

CAMPAIGN BRIEFING

CLPD

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A DEFINING MOMENT FOR TRADE UNIONISM

PROFESSOR KEITH EWING

Trade union leaders are now under great pressure. They and they alone have the opportunity to stop Miliband's breath-taking changes from happening, and the opportunity to defend the principle of collective affiliation.

It is true that Miliband's proposals will not need legislation in order to be implemented. But they will require a change to the Labour Party's rules, UNLESS every union agrees voluntarily to accept any new arrangements about to be proposed by Lord Collins of Highbury.

Without an agreement, each union will be free to continue to affiliate to the Party on its own terms, as at present. But because not every union leader will be able or will want to deliver an agreement of this kind, rule change at some stage is inevitable.

So far as the unions themselves are concerned, Miliband's proposals as a minimum will require every union to adopt the UNISON model – an Affiliated Political Fund (APF) and a General Political Fund (GPF) – a model born of an amalgamation of two political cultures in one organization.

Good news for UNISON, who will come through this trauma largely unscathed. But not such good news for all the other unions, who will be required to change their rules if they are to retain the right to affiliate to the Labour Party.

No doubt Lord Collins will be able to help here, by drafting model rules which may have to be adopted by all affiliates, these likely to require all affiliated unions to establish two political funds, one for those members who choose to affiliate to Labour, and one for those who do not.

These rules will then have to be approved by the regular rules revision procedures of

each of the affiliated trade unions individually. It is presumably being taken for granted that trade unionists can be taken for granted to go along with this, and nod it through.

With two funds, trade unions will be able to use (i) the affiliated fund to pay affiliation fees to the Labour Party and (ii) the general political fund to pay for various campaigns, which include campaigns in support of Labour or Labour candidates at elections (as at present).

The latter funds (the general political funds) are likely to become very significant, if the UNISON Model is any guide, as many members will choose to support their union's political activities without supporting the Labour party.

The problem, however, is that these anticipated general political funds are about to become redundant. On 4 June 2013, Cameron announced proposals for new controls on trade union spending in elections, proposals which too few people are taking seriously enough.

(cont. on p2)

ANNUAL CONFERENCE ALERT 2013

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

BRIEFING ON THE RULE
CHANGE PROPOSALS
COMING UP AT
BRIGHTON

At Brighton delegates will be debating and voting on (by card vote) several proposals to change the Party's Rule Book. Some will be from the NEC, but two rule changes are tabled by CLPs (from Northampton Borough Labour Party and from Leyton and Wanstead/Redcar CLPs) and one is tabled by Aslef. The CLP and Aslef

(cont. on p10)

Key message to conference delegates

Conference Arrangements Committee election

Vote Willsman and Clark



Peter Willsman



Katy Clark

The Conference Arrangements Committee (CAC) is the Standing Orders Committee of Annual Conference. It presides over all matters connected to the Conference timetable. CLPs through their delegates control 50% of the vote at Conference. Unfortunately in recent years it has frequently been the case that issues of concern to CLPs are given a low priority and sometimes ruled out altogether. CLP delegates are all too often seen but not heard. CLPs need to reclaim their rights and influence at Conference. Having a strong voice on the CAC is key to this. Katy and Peter will use their experience and commitment to give CLPs that strong voice and will constantly support CLP delegates.

PLEASE PASS THIS NEWSLETTER ON TO ENSURE A WIDE CIRCULATION.

PARLIAMENTARY REFORM: MICHAEL MEACHER MP

MICHAEL MEACHER CHAIRS THE ALL PARTY PARLIAMENTARY GROUP PARLIAMENT FIRST, WHICH IS LOOKING AT REFORMS TO MAKE THE EXECUTIVE ACCOUNTABLE TO PARLIAMENT

The purpose of Parliament is to hold the government of the day to account but and it has long failed to do so effectively. Two reasons stand out. One is that the procedures are heavily loaded in favour of the government and the party establishments. The other is that the Labour Opposition is not representative either of the Labour Party generally across the country or of the trade unions. Both of these obstacles need to be dealt with.



BITEBACKS

‘The trap is opened and Labour falls straight in (Miliband looks at reducing power of union leaders, 8 July). Allegations are made of irregularities in the selection of a candidate in a single constituency and Labour decides that this is the moment to launch a controversial review of its whole constitution. People are suffering dire poverty, the NHS is being steadily privatised, our education system is being fragmented and the UK economy has not grown for years. But instead of focusing on the appalling actions of this terrible government, we will now witness a long and destructive row between the Labour leadership and the unions. The Tories must think that Christmas has come in July.’

(John Edmonds, *Guardian* 10/7/13. John Edmonds was former General Secretary of the GMB from 1986 to 2003, the longest serving major union general secretary in modern times).

As a result of the MPs’ expenses scandal, concessions were made on procedure to try to restore public confidence. Select committees, the most effective scrutinisers of government policy, now have their membership elected by the whole House, not chosen by the Whips. Also, for the first time since the war, Back-Benchers are now able to decide for themselves what will be debated on the floor of the House for 35 days a year.

But there is a huge lot else that needs to be done. It may come as a surprise that probably 4 out of 5 Members don’t know what they’re voting on at the crucial Report stage of Bills, yet the introduction of brief explanatory statements on the daily Order Paper and on the TV monitor is still being resisted. Private Members’ Bills, which often reflect current issues important to the public, are easily derailed by filibustering and the difficulty of getting at least 100 Members there on a Friday when most have left for their constituencies, yet deferred voting and/or shifting these Bills to Tuesday or Wednesday evenings is not pursued.

For the government’s own Bills, the Members at the Committee stage are at present chosen by the Whips who will generally allow only one token dissident who will challenge the party line, yet having these Committee Members put on, not by the Whips, but by a Committee of Selection elected by the whole House has still not happened. Debates on the floor of the House now secured by a petition of at least 100,000 electors, even if the government loses the vote, are regarded as purely advisory and not a requirement to change policy.

(cont. from previous page)

If these plans are implemented (and why would they not be?) any election expenditure by a trade union affiliated to the Labour party (including presumably from a union’s general political fund) will count as Labour Party expenditure.

Being treated as Labour Party expenditure, it will count towards the Party’s spending limit for the purposes of election law. According to the BBC, the same will apply in relation to union expenditure in support of candidates at constituency level.

For anyone harbouring the delusion that the Miliband proposals will release money for election campaigning, forget it. If Cameron’s plans are implemented, trade unions will only be able to spend money at election time with the consent of the Party or its candidates.

Select committee reports which may discredit government policy often gain newspaper headlines, but don’t get debated in the House with a vote which could force a policy change. And when things go badly wrong, it is the Prime Minister, not the House, who decides whether or not there should be a public inquiry (making him both judge and jury in his own case), and even if there is an inquiry, it is again the Prime Minister who determines the chair, the members and the terms of reference. We are still far from a proper functioning democracy.

“If Labour is to regain the role it had before 1980, it needs to recruit a PLP that much more closely reflects the country as a whole”

The second reason that government is not held effectively to account is that Tony Blair tied the Labour Party to Thatcher’s free-market capitalism and stitched up so many selections across the country to colonise the PLP in his own image that a true Labour ideology has been substantially muted. If Labour is to regain the forceful and weighty role it had before 1980, it needs to recruit a PLP that much more closely reflects the class and income patterns of the country as a whole, and thus to ensure that its ideology and policies challenge and overcome the Thatcherite legacy that is still dragging Britain down.

There is no reason why the Party would authorise trade unions to speak on its behalf in this way. And if the party’s fortunes revive with the anticipated influx of private donations as a result of the Miliband reforms, it would not be able legally to do so.

This is a defining moment for the political voice of trade unionism, which it is the misfortune of the current generation of general secretaries to have to defend. Having been marginalised industrially, trade unions are in the process of being marginalised politically.

As matters stand, this will be seen as a great victory for Progress, with trade unions being trussed up like Christmas turkeys.

While all unions will not be equally affected by the changes required, all unions will be diminished if the collective trade union voice grows ever more faint.

This article was first published in Tribune.

THE EUROPEAN UNION AND THE EUROZONE: NO ROAD TO SOCIALISM OR DEMOCRACY

KELVIN HOPKINS MP

The European Union (EU) is anti-socialist, anti-democratic and failing economically. It is surprising therefore that some good socialists and trade unionists still have EU sympathies. Even more surprising,



however, is that many right wing neo-liberal Tories oppose the EU. Big businesses, neo-liberal conservatives elsewhere in Europe and the political class across the continent are committed to the European project, the abandonment of effective borders between European countries and the neutering of democratic member state governments in order to give total power to the market and the corporate world.

The process has been continuing by degrees and occasional leaps since and even before the 1957 Treaty of Rome established the original Common Market. Yes, the clue is in the title. Its objective has been to roll back the democratic socialist and social democratic world established across Western Europe after 1945. Marketisation, liberalisation and privatisation are what the Common Market, the EEC and now the EU have been about.

