucy Anderson (NPF), **Billy Hayes** (CWU), **Diana Holland** (Unite and Labour Party treasurer), **Kelvin Hopkins MP**, **Jim Kennedy** (UCATT and Labour Party NEC), **Michael Meacher MP**, **Kate Osamor** (CLPD), **Simon Weller** (ASLEF), Chair: **Peter Willsman** (Secretary CLPD)

DOUBLE RED ALERT:

Don't forget to read the Willsman Guide to Conference. 2012 edition now available and once again up to the usual exceptional standard of insight and intrigue.

The indispensable handbook for all delegates (it is 14 pages long this year) and anyone else who wants to understand what is really going on at Conference.

The Guide can be downloaded from www.grassrootslabour.net

Annual Conference Highlights

CLPD rally and delegates' briefing

Sunday 30 September 10.30am

Bar 38 (downstairs bar), Peter Street (adjacent to secure area).

Entry £2 (conc. 50p)

Speakers:

Audrey Garner (Chair CLPD), **Mohammed Azam** (CLPD), **Ann Black** (NEC), **Kelvin Hopkins MP**, **Ken Livingstone** (NEC), **Michael Meacher MP**, **Mark Seddon** (CLPD), **Christine Shawcroft** (NEC), **Jon Trickett MP**, **Mick Whelan** (ASLEF) and **Peter Willsman** (Special Briefing for Delegates)

Conference assessment and the way forward for Labour

Wednesday 3 October, 6.00pm,

Bar 38 (downstairs bar), Peter Street (adjacent to secure area).

Entry £2 (conc. 50p)

Speakers:

Peter Willsman (Chair, CLPD secretary), **Tony Benn**, **Ann Black** (NEC), **John Cryer MP**, **Billy Hayes** (CWU), **Kelvin Hopkins MP**, **Martin Mayer** (NEC), **Michael Meacher MP**, **Kate Osamor** (CLPD), **Christine Shawcroft** (NEC), **Cat Smith** (Next Generation Labour)

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 imperious and undemocratic rejection in 1973 of any decision by Annual Conference to adopt an alternative economic policy involving the possible public ownership of some 25 strategic companies.

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. Previously Labour leaders were elected by MPs alone. This demand was achieved in January 1981 and was an advance for Party democracy, although some MPs saw it as a reason to defect and form the SDP, eventually to get fewer votes than Lord Sutch's Party.

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 would mean no majority Labour Governments). 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 'moderni-

sation' and, ironically, 'extending Party democracy'. For example, recently CLPD campaigned for, and achieved, OMOV for the CLP section of the National Policy Forum.

■ 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.

Campaign Briefing is sponsored by:



To join the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy please fill in the form below and return with a cheque payable to CLPD to: CLPD Treasurer, 157 North Street, Luton, LU2 7QH.

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