

Suggested rule change

Right of Party members to select candidates

The Labour Party Rule Book 2010, Section B, Chapter 5 Selections for elected public office, A General rules for selections for public office, Clause 2 reads:

'Party units shall act in accordance with guidance that shall be issued by the NEC in the application of these rules. The NEC has the authority to modify these rules and any procedural rules and guidelines as required to meet particular circumstances or to further the stated objectives and principles of these rules. Further the NEC has the power to impose candidates where it deems this is required by the circumstances.'

Amendment

Replace the words 'Further the NEC has the power to impose candidates where it deems this is required by the circumstances.' with:

'However, the NEC shall not override the general right of party members who reside in the electoral area concerned to participate in any selection unless the party finds itself for any reason without a duly selected candidate within two weeks of the close of nominations. In such cases, the NEC may appoint a selection panel of members drawn by lot from those of its members available (or, in the case of candidates other than for the UK or European parliament, available members of the NEC or appropriate Regional Board or party officials), plus the same number of members appointed by the appropriate party body for the electoral area concerned. In other cases where the need arises, the NEC may draw up a shortlist of not fewer than six candidates for selection by appointing a shortlisting panel drawn by lot from those members available (or, in the case of candidates other than for the UK or European parliament, available members of the NEC or appropriate Regional Board or party officials), plus the same number of members appointed by the appropriate party body for the electoral area concerned.'

Supporting Arguments

At recent general elections, there has been considerable concern about the number of late selections where candidates have been 'parachuted' into constituencies either by imposing candidates selected without any local involvement or by imposing shortlists which excluded popular local candidates. In many cases the time taken to organise the NEC selection or shortlisting process was no quicker than would have been possible at a local level by reducing the time allowed in the normal timetables for selection. In 2010, such decisions were taken without even the presence of local observers. This amendment therefore restricts the imposition of candidates to the most extreme circumstances, and in the case of imposition of either candidate or shortlist, that decisions are taken jointly with local representatives.

Closing date for constitutional amendments: 30 July 2010

Suggested rule change

**Policy reports: end the choice between all or nothing
Allow conference to vote in parts**

The Labour Party Rule Book 2010, Section B, Chapter 3 Party Conference, 3C Procedural rules for party conference, Conference rule 2 - Agenda. 2G reads as follows:

‘Conference shall consider policy reports and draft reports as part of the rolling programme, the NPF report, the NEC annual report, NEC statements and development strategy, constitutional amendments and contemporary issues or emergency resolutions submitted and accepted. It shall not consider any business unless recommended by the NEC or the CAC. At any special session of party conference, the NEC shall determine the business to be conducted.’

Amendment

After ‘strategy’ end the sentence and insert: ‘Conference has the right to refer back part of any policy document without rejecting the policy document as a whole. Conference shall also consider’

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Supporting Arguments

Conference has always had the right to refer back any section of the NEC Report. But the platform has always refused to extend this right to NEC policy statements (except in 1974 when Tony Benn chaired the Conference). When Partnership in Power was introduced in 1997 delegates were led to believe that National Policy Forum reports would be voted on in parts if Conference so wished. But in practice this has not happened. Conference has to vote for the whole document on a take-it-or-leave-it basis. This means that documents are always passed, although delegates may be unhappy with one or more particular section. This proposed rule would allow Conference to have a separate vote on any part of a policy document. It is a simple democratic procedure that is long overdue.

Closing date for constitutional amendments: 30 July 2010

Suggested rule change
Annual Conference – minority positions to Annex Reports

The Labour Party Rule Book 2010, Section B, Chapter 3 Section C (Procedural rules for Party Conference)
Subsection 2B Line 4.

Add after 'policy commissions':

'including any Annex Reports. The NEC will also make provision for any alternatives or minority reports to these Annex Reports to be presented, provided each alternative/minority report has been supported by at least 20 per cent of the members of the appropriate Policy Commission.'

Supporting Arguments

The Rule Book allows for Minority Positions to be timetabled in relation to final reports for the National Policy Forum – provided at least 35 members of the NPF's total membership of some 195 agrees to each Minority Position. Each year at Conference Annex Reports are provided by Policy Commissions in relation to the Contemporary Issues remitted at the previous year's Conference. At present these are put forward on a 'take it or leave it' basis. The above rule change would allow for a wider range of debate and bring the procedure into line with the process in relation to NPF reports. There are some 16 members of each Policy Commission, so a figure of 20 per cent to agree a Minority Report is roughly parallel with the process in relation to NPF reports.

Closing date for constitutional amendments: 30 July 2010

Suggested rule change
Restore Conference's right to take policy decisions

The Labour Party Rule Book 2010, Section B, Chapter 3 Party Conference, Section C Procedural rules for party conference, Conference rule 2 - Agenda.