The 1980s Single European Act was the EU's "Great Leap Forward", with Maastricht, Lisbon and, of course, the Euro following from it. Gordon Brown, perhaps surprisingly, fought Blair to keep Britain out of the Euro and won. The Exchange Rate Mechanism (ERM) disaster of 1990-92 effectively destroyed the creditability of the Tories for a generation, and joining the Euro would have done the same for Labour.

Guardian economist Larry Elliott recently wrote a darkly amusing piece suggesting that had Britain joined the Euro, our economy would now have been wrecked – a kind of Greece writ large – and that we would have crashed out of the Euro, bringing down the whole single currency edifice with Nigel Farage seriously challenging to be Prime Minister!

The Eurozone economic crisis is deepening by the month, with unemployment over 12% and rising. Things in Greece and Spain are much worse, such that if we had



the same levels of unemployment in Britain there would be eight million on the dole, not two and a half million, and over half of those under 25 would be jobless. It is now acknowledged that Greece will never be able to pay its debts and the allegedly socialist party PASOK is locked in a deadly coalition embrace with the New Democracy conservatives afflicting appalling austerity and poverty on the Greek people. Greece and Portugal are being forced to implement fire sales of public assets while the anti-socialist conspirators across Europe quietly rub their hands in glee.

Other Eurozone countries are in crisis, with Italy looking to a possible bale out – quite a different order than those for smaller EU members. Even more significant is France, which is in increasing economic difficulty. France indeed may be the crumbling keystone which could see the whole Eurozone fall apart.

So what should happen? The establishment of national currencies adjusted to realistic international parities and with member states setting their own economically appropriate interest rates would be an immediate priority. Greece, for example, with a new drachma would devalue substantially making imports more expensive and channelling demand into its domestic economy. Greek holidays would become cheaper, boosting the tourist trade and giving a kick start to recovery.

When the rest of the Eurozone states have their own national currencies they will

all be able to reflate their own economies, to begin to grow and create jobs. As employment returns, governments will have more tax revenues and be able to rebuild their public services and welfare states.

If this is not done, more pain will be inflicted on working people, and, if the left does not fight their corner, the fascist right may step in. Who would now bet against Marine le Pen being the next President of France?



BITEBACKS

'The concentration of power in the hands of corporations, especially financial business, is at the core of global injustices such as the deprivation of food. Yet across the board, the British government sees these behemoths as the solution to injustice.'

(Nick Dearden, Director Jubilee debt Campaign, *Guardian* 10/6/13).

'The difficulty is in convincing Germany that its current policies are leading to a prolonged depression, political and social conflicts and an eventual break-up not only of the euro but also of the European Union.'

(George Soros, *Guardian* 10/9/12, taken from an article in the *New York Review of Books*).

KEEP THE PARTY LABOUR, DEFEND THE UNION LINK

**BILLY HAYES,
GENERAL SECRETARY CWU**

Just two years away from the General Election, the priorities of the Labour Party ought to be obvious. These surely need to be to strengthen our campaign against the Coalition gov-



ernment's failing policies; sharpen our alternatives in anticipation of government; and prepare our internal organisation for the elections in 2014 and 2015. Yet for some reason, we're plunging into an internal conflict over a central element of our Constitution.

It appears that the Spring Conference is to become a rubber stamp for ending the effective, collective involvement of the trade unions in the Party. Precisely why this is so urgent has not been explained. A relationship that has endured for over a century surely warrants a more considered examination.

The suggestion is that an "opt-in" will be necessary to demonstrate Labour's real support in the unions. In reality, the overwhelming majority of trade union members want the Coalition government out. There will be many trade union members who want this without ever wishing to join Labour. Such support is going to be walled off from Labour by the hurdle of opting-in.

It seems to be generally agreed that the new mechanism will reduce levy affiliation

by around 80 to 90% from current levels. On top of this, general donations will be substantially reduced, as the impact of reducing the role of unions will increase internal resistance to donations. Inevitably, there will be the argument that if we only affiliate 10 to 20% of levy payers why should we donate more than 10 to 20% of the remaining levy on top of this?

Taken together these reductions will cost several million pounds. The obvious question is then how do the enthusiasts for opt-in propose to fill this gap?

There will be some increase in business donations, if Labour appears to be the next government. But we know how fickle business is in its support for Labour, unlike the loyal support received from the unions.

There is only one way this proposal will work – through a massive increase in state funding of political parties. Labour in government could secure Lib-Dem support for this, and perhaps the Tories also, if there is a large enough cap on individual donations.

This is not a debate to be taken after the Collins review, and Spring Conference. This is a debate about whether opt-in can work at all. It is vital for all members that the question of the funding gap is answered now.

It is also a distressing to see "open primaries" being touted as a strengthening of the Party's connection to the electorate. With such a system the election of Labour's candidate for London Mayor is likely to be more

influenced by an unfriendly media and radio shock-jocks than union affiliates and individual Party members.

How extraordinary is it to insist upon signed authorisation and financial commitment from trade union members before becoming involved in Party processes, whilst offering to anyone, free of charge, the opportunity of participating in the mayoral selection?

Suggesting this is also appropriate for Party parliamentary selections really does begin to question the value of membership and affiliation. Why pay for the privilege of membership when you get the rights of membership free?

"We will not dress up as a good thing the battering of the union link, nor the reduction in Party control via open primaries"

The CWU will participate in the Collins review. We will not dress up as a good thing the battering of the union link, nor the reduction in Party control via open primaries. By insisting upon examining the practical problems of opt-in and primaries, perhaps a re-think can be prompted. That is essential if, in future, the Party is to avoid bankruptcy or becoming a state-funded liberal party.

BITEBACKS

'Academic research has shown there was no monolithic union power that inflicted the 'winter of discontent' on a victimised British population. As former Fleet Street editor Derek Jameson later recalled of press coverage of the 'crisis', "we pulled every dirty trick in the book; we made it look like it was general, universal and eternal, when it was in reality scattered, here and there, and no great problem".'

(Dr Bryn Jones, University of Bath, *Guardian* 24/4/13).



DEFEND THE UNIONS – SAY NO TO PRIMARIES

RECOMMENDED DRAFT MOTIONS FOR PARTY MEMBERS, BRANCHES AND CLPS (THESE MOTIONS ARE AVAILABLE FOR COPYING ON THE CLPD WEBSITE)

Defend the link

This CLP notes that the Labour Party was founded as an alliance between trade unions and socialist organisations to provide a political voice for working people. With the current attacks on working people it is most important that the Labour Party and trades unions work effectively together – poor working conditions and low wages require more union organisation and legislation to protect workers.

We believe that Labour's continuing relationship with three million trade unionists who are affiliated members of our Party helps to root our Party in our communities and workplaces. It is a relationship which has seen the Labour Party through its greatest crises and to our greatest triumphs.

We believe the Party can best achieve its aims and values if it is funded primarily by its affiliates and members. Both state funding and large business finance cannot tie the Party so closely to its principles.

We recognise that trade unions are collective organisations of working people, and understand that the relationship between the unions and the Party, locally and nationally, should be on the basis of collective affiliation.

We note that Ray Collins is currently leading a review of the Party's relationship with the trade unions at the request of the Party Leader.

We support positive measures to strengthen and improve the relationship between the Party and the unions, for example by encouraging the greater democratic engagement of ordinary trade unionists in Party structures and by developing the understanding of the nature and purpose of trade unionism among Party members.

We oppose any moves that would weaken or undermine the relationship between the Party and the trade unions based upon their collective affiliation.

We note the Tories are determined to divert the electorate's attention away from the government's failed policies by blaming all those not responsible, including the trade unions, for the current economic mess. We oppose their fraudulent agenda and will not

give them further sticks with which to beat our Party or the trade unions.

We believe that the Party's priority at present must be to win a Labour government and ensure Ed Miliband is the next Prime Minister. The political focus, the energy and resources of our the entire Party should be focused on this fight against the Tory-led coalition. Proposals to reduce the role of Labour's affiliates in the Party's internal decision making would be a diversion from this fight against the Tories.

We call upon Ray Collins and the NEC, in the current review, to reflect these concerns.

CLPs can forward their suggestions on the Collins review to the NEC and to the Better Politics Policy Commission (via www.yourbritain.org.uk). Please also copy them to NEC member Ann Black and to Ed Miliband.

Keep the Party Labour – No to primaries

This CLP notes that Ray Collins is reviewing the use of primaries in the selection of Labour's candidate for London Mayor and for other elections.

This CLP notes from the experience of the US that primaries: drive up the cost of seeking selection; favour wealthy candidates; reduce the input of grassroots members; and strengthen the influence of right wing media in candidate selection.

We also note the Labour has a long standing membership structure that unites individual members with affiliated organisations in an effective Party able to promote Labour candidates in elections at all levels of the democratic process.

