

Suggested Rule Change

Three year rule

The Labour Party Rule Book 2013 Chapter 3 Party Conference Clause III Procedural Rules for Party Conference 2. Conference rule 2 – Agenda section H (page 14) reads as follows:

“When party conference has made a decision on a constitutional amendment, no resolution to amend that part of the constitution or rules of the party shall appear on the agenda for a period of three years from the time such decision is made, except such resolutions to amend the constitution and rules that are in the opinion of the NEC of immediate importance.”

Amendment:

Delete these words and replace them with:

“When party conference has debated a proposed rule change, no proposal to amend the constitution or rules of the party that has the same main purpose (if the proposed rule change was rejected), or whose main purpose is to reverse it (if it was agreed), shall appear on the agenda of the three following annual party conferences, except such resolutions to amend the constitution and rules that are in the opinion of the NEC of immediate importance.”

Supporting Argument

This proposal is intended to clarify this clause (known as “the three year rule”) to prevent the abuse of the rulebook to stop constituency parties’ proposed rule changes being considered. The original intention of this clause was to prevent repeated discussion of the same issue year after year, and these words were interpreted in that way for many years. In recent years, however, it has been interpreted increasingly widely and unpredictably: the word “part” is not defined by the rules and has been interpreted to mean a whole clause or even more, covering in some cases several pages. Amendments on completely different issues to the subject of a proposed rule change which happened to fall in the same clause, sometimes no more than drafting changes, have been used to prevent debating and voting on constituency proposals. CLP rule changes which are ruled in order and scheduled for debate have also been ruled out later in the week because of NEC rule changes (often on different issues) to the same clause made earlier in the week. These results are arbitrary and contrary to the spirit of the three year rule. The amendment clarifies the rule and helps the CAC reach its decision by considering what a proposed amendment is really designed to achieve, rather than simply asking whether the proposal relates to the same “part” (whatever that means).

The closing date for constitutional amendments is 5pm on Friday 21 June 2013.