Amendment

In Clause C

Lines 2-4: Delete 'Contemporary issue...to Conference' and insert 'motion on a matter of concern.'

Lines 4-7: Delete 'The CAC...Conference' and insert 'The CAC shall submit all motions received to a priorities ballot at the start of Conference.'

Lines 14-18: Delete 'Issues must...prioritised' and insert 'motions must be in writing and on one subject only.'

Line 20: Delete 'issues' and insert 'motions'.

In Clause F

Line 2: Delete 'issues' and insert 'motions'.

In Clause G

Line 5: Replace 'and' with ','

Line 6: Delete 'issues or' and insert 'motions and'.

Supporting Arguments

At a time when it was generally believed that a general election was imminent, the 2007 Party Conference was persuaded to replace contemporary motions with contemporary 'issues'. Whereas motions could be properly debated and voted on, thereby maintaining Conference's precious right to take decisions on Party policy, 'issues' could merely be debated and referred to the National Policy Forum without any votes to indicate Conference's views.

This serious weakening of the Party's democracy in 2007 was accepted on the undertaking that it would be reviewed in two years' time.

So now is the time for CLPs and affiliates to ask for their democratic rights to be restored.

Closing date for constitutional amendments: 30 July 2010

Suggested rule change
The right to amend NPF documents at conference

The Labour Party Rule Book 2010, Section B, Chapter 3 Party Conference, 3C Procedural rules for party conference, 2. Conference rule 2 - Agenda. 2C reads as follows:

‘All affiliated organisations and CLPs may submit one contemporary issue which is not substantially addressed by reports of the NEC or NPF to Conference . The CAC shall determine whether the issues meet these criteria and submit all issues received to a priorities ballot at the start of conference. The ballot will be divided into two sections. One section for CLPs and one section for trade unions and other affiliated organisations. At least the four priorities selected by CLPs will be time-tabled for debate, as will at least the first four priorities selected by Trade Unions and other affiliated organisations. Issues must be in writing, on one subject only and in ten words or less and may be supported by an explanation of why the issue should be prioritised. Alternatively, a constitutional amendment on one subject only may be submitted in writing. Contemporary issues and constitutional amendments must be received by the General Secretary at the offices of the party by the closing date determined by the NEC.’

Amendment

Add at end: ‘In a year when conference is considering the final stage documents from the National Policy Forum, CLPs and affiliated organisations may submit one amendment to the material set out in the final stage documents. These amendments shall be subject to compositing for debate and voting at conference in accordance with recommendations from the Conference Arrangements Committee.

Supporting arguments

The Partnership in Power rule changes introduced in 1997 substantially reduced the opportunities for members’ participation in Labour’s policy making process. A rule change promoted by CLPD, and carried thanks to the support of trade union delegates, now gives CLPs the right to debate four subjects of their choice. However, most policy proposals are still decided by the National Policy Forum where CLPs and affiliated trade unions are under-represented. The rule change we are proposing would allow CLPs and affiliated organisations to submit an amendment to the final reports of the NPF. This would give CLPs some direct role in policy-making.

Closing date for constitutional amendments: 30 July 2010

Suggested rule change

Four plus four should equal eight

The Labour Party Rule Book 2010, Section B, Chapter 3 Party Conference, 3C (Procedural rules for Party Conference), Conference Rule 2 – agenda, Clause 2C reads as follows:

‘All affiliated organisations and CLPs may submit one contemporary issue which is not substantially addressed by reports of the NEC or NPF to Conference . The CAC shall determine whether the issues meet these criteria and submit all issues received to a priorities ballot at the start of conference. The ballot will be divided into two sections. One section for CLPs and one section for trade unions and other affiliated organisations. At least the four priorities selected by CLPs will be time-tabled for debate, as will at least the first four priorities selected by Trade Unions and other affiliated organisations. Issues must be in writing, on one subject only and in ten words or less and may be supported by an explanation of why the issue should be prioritised. Alternatively, a constitutional amendment on one subject only may be submitted in writing. Contemporary issues and constitutional amendments must be received by the General Secretary at the offices of the party by the closing date determined by the NEC.’

Amendment

Replace the words ‘At least the four priorities selected by CLPs will be time-tabled for debate, as will at least the first four priorities selected by Trade Unions and other affiliated organisations’ with:

‘At least the first four priorities selected by Trade Unions and other affiliated organisations will be time-tabled for debate, as will at least the first four priorities (excluding those selected by the Trade Unions and other affiliated organisations) selected by CLPs

Supporting Arguments

Partnership in Power structures introduced in 1997 limited members’ direct input into conference to only four subjects. In practice these were chosen by the unions. Thanks mainly to union dissatisfaction with the way conference was being ‘managed’, the 2003 conference passed a rule change which provided for four subjects also to be chosen by the CLPs. But when it came to voting for priorities, CLP delegates were pressurised first by ministers in ‘briefing’ sessions, then by party officials when collecting their ballot papers, that they should vote for the priorities chose by the unions because there would not be time to debate more than four subjects. The result has been that, in most years since, only one additional subject has been debated. The New Labour Plan to avoid debate and the possibility of the platform’s defeat on controversial subjects was therefore largely achieved. This rule change would ensure that eight subjects are debated every year, four chosen by the trade unions and four additional subjects chosen by the CLPs. This would increase the role of CLPs and the influence of annual conference, the party’s sovereign body.