We note this structure gives the Party a relationship with millions of trade unionists and helps to root Labour across widespread communities and workplaces. It is a relationship which has helped our Party through its greatest crises and to our greatest triumphs.

We also note that the Labour Party's individual membership is another invaluable base within society – and the aim should be to build that into a mass membership. Should it become possible to have a say in Labour's candidate selections without being a Labour Party member an important incentive for joining the Party will be removed. Recruiting members is facilitated by linking participation in Labour's selections and internal elections with membership, as was successfully promoted during the 2010 Leadership election.

This CLP believes that primaries (in giving voting rights to non-members) would

devalue Party membership and therefore hinder the development of the committed activist base – essential to winning elections.

We believe that both the affiliates and individual members play a valuable role in our candidate selection processes, which should be retained.

We also believe the method of selecting the London Mayoral candidate should be removed from the remit of the Collins review as it should be a devolved matter for the London Labour Party to determine.

We note there is no great demand from either the electorate or Party membership for primaries.

We therefore oppose the introduction of a primary for the selection of Labour's candidate for London Mayor or for any other election and call on Ray Collins to recommend that Labour's selections processes continue to involve Labour's membership (both affiliates and individuals) and to recommend they are not replaced with primaries.

We call upon Ray Collins and the NEC, in the current review, to reflect these concerns.

CLPs can forward their suggestions on the Collins review to the NEC and to the Better Politics Policy Commission (via www.yourbritain.org.uk). Please also copy them to NEC member Ann Black and to Ed Miliband.



BITEBACKS

'Most of the discussion in the media about the unions and the Labour Party is wrong-headed. The impression given is that there is an entity known as the Labour Party and that somehow the Unions are separate and merely link up to the Party. In fact our Party is not a singular body: it is a federation.' (Tel's Tales, Campaign Briefing 77).

Party members are constantly being patronised and told that they are valued and will be given real power in the Party. The truth is somewhat different... Experience shows that success in primaries invariably becomes the preserve of the rich. It has been estimated that a candidate would need some £75,000 to run an effective campaign in a London Mayoral primary. (Tel's Tales, Campaign Briefing 77).

THIS IS NOT THE SPECIAL CONFERENCE WE NEED

MARK SEDDON, ONE TIME EDITOR OF *TRIBUNE* AND FORMER NEC MEMBER

Just before next year's local government elections and what will likely be the most important set of European elections for many years, and as a springboard to the general election, Labour will be holding a Special Conference. Will it be to launch a popular campaign for jobs, growth, and an end to the privatisation of our public services? Could it be to expose the emerging Tory UKIP pre-election coalition deal? Or could it be to take on the Tories and the SNP who between them want Scotland to take the lonely road to independence?

No, you've guessed it: Labour will be holding a Special Conference on the Party's relations with the trade unions. It will be doing so because a tight-knit group, many hostile to the trade unions and elitist to the core, deliberately set a hare running over the candidate selection process in Falkirk. A flawed internal report was sent to the Scottish police who said that there was no case to answer, and such was the embarrassment of the Party officials who prepared it that the report remains secret. But what has flowed, in the months and weeks since, has been bilious in the extreme towards the unions and Unite in particular. For the most part it has come from sections of the media with the full connivance of the Conservative Party and David Cameron. Their aim has been to drive a wedge between Labour and the unions for they know that, without the unions Labour will find it difficult to survive in the longer term. In addition, anything that helps to divert attention from the relationship between the Tories and their fat cat backers has to be welcomed by both Tories and media alike. Sadly, Ed Miliband seems to have wandered straight into a trap. In the best sense, it is up to all of us to help him out of it. He and Labour need to be taking the fight to the Tories over issues that matter to ordinary people. And in order for him to become the great Prime Minister many of us believe he can be, he needs the unions too.

Equally sadly there are, I believe, those around the Labour leader who have not forgiven him for winning – with union support



– Labour's leadership campaign. They are less interested in the upcoming general election than in the one afterwards. They believe that, by that time, with the collective voice of the unions broken within Labour, with the power of selecting the leader again back more with the Parliamentary Party, they will also have achieved full state funding of political parties. Failing that, and in the words of one of Tony Blair's former aides recently writing in the *Daily Telegraph*, there is another potential solution at hand:

'What's a million pounds?' he wrote. 'It's one payment from a union, but it's also £1,000 a year from a thousand people – and in modern prosperous Britain many people have that much money to donate. There are, to my knowledge, nearly 1,000 former Party staff or special advisers who trade at a premium in the jobs market because of their "connections" to Blair or Brown.'

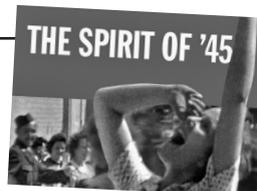
“Without the unions, Labour could simply become a Party of back-scratching ‘mates’”

In other words, without the unions, Labour could simply become a Party of back-scratching 'mates'.

Political parties stop being organic, grassroot based, and responsive movements once state funding frees the Party machine from having the encumbrance of members who keep on making demands and insisting on having a say over policy. They become extensions of the old 'rotten boroughs' if they become the property of a few wealthy mates.

This then is the new elitism that we have to counter, and we can only do so if our affiliated unions continue to have a strong collective, political and financial role in the Party of their making. We could begin by making the Spring Special Conference a campaigning springboard for victory at the general election.

As an antidote to depressive mood swings caused by Blairites and Progress, try Ken Loach's film *The Spirit of '45*. It's a real tonic for flagging socialists.



BITEBACKS

'The changes in the Party's local culture must continue, so that instead of activity dominated by meetings, CLPs undertake campaigning, education and socialising... so an independent organisation has been created, called Progress.'

(Peter Mandelson and Roger Liddle, *The Blair Revolution*).

'Some Blairites will claim I am asking Labour to choose between power and purity. The opposite is true. There has never been a time when social democracy was more relevant or when its unflinching advocacy more likely to command support. Labour needs to listen-but to its own conscience and judgement not "the people" as heard through the UKIP megaphone.'

(Roy Hattersley, *Guardian* 6/5/13).

'In comparison to the machinations under so-called New Labour, the goings-on in Falkirk didn't amount to much at all. This is no doubt the real reason why the Party won't publish the report of its investigation. The *Guardian* has had access to the report and described it as 'very thin gruel.'

(Tel's Tales, Campaign Briefing 77).

'According to figures from pay research firm Income Data Services: while workers' pay increases have failed to rise above 2% on average, senior directors and board members have enjoyed rises of 17.8%.'

(Phillip Inman, *Guardian* 1/7/13).

'We have the best protected public debt position of any country in the world top 30, the least likely to suffer from any speculative attack. We do not have to rival the Greeks in a crash austerity programme. All the stuff about tough but necessary hard choices, not passing on too much debt to the next generation is hogwash. It is a highly selectively marshalling of facts to support an ideological crusade against the state.'

(Will Hutton, *Observer* 23/6/13).

UNITE FIGHTS TO REFORM THE PARTY

JIM KELLY, CHAIR LONDON AND EASTERN REGION UNITE THE UNION (WRITING IN A PERSONAL CAPACITY)

For Unite, in the London and Eastern Region, industrial struggles are coming thick and fast. Not only are our members fighting to defend terms and conditions but our union is also struggling for basic trade union rights, as in our campaign against black listing and for union recognition at Crossrail. The attacks our members face at the workplace are themselves part and parcel of the wider government agenda of embedding the deregulated market over the state and people. Of course, our Region's struggles are mirrored by Unite in other Regions as well as other trade unionists and community activists up and down the country.

In spite of our many industrial victories (and our Region has had its fair share) we are faced with the fact that unions and working people need large scale legislative change to roll back neo-liberalism. We need policies which defend trade union rights and impose wider social controls over the madness

of the market. This can only come about through a political party promoting such change through Parliament and is the reason why we desperately need a Labour government.

However, Unite is trying to do more. We are arguing for our members to become actively involved in the Party. Our reasons are straightforward: we see many MPs who have lost contact with ordinary men and women and, more alarmingly, we also see that there are many who have never had any contact with working people. If you asked Labour MPs what do unions do, how many would be able to tell you? As importantly as who our representatives are, we have a Party seemingly wedded to neo-liberal policies and we are faced with the prospect of a future Labour government enacting an 'austerity like' programme. The Party itself is held together by the top down undemocratic structures and processes enacted in the Blair years.

Unite then not only needs a political solution to the attacks on trade unionists and working people but we also need to reform the Party, a struggle many CLP members have been involved in for many years. We have seen the response of the Party's ma-

chine to this in their contemptible and disgraceful behaviour in Falkirk.

As those who know me well are aware, I am not one to see conspiracies around every tree and I certainly do not think what happened in Falkirk was a Labour Party conspiracy – incompetence is of course another matter.

What Falkirk does tell me is the right are worried about union intervention and that they will go to any lengths to stop us. For sure it was the right who fanned the flames of the press attack on Unite. In truth the right-wing of the Party should be worried, because we pose a fundamental challenge to their bureaucratic control over the Party. Unions can galvanise members to join the Party and enable them to play a pivotal role alongside other Party members to challenge the domination of the metropolitan elite in the PLP, discuss and debate policy and support the struggle to democratise the Party. This struggle which boils down on the one side to those who wish to consolidate Neo-liberalism and on the other those who want to roll it back. This struggle is going to be fought in our Party for a number of years to come and on our part Unite has no intention of walking away from this fight.

IT WON'T BE ED WHO PAYS THE PRICE

PETER WILLSMAN, SECRETARY CLPD

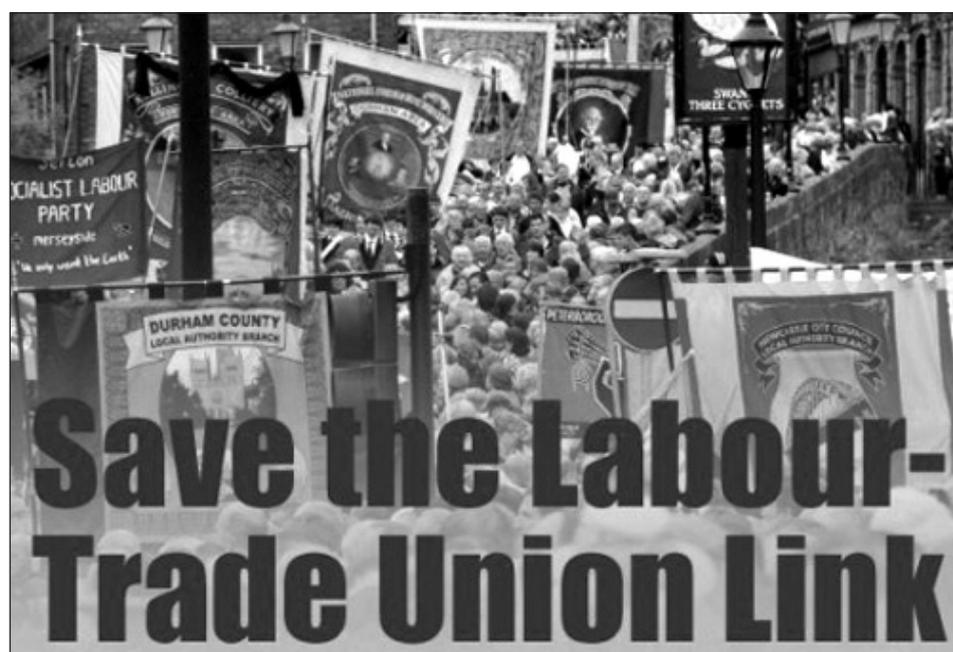
In private meetings it has been pointed out to Ed that his, so far very unclear, proposals to change the link with the Unions could cost our Party millions of pounds. His answer apparently is that doing what is right is above price.

Putting aside the fact that there are strong arguments to show that Ed is not "right", what could the price be? It could mean many loyal staff losing their jobs, it could mean inadequate resources to fight the well heeled Tories at general elections. Thus it could mean Labour just losing a knife edge election.

Ed needs to ask himself why the Tories and their media allies are so pleased with what he is doing and why so many party members and trade unionists are demoralised. If we lose to the Tories this will mean untold misery for millions. The people we employ and the people who loyally vote for us will pay the price, not Ed.

We live in a totally unfair world where the dice are always loaded in favour of the rich and powerful. A Labour government is the only hope that our people have. It is beyond

belief that Ed is prepared to put all this in jeopardy and to divert the Party's energy and focus by making such a big deal of the obscure arrangements over levy payers.



SPEAKING TRUTH TO POWER

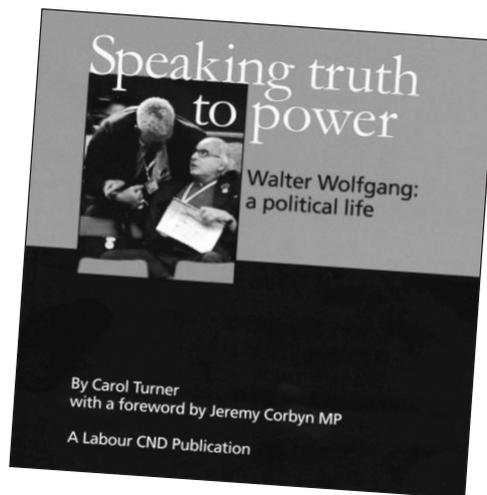
LAURA DAVISON, MEMBER OF FOLKESTONE AND HYTHE CLP, REVIEWS CAROL TURNER'S CND PUBLICATION WALTER WOLFGANG: A POLITICAL LIFE WITH A FOREWORD BY JEREMY CORBYN MP

I've never met Walter Wolfgang. But, after reading this fascinating booklet by Carol Turner, perhaps I don't need to. He seems to become a kind of symbol through its pages. Not least pictorially, as in the iconic image of the moment he was evicted from the Labour Party Conference of 2005 (famously used by CLPD to get Walter on the NEC) which adorns the front cover. But the other photographs included are striking too – a series of images of Walter on the front line of demonstrations, speaking at events and often sporting a trademark camel-coloured coat against the cold.

Walter Wolfgang was born in Frankfurt am Main in Germany and was sent to boarding school in Britain in 1937 aged 13. His parents followed but Walter had to leave school at 16 after his father was forced to liquidate his business because of Hitler's compulsory acquisition of Jewish property and assets. He became a British citizen and joined the Labour Party in 1948.

“I had to engage in a process to get politics moving – and Labour was the agency”

Engagement with the Party brought the realisation that democratic reform of Labour's structures was needed and when the Campaign for Labour party Democracy was founded in 1973 he became and remains an active member. His involvement with pressure group politics began with Victory for Socialism, a group set up to pursue peace abroad and the extension of public ownership and worker participation at home. In 1956 he became joint secretary of the VFS's Suez Emergency committee, helping to organise a rally in Trafalgar Square opposing military action against Egypt. After Suez, Walter turned his attention to nuclear disarmament, forming a lifelong bond with CND. He became one of the organisers of the first Aldermaston march and stood for parliament on a platform of unilateral nuclear disarmament. In an act of control freakery he was subsequently banned from standing again, despite coming second and increasing the Labour vote by more than average.



By the late seventies, with the deployment of cruise missiles in Britain, Walter, as an active member of Labour CND, seized the opportunity to push nuclear disarmament up the political agenda again.

Conference voted for unilateral disarmament in 1980, '81 and '82 and despite leadership shenanigans trying to prevent it, in '83 too. In the nineties, attention shifted to the demand that Trident be scrapped and several conferences voted to do so. But a watering down of Party democracy begun under Kinnock and extended under Blair put a stop to that. As Walter says, “New Labour had no truck with internal democracy” and the position on unilateralism was lost.

After the twin towers attacks, CND opposed the invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq and supported Stop the War. In Walter's view, while New Labour's neo-liberal policies ultimately cost Labour the 2010 election, Iraq was a big factor too, with Blair having, he believes, lied about weapons of mass destruction and being seen as Bush's poodle.

In her preface the author Carol Turner says that she has never known Walter deviate from his principles or abandon his goals. Jeremy Corbyn in his warm foreword claims Walter Wolfgang is the scourge of opportunism. Indeed he comes across in this booklet as a person who by his commitment makes you stop and think, “what would Walter do?”, a signpost, not a weathercock as Tony Benn would say.

This short booklet brilliantly summarises a dynamic political life, which continues today. It demonstrates Walter's commitment to peace and socialism and shows that winning the argument inside the Labour Party is essential to the fight for these ideals. As Walter recalls when he joined the Party, “I had to engage in a process to get politics moving – and Labour was the agency.”

LABOUR, TRIDENT AND THE 2015 ELECTION

Speakers:
Nick Brown MP
Jeremy Corbyn MP
Sheila Gilmore MP
Clive Lewis PPC
Nancy Platts PPC
Ann Black NEC
 Chair: **Kate Hudson, CND**

6.30–8.30pm,
Monday 23rd September
 Royal Albion Hotel,
 35 Old Steine, Brighton

Refreshments provided

Organised by CND,
 Labour CND and
 Labour Action for Peace



BITEBACKS

‘Abandon Trident, former UN weapons inspector tells Britain: “I know that the British military establishment are not very keen on it. I don't think Britain would be more protected by Trident and Germany and Japan seem to be managing without nuclear weapons”.’

(Hans Blix, speaking at the Hay Literary Festival *Guardian* 27/5/13).

‘This anti-war view, so widely held and strongly felt throughout Britain, finds no expression in a parliament for whom the merest whiff of boot polish or military jargon causes a fit of “Tommy this, Tommy that...” jingoism. The fact is, there are two majority views in this country: one in the political body that says war, war and more war; and one in the population which says it has had enough of giving up its sons and daughters abroad and now, again, at home.’