Closing date for constitutional amendments: 30 July 2010

Suggested rule change

CLPs to have the right to submit a rule change AND a contemporary issue

Rulebook 2010. Section B. Chapter 3. Rule 3C Procedural rules for party conference. Conference Rule 2 - agenda. Clause 2C

The last two sentences of Clause 2C reads as follows: ‘**Alternatively**, a constitutional amendment on one subject only may be submitted in writing. Contemporary issues and constitutional amendments must be received by the General Secretary at the offices of the Party by the closing date determined by the NEC.’

Amendment

Delete ‘Alternatively’ and replace by ‘also’.

Supporting arguments

The right of CLPs and affiliated organisations to amend the Party’s Constitution is an important democratic right. There should be no restriction on this right. At present, CLPs and affiliated organisations can submit either a rule amendment or a ‘contemporary issue’, but not both. This is an arbitrary and unnecessary restriction, since there is no link whatsoever between rule changes and ‘contemporary issues’. The above rule change would remove this unreasonable restriction.

Closing date for constitutional amendments: 30 July 2010

Suggested rule change
Ending the delay before rule changes are timetabled

The Labour Party Rule Book 2010, Section B, Chapter 3 Party Conference, Section C Procedural rules for party conference, Conference rule 2 - Agenda.

Amendment

At end create a new clause I as follows: 'All constitutional amendments submitted by affiliated organisations and CLPs that are accepted as in order shall be timetabled for debate at the first annual party conference following their submission.'

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Supporting Arguments

The procedure outlined in this rule amendment was precisely the procedure for changing the Party's constitution up until 1968. At the 1968 Conference it was agreed to adopt a convention so that in future all rule change proposals from trade unions and from CLPs (but not from the NEC) should be subject to a year's delay before being timetabled. The idea was that this would enable the NEC to examine the proposals in detail and at length and then make a considered response to the following year's conference. The NEC's detailed response would then be timetabled at Conference alongside the rule change proposal. This convention may have been well intentioned but in practice the NEC invariably only gives cursory attention to their proposals and their response is usually one line.

The closing date for submitting rule amendments is normally early June and the annual conference is not until late September. Under the above proposed rule change the NEC would therefore have nearly 4 months to give the issue their attention; they do not need another whole year. All the 1968 convention does is annoy and frustrate the unions and the CLPs. It is well past its 'sell by' date.

Closing date for constitutional amendments: 30 July 2010

Suggested rule change
Increasing democracy in leadership elections

The Labour Party Rule Book 2010, Section B, Chapter 4 Section B (Procedural rules for elections for national officers of the Party) Subsection 2Biii

Add at the end after 'PLP':

'When the PLP is in government and if 20 per cent of the Commons members of the PLP or MPs, CLPs and affiliated organisations whose combined votes constitute 30 per cent of the electoral college nominate a candidate (who accepts a nomination) for Leader or nominate a candidate (who accepts nomination) for Deputy Leader, then the NEC will timetable a motion at Party Conference so that Conference can decide whether it wishes to institute a full election procedure for the appropriate position(s). An election shall proceed only if requested by a majority of Party Conference on a card vote.'

Supporting Arguments

At the moment CLPs and affiliated organisations are not fully involved; only MPs can decide whether a Leader/Deputy Leader should be challenged while Labour is in government. The above rule change introduces more accountability for the two most important positions in our Party.

Closing date for constitutional amendments: 30 July 2010

Suggested rule change
More NEC seats for CLPs
National Executive Committee: Representation of Scotland and Wales

The Labour Party Rule Book 2010. Section B. Chapter 4 Elections of national officers of the party and national committees. C Procedural rules for elections for national committees. 1A Election of the National Executive Committee. Sub clause ic reads as follows:

Line 1 Division III (CLPs) shall consist of six
Line 2 members, at least three of whom
Line 3 shall be women, to be nominated by
Line 4 their own CLP and at least two other
Line 5 CLPs. The ballot for these places shall
Line 6 be conducted among all eligible
Line 7 individual members of the party by
Line 8 means of a national one-member-
Line 9 one-vote postal ballot conducted to
Line 10 guidelines laid down by the NEC.

Amendment

Line 1: Delete: 'six' and insert: 'eight'

Line 2: Delete: 'three' and insert: 'four'

Line 5: After 'ballot for' insert: 'six of'

Line 9: After 'ballot.' insert: 'There shall be two separate ballots for the two remaining places, one in Scotland and one in Wales. They shall be conducted among all eligible individual members of the party in Scotland and Wales respectively by means of a one-member-one-vote postal ballot. All three ballots to be'

Supporting Arguments

The Scottish and Wales Labour Parties have a separate identity to that in the English Regions and each has its own General Secretary. In addition the Scottish and Welsh parties now monitor the work of the Labour Groups in the Scottish parliament and Welsh Assembly. There is therefore a strong case for automatic representation on the NEC from Scotland and Wales.

Our suggested rule change increases CLP representation from six to eight. It would redress the loss of a seat from seven to six which CLPs suffered in 1997 when Partnership in Power was first introduced.

Closing date for constitutional amendments: 30 July 2010

Suggested rule change
Time for a new Clause IV

The Labour Party Rule Book 2010, Section B, Chapter 1 Clause IV (Aims and Values)

Delete whole clause and replace with the following:

‘ The Labour Party is a socialist party committed to democracy, human rights and the promotion of human welfare. Labour recognises that the capitalist economic system based on the private ownership of the means of production, distribution, and the accompanying financial system, has historically provided for an expansion of output and hence a basis for higher living standards. It has, nevertheless, always been associated with successive booms and slumps, periodic mass unemployment, social deprivation and gross inequalities in the distribution of wealth, income and opportunities for social improvement. Capitalism is motivated by the pursuit of private profit. This motivation can sometimes stimulate initiative and enterprise. It can also lead to catastrophic downturns in economic activity and has been an important factor contributing to war. Socialism, based upon the public ownership of key sectors of the economy, control of the financial system, and the democratic participation of the workforce in the setting and checking of objectives, would provide the basis for steadier expansion, higher living standards, much less inequality and the elimination of periodic mass unemployment. We recognise that private trade and enterprise will continue to occupy an important role in distribution, services, many sectors of manufacturing and some financial services. We are committed to providing an economic and social framework within which private firms will be able to prosper and contribute to public welfare. We seek at all times to promote economic progress, sustained employment, and social security affecting health, pensions and disabilities. We will work for equal rights for all regardless of race, gender, class, age, disability, sexual preference or religion. We recognise the important role of trade unions in protecting and advancing the interests of working people and hence are committed to good international standards on trade union rights, including recognition, collective bargaining, workers’ participation in decisions affecting their welfare, and employment rights, including rights in the conduct of disputes. Similarly, we recognise the importance of cooperative principles in productive industry, distribution, in the provision of mortgages for housing and in other areas of activity. We encourage the application of cooperative principles. Labour is committed to the maintenance and strengthening of democracy, in which government at all levels is elected by and held accountable to the people. On the basis of these principles Labour seeks the support of the public, and encourages public participation in democratic discussion and the machinery of politics.’

Supporting Arguments

The worst economic crisis since the early 1930s has shown that our Party must shake off the previously neo-liberal ideology that has gripped many of our parliamentarians, not to mention the Tory and Lib Dem parties. This ideology encompasses a naive and 19th century belief in the efficacy of the ‘invisible hand of the market.’ This ideology has also meant deference to the City financiers and bankers and to the private sector in general, together with a neglect of manufacturing. Labour will never prosper by being a watered down version of the Lib Dems or Tories. Our Party can only prosper on the basis of the aims and values which have always sustained us and which always will. We have tried to set out these aims and values in our rewritten Clause IV. If your CLP feels it can improve on our wording then please amend it.

Closing date for constitutional amendments: 30 July 2010

Suggested rule change
Ministers to be ineligible to serve on CAC

The Labour Party Rule Book 2010. Section B. Chapter 4 Elections of national officers of the party and national committees. C Procedural rules for elections for national committees. 1B Election of Conference Arrangements Committee. Sub clause ii reads as follows:

Every affiliated organisation and CLP may
nominate an eligible member of the party for a
seat on the CAC.

Amendment

Add at end: 'Members of the government (when the Party is in power) and members of the Parliamentary Committee (when the Party is in opposition) are ineligible to stand for the CAC.'

Supporting arguments

The CLPs have two seats on the Conference Arrangements Committee (CAC) and for many years these were occupied by rank and file members. In recent years, however, they have often been filled by government ministers. To operate as it should, the CAC must always be independent. Most controversial issues at conference relate to government policy and this puts the ministers in an impossible position. They cannot serve two masters. They are always under pressure to follow the government line, rather than the democratic interest of the delegates. This rule change would prevent such a clash of interests.

Closing date for constitutional amendments: 30 July 2010