(Joe Glenton, former soldier, *Guardian* 24/5/13).

‘What, then, to make of the 2010 testimony from the head of MI5 between 2002 and 2007 who said: “our involvement in Iraq, for want of a better word, radicalised a whole generation of young people and substantially raised the terror threat to the UK?”’

(Ian Sinclair, *Guardian* 28/5/13).

BUSINESS AS USUAL

NEC AND NPF MEMBER CHRISTINE SHAWCROFT REPORTS ON EXPERIENCES AT THEIR RECENT MEETINGS

The combination of a newish leader, a new General Secretary and new trade union delegates of an entirely different calibre to the old time servers seemed to hint at the promise of an NEC where things would be done differently over the last year. Unfortunately, it's been business as usual. Although Iain McNicol has been as good as his word in cutting down the number of tabled papers presented to the NEC at the last minute (although there were tabled rule changes at the July meeting, which is doubly odd as they've been on the agenda since last year), it has remained the case that the most important discussions arise from matters which aren't even on the agenda, never mind having any accompanying papers. So at the July meeting we discussed Falkirk, and although there was a report, almost no-one had seen it, not to mention the Leader's proposals for Party "reform" which were discussed under his verbal report.

A few months ago, the NEC had the chance to right a great wrong, and readmit Lu-

tfur Rahman to the Party. Unfortunately they missed their chance completely. Although most delegates agreed that there had been a miscarriage of justice two years ago, they then went on to compound the original offence by allowing the local Party to go ahead and select a mayoral candidate, ignoring the previously democratically selected one. At the time of the original travesty, the NEC had been promised all manner of reports and inquiries, most of which have never materialised.

When it comes to the National Policy Forum and the Shadow Cabinet's policy reviews, there is always a great deal of talk about how the system hasn't worked very well in the past, there has been a lack of democracy and accountability, but we're trying to put this right. However, the changes that are made make the matter worse, not better. Even JPC members agreed at the last NPF in June that the "Challenge" papers, voted on from a very limited list of topics at last year's Conference, aren't at all challenging, and that the "options" for voting on (something CLPD has been calling for in the case of policy documents for many years) weren't really options. Not being mutually exclusive, they were mostly just rubber stamped.

I have raised several times the appalling misuse of the "three year rule" at Confer-

ence, and the Chair's refusal to take card votes which are the delegates' right to call for. I've been completely ignored, as usual, so I'm now waiting in fear and trepidation to see what they come up with this year!



BITEBACKS

'The asinine notion that ownership and control of a national economy didn't matter was part of the whole Thatcherite ideological baggage – a set of notions taken up with frightening alacrity by the Blair/Brown/Balls axis after 1997. Transfer to overseas ownership of UK companies has adverse effects; the national tax base is eroded as these companies move their operations overseas or engage in tax scams such as transfer pricing. The same erosion occurs to the UK's skills base as support and supply functions are replaced by their own suppliers, as is the case with Japanese companies present in the UK.'

(Frank Lee on Alex Brummer's *Britain for Sale*, *Chartist* May/June 2013).

THE SICKNESS OF YOUNG LABOURISM

MAX SHANLY, MEMBER OF YOUNG LABOUR NATIONAL COMMITTEE, CALLS FOR AN END TO BLAIRITE DOMINANCE

At a recent meeting of the Young Labour National Committee, I proposed a rule change that would not only give Young Labour policy-making powers, but also provide guidelines as to how the policy procedure would work. The rule change was in line with the manifesto pledges made by both the Chair of Young Labour, Simon Darvill, and the NEC Youth Rep, Bex Bailey. However, they, along with a majority of the Committee who had also included policy-making powers in their own manifestos, rejected the rule change. Why did they do so? Were they not elected on the back of manifestos that stated they would implement these reforms? Did they not agree with them in the first place?

I suppose none of this should be particularly surprising. Labour Students, that bastion of ultra Blairite politics, and the organisation/faction that holds pretty much all of the power on the National Committee

(and from where Darvill and Bailey derive most of their support), has still yet to implement OMOV balloting for its own elections. They claim it would be an 'access issue', but really the issue is that it would stop the Party machine from being able to decide who would be running the Party's student wing for the next year. They, backed by their former Chair and now National Youth Officer, Dean Carlin, decide the agenda for the National Committee meetings. Labour Students share an office with Carlin, and also for some reason, have access to the Party membership database, despite being a separate organisation to the Party, in clear breach of the Data Protection Act.

The sickness of Young Labourism is that politics for those with power in our youth wing is about personalities, not issues. It is about making sure that a small dominant group of people, who toe the Party line, are unchallenged both electorally and politically. Politics for them is not about making a difference, but furthering their own careers. So long as Young Labour is still constitutionally tied to Labour Students, it will not be free, it will not be autonomous, and it will not be democratic.

But more importantly, it will not provide hope to young people, and if it doesn't, then the future of Labour is looking very grim – and one that cannot happen. It is time to organise and to challenge the dominance of the right in Young Labour, it is time to have a socialist perspective once more, not just for us, but for the millions of young people who are currently looking forward to a future in which they will have no prospects what ever.

Let us change the future, and let us do so together.



BITEBACKS

'The central problem of our age is not growth or inflation, it is unemployment...The means to restore the public finances to health is to restore employment, and the means to do that is to reposition finance as servant to production and labour.'

(Extract from a 1944 Labour policy document, quoted in a letter by David Murray, *Guardian* 20/6/12).

ANNUAL CONFERENCE

(cont. from front page)

rule changes were submitted in 2012 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 agree rule changes one week and have them voted on by conference the following week.

Last year, in addition to the two rule changes from CLPs and the rule change from Aslef, no less than a further five rule changes were submitted by a total of 21 CLPs (Tower Hamlets Labour Party, Beverley and Holderness CLP, Burnley CLP, Braintree CLP, Derby North CLP, East Devon CLP, Glasgow North CLP, Halifax CLP, Hemsworth CLP, Islington South and Finsbury CLP, Leeds East CLP, Leeds North East CLP, Mid-Bedfordshire CLP, Newport West CLP, Saffron Walden CLP, Stevenage CLP, Tunbridge Wells CLP, Exeter CLP, Islington North CLP and Rotherham CLP. All of the rule changes submitted by these 21 CLPs have been ruled out of order by the Conference Arrangements Committee (CAC). In some cases the ruling out was completely out of order and in other cases it was questionable. It is 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 THE RULE CHANGE FROM NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH LABOUR PARTY

This is an important rule change that provides for natural justice. It limits to one year the period that the NEC can suspend a party member without any action being taken. For the NEC to have the power to administer suspensions to a party member pending the outcome of an investigation (and possible subsequent hearing by the NCC) is a longstanding and correct procedure. But unfortunately

KEY VOTES IN PARTY ELECTIONS

Conference Arrangements Committee (Constituency Section):

Vote for Peter Willsman
Vote for Katy Clark

National Constitutional Committee (Constituency Section)

Vote Gary Heather

there have been cases where the investigation and hearing have been so delayed that the suspension itself has become a punishment, in that the member is prevented from standing for any party or public office. This suggested rule change would debar open-ended suspensions and impose a reasonable restriction of 12 months on administrative suspensions.

SUPPORT THE RULE CHANGE FROM LEYTON AND WANSTEAD CLP AND REDCAR CLP

This rule change mirrors the arrangements for the election of our Party's Leader, by proposing that a local authority Labour Group and/or the CLP(s) covering its council area could apply to the NEC to initiate a consultation process with a view to establishing local electoral colleges to elect the leader of the Labour Group. The idea of a local electoral college to choose leaders of Labour groups was floated in the first draft of Refounding Labour. It presumably met resistance from supporters of the status quo and was regrettably dropped from the final document that was presented to annual conference. Giving Party members more of a role and influence within our Party was a key commitment by Ed Miliband during his leadership campaign. A wider franchise for electing council leaders would be an important step forward for Party democracy. In recent years, central government has made many changes to local government structures and arrangements. Many of these have increased the power of group leaders and tended to weaken their accountability to the rest of the group. A local electoral college

MANDATING OF DELEGATES IS IN ORDER

All unions and many CLPs instruct (i.e. mandate) their delegates how to vote on items of Conference business. This is a perfectly legitimate practice; it is up to each CLP as to what arrangements they make. The Rule Book is completely silent on the matter. Anyone who tries to oppose mandating should be asked to produce the (non-existent) rule which supports their case.

would enhance the accountability of a leader to both councillors and Party and strengthen the link between Group and the local CLPs and Party members.

SUPPORT THE RULE CHANGE FROM ASLEF

At the time of writing this rule change still remains on the agenda for Brighton. It was submitted in Spring 2012 when there was uproar in the Party about the misnomer group, 'Progress', receiving £3 million from Lord Sainsbury, and the suggestion that some of this bling was being used to bankroll Blairite Parliamentary hopefuls. The Aslef proposals are eminently sensible and even some 'Progress' supporters should agree with them!

THE CAC IS OUT OF ORDER – DELEGATES MUST SAY NO TO MACHINE POLITICS AND UPHOLD JUSTICE FOR CLPS

There are two rule changes that have been ruled out by the CAC using arguments that would be considered to be wrong by any fair minded party members. These are the rule change from Leeds Central CLP/Leeds North East CLP and the rule change from Exeter CLP/Islington North CLP. Both decisions by the CAC are based on their interpretation of the 'three-year-rule' which reads as follows:

"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

ALERT 2013

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.

agenda for a period of three years"

The key word here, of course is "part".

JUSTICE FOR LEEDS CENTRAL CLP AND LEEDS NORTH EAST CLP – SAY NO TO MACHINE POLITICS

These CLPs want to institute the new position of a Labour Party Ombudsperson, who would be a vital check on the internal machine politics that Ed is so concerned about. Leeds has proposed a completely new Clause (10) to Chapter 1 with all subsequent clauses renumbered. The new Clause (10) from Leeds has, of course, no overlap with any of the existing Clauses in Chapter 1. The CAC, apparently, is arguing that because the old Clause (10) (i.e. what would be Clause (11) under the Leeds proposals) has been amended in the last three years, then this means that the new Clause (10) from Leeds is somehow

caught by the "three-year-rule"! They also argue that because there were amendments to Chapter 2 in 2011 that have a bearing on the proposal for an Ombudsperson, this also means that Leeds is caught by the "three-year-rule". But every reader will have clearly appreciated the falseness of this last argument. Namely, that Chapter 1 cannot possibly be the same "part" of the Rule Book as Chapter 2! Had the originators of the "three-year-rule" meant "clause", they would have put "clause," and had they meant "chapter" they would have put "chapter," but they put "part". Obviously "part" was generally intended to be something smaller and more discrete than a whole clause.

JUSTICE FOR EXETER CLP AND ISLINGTON NORTH CLP – SAY NO TO MACHINE POLITICS

These CLPs want to institute a national one-member-one-vote postal ballot for the election of the CLP seats on the CAC by amending Chapter 4 Section (B) (Election of CAC). This has also been ruled out by the CAC, apparently again employing the "three-year-rule". The CAC argues that a rule change containing a proposal for OMOV elections for all national committees was defeated in 2010. This is true, but the 2010 rule change was to Chapter 1. Clearly Chapter 1 is not the same "part" of the Rule Book as Chapter 4! It is also the case that Chapter 4 Section (A) (Election of NEC) was amended by Conference in 2011 and 2012, but obviously

Section A (Election of NEC) is not the same "part" as Section B (Election of CAC).

Now, it may be the case that the 'three-year-rule' is inadequately worded. But that is neither here nor there. The CAC's only job is to interpret the rules as they are written in the Rule Book. Not to make them up as they go along. That is machine politics!

THE UNIONS AND THE LABOUR PARTY – ED NEEDS TO HANDLE WITH CARE

The unions founded the Labour Party and they are an intrinsic part of the federation that makes up our Party. Unfortunately the Party has blundered into looking inwards from now until the Special Spring Conference, instead of wholly concentrating on fighting the Tories. We are told in the press that this is an attempt at a "Clause IV moment". If there is any truth in this press story, then there is only one word to use and that is "pathetic". There may well be a lot of good intentions behind all this, but, as we know, the road to hell is paved with good intentions.

Ray Collins, the former General Secretary, has been asked, among other things, to review and make recommendations concerning "the development of a new relationship between the Labour Party and members of affiliated organisations". Ray will hopefully consult widely and draw up a consultation paper that will be launched at Annual Conference. This must be a genuine consultation paper that properly addresses the issues, and not a phoney consultation as we've had so often in the past. In other words, it must leave the door open to a wide range of possible ways forward, including retaining the status quo if there is strong support for that. Affiliated organisations, CLPs and Party members must then be able to fully respond and all these responses must be properly taken on board. The Special Conference must allow for genuine debate and decision from a range of options if several alternative ways forward have emerged by the Spring. If we have to endure yet another stitch-up then that would be machine politics at its worst!



BITEBACKS

Phillip Gould treated every day as though it were a referendum on Blair's leadership. The result was that, even with eight years of three-figure majorities, New Labour allowed Tory assumptions and arguments – taxes bad, markets good, public sector inefficient – to set the agenda and be treated as common sense.

(Daniel Finkelstein, *Guardian* 29/9/12).

VENEZUELA AFTER CHÁVEZ

DOMINIC CURRAN, CONVENER OF YOUNG CLPD, WAS PART OF A DELEGATION TO VENEZUELA. HE GIVES US HERE HIS ASSESSMENT OF THE CURRENT SITUATION

The election of Nicholas Maduro as Hugo Chávez's successor to the President was far too close for comfort, with opposition leader Henrique Capriles coming two per cent short of winning. However our delegation was pleased to see the Bolivarian Movement reconsolidating its support and addressing its shortcomings, so regaining the support of the people.

We learned that the story spun by the media that the election was so close because the socialist project was coming apart at the seams and Chávez's death was one of the final nails in its coffin, was totally false. The closeness of the election was down to the fact that the death of Chávez had been a terrible psychological blow to the supporters of the revolution and many had despaired and simply not turned out to vote. There had been no great swing to the opposition. As Maduro has been in government for enough time to prove himself as a revolutionary leader capable of delivering the social transformation that Chávez was capable of, one gets the feeling that the Chavistas who abstained in the last election are becoming re-enthused after the loss of their leader.

We met the President of the National Electoral Council, Tibisay Lucena, who told us about the exemplary procedures in the March election with audit after audit showing the same margin of victory for Maduro, despite the continued non-recognition of the result by United States (now alone in the world in taking this stance) and the opposition submitting ridiculous and unsubstantiated complaints about the election.



BITEBACKS

'Outside the official definition of tax avoidance, the offshore schemes of Britain's biggest multinationals have not just escaped any clampdown, they have been rewarded with a rewriting of corporate tax law that makes them more irresistible than ever.'

(Richard Brooks, author of *The Great Tax Robbery*, *Guardian* 13/3/13).



Venezuela is still recovering from the shock of the post electoral violence instigated by the opposition that was seen in March. After he decided not to recognise the totally fair election in March, Capriles told his supporters to go out onto the streets and "express their anger" and ten people were killed in ensuing riots. Many Venezuelans personally blame him for ordering these killings and now most of his posters are defaced with the word "asesino" or "KKKpriles". Now that Capriles and the opposition have exposed themselves as the violent and thuggish force that they are, the population is turning on them and they will not see the levels of support that they did in the election for some time. Estimates put the amount of money that the United States gives to the Venezuelan opposition at twenty million dollars, so despite all the nonsense in the mainstream media about what wonderful democrats they are, the opposition is more like violent mercenaries in the pay of US imperialism to overthrow the government and return the oil wealth to the oligarchs.

Reports of shortages in Venezuela are also very overstated in the mainstream media. Again despite all the talk of products running out in shops, we were astounded at the sheer abundance of food wherever one looked in Venezuela. Where there have been quite bad shortages in toiletries and important brands of cornflour, these have been orchestrated by the monopoly private companies still under the control of the old oligarchy and recent investigations by the government have shown warehouses full of these products that have been purposely hidden and blocked from distribution, something the government is forcing to be corrected, meaning most of the shortages have been solved.

One of the issues the opposition made much hay about during the election was the high level of violent crime in Venezuela. Our trip coincided with the beginning of the

"Secure Homeland Plan" which put smart patrols of the Police and National Guard in crime-ridden areas for the first time to great effect, with not a single murder in Caracas for a few days while we were there when the typical number is fifty per day on average. We also met officers of the newly created Bolivarian Police Force which was founded to circumvent the old corrupt police only accountable to State and Municipal government. They stressed a refreshing commitment to human rights, good community relations and crime prevention. Now that the government has proper control over policing, it is able to start a proper campaign on crime that will give the opposition one less issue to make political gains on.

"It is very inspiring to see what can be achieved in terms of social transformation even in a developing country like Venezuela"

Despite much sensationalist coverage to the contrary in the British press, the media is remarkably free in Venezuela. One only has to glance at a news stand or flick on a television for five minutes and see the bile spilled by the newspapers and news channels against the government to see that the press is in no way controlled by the government.

The social programmes for employment, health and education under Chávez continue and it is very inspiring to see what can be achieved in terms of social transformation even in a developing country like Venezuela. Don't believe what the press says: despite a bit of a shock, the Bolivarian revolution is on track and has recovered from its electoral hiccup in March and is powering on despite losing its Comandante Hugo Chávez.

TO SUCCEED LABOUR MUST ABANDON AUSTERITY

**BEN FOLLEY,
CLPD EXECUTIVE MEMBER**

The Tory-led coalition's spending cuts agenda, slashing public services and welfare, is crushing people's living standards. The imposition of austerity on the majority of the population, whilst those at the top are made better off, is increasingly generating public anger.

A new national forum – the People's Assembly Against Austerity – has come together to help coordinate opposition to these attacks – with 4,000 plus people attending its inaugural conference in London this June. Additionally thousands of people have been attending the People's Assemblies gatherings up and down the country.

The People's Assembly is a new broad based movement involving national trade unions alongside public service defence campaigns. It is a movement that Labour should align itself to.

The Tories' policy is failing and their electoral support has declined. An alternative policy to austerity is needed – one that doesn't rely on exacting punishment on the poorest and most vulnerable in society. Only the Labour Party can do this. Labour needs policies for 2015 that will change society for the better. That is also the best way to enthuse potential Labour voters to give us their support.

Within the Labour Party there is huge opposition to the Tories austerity framework and support for an alternative. Across the country Labour activists, councillors and MPs are opposing cuts. Labour MPs and councillors have been mobilising alongside trade unions and community campaigns to oppose closures to hospitals and fire stations. Many have been actively campaigning against the bedroom tax.

Despite widespread opposition to the government's austerity policy, which is evidently failing, there is a vociferous lobby from the right wing, backed by the Tory media, pressing Labour to continue the cuts framework. So it is essential those who oppose austerity make our voices heard.

Within the Labour Party we need to be making the case for an economic agenda to restore prosperity. If Labour is elected and embraces austerity the assault on ordinary people will continue, Labour will fail in government and demoralise our supporters.

The Labour Assembly in November is meeting to build up this campaign within the Labour Party. Its launch statement won support from hundreds of Labour activists, councillors and MPs.

Initial MPs supporting the event include: Diane Abbott MP, Dave Anderson MP, Katy Clark MP, Michael Connarty MP, Jeremy Corbyn MP, John Cryer MP, Paul Farrelly MP, Paul Flynn MP, Kelvin Hopkins MP, Ian Lavery MP, John McDonnell MP, Michael Meacher MP, Grahame Morris MP. Others backing a Labour Assembly include Owen Jones and Ken Livingstone.

Labour Assembly Against Austerity

10am–5pm

Saturday 9th November, London

To register for the event visit:

www.labourassemblyagainstausterity.org.uk

AUSTERITY POLICY IS A FAILURE: WHY EMULATE IT?

**MICHAEL BURKE, SOCIALIST
ECONOMIC BULLETIN
(WWW.BIT.LY/SOCIALISTECON)**

The austerity policy of the Tory-led government is a failure, and there is nothing to be gained by emulating it. Since the 2010 Comprehensive Spending Review there has been no growth of the domestic economy at all. Exports have provided a minuscule increase in GDP.

Overall, the austerity policy has produced stagnation. As a result there has been no progress in the stated aim of government policy which they claim is deficit-reduction. The public sector deficit has been stalled at £120bn over the last two financial years.

This is inevitable. It is virtually impossible to reduce the deficit while the economy stagnates, as tax revenues cannot grow and rising poverty in the wider population puts upward pressure on the bill for social protection. Economically it is completely counter-productive to adopt austerity policies as they cannot produce growth, or decent-well paid jobs or reduce the deficit.

It is also counter-productive politically. Precisely because austerity cannot produce growth it has declining credibility. There is no electoral credibility to be gained by adopting a policy that has so clearly failed.

This is also true of the detailed policies which have been adapted to the Tories' line. Not opposing Tory plans for workfare, dropping the commitment to universal winter fuel payments and supporting the public sector pay freeze will undermine electoral popularity with the unemployed, pensioners and public sector workers. These policies will do nothing to generate economic recovery.

The scale of the current crisis means that

they are also irrelevant in terms of producing recovery. The British economy is still more than 3% below where it was before the recession in the first quarter of 2008. But by the time of the next general election it will be about 20% below where it would have been had there been no recession at all. The shortfall between where the economy is now and that previous trend rate of growth means the economy will be around £350bn smaller than it should be.

This is the source of the deficit – the absence of growth – and the driving force of the recession is the fall in investment, both from the private sector and from the government. The decline in investment in plant, equipment, machinery and construction now more than accounts for the entire fall in GDP.

There is no possibility of promoting economic recovery through further government spending cuts. Even the IMF and *Financial Times* have argued that the austerity policy won't produce growth. The only feasible alternative is a very significant increase in state-led investment.

That means investing in local authority affordable housing, green energy production, large-scale investment in infrastructure and rail, and investment in education.

We're told that 'there is no money left'. But this is simply untrue. The cash balances held by firms as deposits in British banks now amount to £750bn, more than enough to fund recovery. The government should be intervening to ensure some of these resources are directed into investment.

We only need to look at the falling popularity of French President Hollande to see the disastrous consequences of continuing austerity policies. The only policy that will work is investment, not cuts.

THE BLAIRITES: STRONG ARROGANT AND OBLIVIOUS TO THE WISHES OF LABOUR MEMBERS

**JON LANSMAN,
EDITOR OF LEFTFUTURES**

There is no doubt that the Blairites have had a rough few years.

As they see it, Brown, the Pretender, who hated the Great Leader, undermined him and forced him out. No sooner had the usurper stolen the Great Leader's job, than he demonstrated that he wasn't capable of doing it himself, didn't really believe in 're-forming' public services, and was against modernisation. Then he very nearly managed to hang on in government when he deserved not only to lose but to be humiliated, in preparation for the great revival.

The Brown years never dented the Blairites' sense of entitlement to run the Labour Party as the Great Leader would wish. They never doubted that the Great Successor would win the leadership, seeing off the treacherous brother who had learnt his perfidious ways in the court of the Pretender.

And then their world fell apart: the end of New Labour; 'apologies' for New Labour; shifting the Party away from 'the centre ground'; allowing unions and lefties to think they might actually be allowed some influence; the departure of the Great Successor, leaving them leaderless; unsettled by the severity of the economic crisis and lacking any ideological compass to guide them.

Before we continue, we need to reflect on who we mean by the Blairites. Some on the left appear to think of the Labour right as a homogeneous group of neo-Thatcherites. Actually, it is just as divided and ideologically diverse as the left. Although the rows between the Blairite and Brownite camps were, in the words of the *Independent's* Steve Richards, "apolitical rows for the depoliticised decade", the political divisions have become more visible.

Most of the Labour Right amongst the membership can be described as social democrats. Even in their leaders, though there are clearly elements of continuity with Thatcher's neo-liberalism, there is rather more continuity with traditional Labour revisionism. Blair himself, however, is, in more of Steve Richard's words, "a social and economic liberal, in many ways closer to the Conservatives, leading a centre-left party that he knew was in a different place from him."

So what are the Blairites now that there are now Brownites? Truthfully they are hard to define. It is easiest to do so in compari-

son with the traditional right of the Party, social democrats who see themselves in the Crosland tradition, who support a significant role for the state, equality & redistribution, who support trade unions and their role within the party, and who recognise class as a key determinant of inequality. The traditional right are closer to Labour First than Progress.

"Blair himself is a social and economic liberal, in many ways closer to the Conservatives"

Labour First includes people whose politics may be well to the right such as John Spellar, Warley MP since 1992 and key right-wing union fixer since the 1970s, as well as others such as Tom Watson now seen as centrist. All are more loyal to Ed Miliband than Progress and unsentimental about Blair.

The Blairites, including the leaders of Progress and several members of the Shadow Cabinet, prefer to remain ideology-lite. They are practitioners of triangulation, spin and Party discipline, hostile to the state and still enamoured of the market in spite of its recent colossal failures. Their frequent warnings about Labour's comfort zones indicate how much further to the right are their own. But even Progress activists are people with a range of views, and the political day trippers who frequent their conferences even more so.

When the Blairites finally recovered from the shock of David Miliband's defeat, they could not agree on strategy. They were as uncertain as the Left how far Ed Miliband wished to move away from New Labour. By the end of 2011, some were willing to back Balls against him. But after a month of almost daily sniping from Murphy, Twigg, Byrne and others in January 2012 (and in spite of Ed Balls's support for a public sector pay freeze designed to solidify his backing from the Blairites and not cleared with the Leader), others were unwilling to take the plunge. Whether it was because they couldn't stomach Balls, or because too many MPs who'd voted for both Balls and David Miliband were now loyal to his brother, the Blairites agreed to lay off the leader and the sniping stopped.

The Spring of 2012 was their low point. Their contempt for the choice of Leader and members' desire to bury New Labour brought to a head the opposition of leading

trade unionists, and not only from the left. In February a dossier called simply A Report into the constitution, structure, activities and funding of Progress was circulated to all CLPs. It argued Progress was a party-within-a-party, pursuing policy and party organisation agendas, as well as "openly supporting candidates in parliamentary selections".

The following month the Yorkshire regional TUC conference on 3 March, for example, passed unanimously a GMB motion supported by Wendy Nichols of Unison, a member of Labour's NEC, calling on unions "to take all practical steps to oppose the organisational and ideological aims of 'Progress'". In June, the GMB Congress passed a motion along similar lines, with strong support from general secretary, Paul Kenny.

This drove Progress onto the defensive. Shadow Cabinet member, Ivan Lewis, called on the Party to "encourage plurality. No individual or section of the Party has a monopoly of wisdom." Progress Director, Robert Philpot, stressed that Labour was "stronger for being a broad church, both organisationally and ideologically. Let's keep it that way." Pluralism and inclusiveness had not previously been high amongst the tenets of Blairism. They even went out of their way to stress the importance of trade unionism.

The conversion, of course, was not convincing. At their summer conference in 2012, in a breakout session entitled "What should a modernised link look like", the answer seemed to be "just like USDAW and Community", only with a political fund that is "opt-in" rather than "opt-out", consulted but with little direct say over Labour Party policy.

Progress did make superficial changes in its structure to provide some appearance of democracy and transparency about funding, designed to avoid being forced to make changes by the Party. However, a rule change submitted by ASLEF last year, is still likely to be moved this year. As well as requiring "acceptable standards of democracy, governance and transparency", it would require Progress to donate half of its future income from Lord Sainsbury (over £1.8m to date) to the Party.

That may well explain the recent rise in Progress attacks on trade union influence in the Party, starting with an interview with "Militant moderate" Alan Johnson in their February magazine. His working class roots and trade union background made him their

(cont. on next page)

HOW LABOUR'S TRIGGER WORKS

A CLPD BRIEFING ON THE RE-SELECTION OF SITTING LABOUR MPS

Labour's 'trigger' system, part of the overall process that decides whether a sitting Member of Parliament stands again at the next general election, has now started in local constituency parties – with some already having concluded their re-selections.

Re-selection of MPs, whose introduction CLPD successfully campaigned for in the 1970s to replace the automatic re-adoption of sitting MPs as candidates, provides local parties with a mechanism to hold their Labour MP to account. Whilst the current trigger mechanism is a watered down version of the mandatory re-selection CLPD initially won, it remains the principal means of making MPs democratically accountable to the Party.

In the current round of selections we are choosing who will represent the party

at the next general election, which unless the Tory/Lib-Dem coalition breaks down, is due to take place on May 7th 2015.

Labour's trigger mechanism allows the whole local party, both individual members and affiliated organisations, to determine whether the constituency holds a full open selection contest for its next candidate in which other potential candidates are nominated or re-selects the sitting MP without such a contest.

After an MP has indicated they are seeking re-selection the local party, under the supervision its Regional Office, establishes a timetable of around eight weeks for the process. Party membership is frozen and individual members of the CLP who have been members of the Labour Party for six months up to the freeze date are eligible to participate in the ballots that take place at Party meetings.

All the local constituency party's units (branches and forums) and its affiliates (trade unions, socialist societies and coop-

erative organisations) are treated equally and entitled to return a vote.

Members of party units are entitled to at least seven days notice of trigger ballot meetings. The meetings are provided with statements from the MP and the Chief Whip and can then discuss the merits of the MP for up to half an hour. This is followed by a secret 'YES/NO' ballot as to whether to re-select the sitting MP. The party unit's decision is determined by simple majority. There is no casting vote for the chair, and in the event of a tie the ballot is re-taken which if a tie is repeated means the branch or forum does not make an affirmative nomination.

To be re-selected, the sitting MP requires a majority of the affirmative nominations from the CLP's branches, forums and affiliated organisations. Where the MP fails to obtain such a majority a full selection procedure takes place in that constituency.

(Jon Lansman, cont. from previous page)

ideal mouthpiece for the claim that trade unions are in danger of becoming "irrelevant" and "cannot connect to a whole swathe of the workforce that thinks they died out with the ark". And we must mention also his plea that the drive to increase working-class representation in parliament should not be "left to a small clique in the affiliated unions who want to get the people who mirror their views into parliament" and his calls on the unions to reduce their power within the Labour Party."

"This is a planned attack that reflects underlying and long-standing hostility to trade unions and the desire to destroy any influence they have within the Party"

Certainly, it is not the fear that they are losing out in the parliamentary selections that has driven Progress to this. Their success in winning a clear majority of this round of selections in winnable seats reflects a growing strength and confidence, buoyed by the many concessions Ed Miliband has made to them over policy. This is a planned attack that reflects their underlying and long-standing hostility to trade unions and their desire to destroy any influence they have within the Party.

At their most recent summer conference, Peter Mandelson continued the dirty work, claiming that trade unions wield an "absolutely disgraceful" influence over the selection of parliamentary candidates which risks undermining the Party's campaign for a "new politics" in Britain. "Too many selection processes... are in the hands of one union at worst or a couple at best," he argued. He also described union voting strength at conference as "disgraceful" – and this in answer to a question inviting him to outline what united Progress and Unite! Answer – nothing.

More recently, he has again attacked the role of unions in influencing parliamentary selections, focusing on the contest to replace the disgraced Eric Joyce, himself parachuted by the Blairite machine into the Falkirk seat to displace left MP, Dennis Canavan. His attack, he claims, isn't on trade unions who "should, of course, participate in parliamentary selection processes" but on their "being allowed to pay en bloc to recruit en masse their members to the Party... like some modern-day block vote for trade union general secretaries to wield in London."

He is utterly disingenuous. What he opposes is any kind of collective influence for trade unions in the Party they founded. The Blairites have chosen to attack over Falkirk because they believe they can smear and discredit Unite even though no rules appear to have been broken.

The Blairites are strong, arrogant and oblivious to the social democratic aims of

most Party members never mind the desire of most trade unionists for a Labour Party that once again voices their aspirations. This year will see a vital struggle between Progress and the unions, and especially Unite. We know whose side we're on.

This article first appeared in Original Briefing Cooperative, July 2013.



BITEBACKS

'Wage-based demand in rich economies provides about two-thirds of economic demand, and in the periods leading up to both the 1929-31 and 2008-9 crashes the wage share fell heavily while wealth ballooned at the top. British wage-earners today have some £100bn less in their pockets than if national income were shared now as it was in the late 1970s.'

(Michael Meacher MP, *Guardian* 25/4/13).

'The report shows that the richest 1% of the world's population increased its income by 60% in the last 20 years. In 2012 the world's 100 richest people enjoyed a net income of \$240bn while people in extreme poverty lived on less than \$1.25 a day.'

(*The Cost of Inequality*, Oxfam).

BLEAKONOMICS

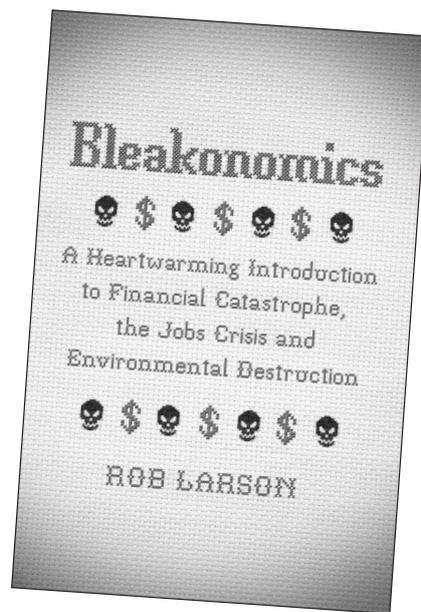
COLIN BURGESS, THORNBURY AND YATE CLP, REVIEWS ROB LARSON'S 2012 PLUTO PRESS PUBLICATION

First accept my apologies for selecting an American book. When I was asked to contribute a review, it took me some time to select a book that I thought would follow on from Dexter Whitfield's powerful four trend analysis of the effects of neo-liberalism on British social reality. I think this is it. The other reason is that I actually enjoyed reading Rob Larson's book, written as it is in a completely different style from Whitfield's. Although pricey at about £16, the quality of production, paper and print makes it a good book to hold in your hand. A bonus is that, post-2008, Larson presents a more realistic view of American capitalism than did our New Labour "amerophiles". Larson organises his book around three major issues of our time. This makes the task of bringing the two books together easier than it otherwise would be.

Contrary to New Labour's efforts in continuing the embedment of neo-liberalism, Larson sees this as a serious cause of the problems of labour. He identifies the elements of the ideology as: the belief in deregulation of industry, business and finance; getting rid of the interventionist state so diminishing social services; globalising production, trade and financial services; and privatising public services.

"Larson sees neo-liberalism as a serious cause of the problems of labour"

Larson's three issues are: the deterioration of the world's natural systems; the social conflicts arising from concentrated wealth; and the financial instability of market bubbles and crashes. The key concept used in the environmental section is "externalities", which he says are the unpaid-for positive and negative effects, or benefits and costs, of the free market on people not party to the current deal. He refers to these outcomes of the neo-liberal market as "goods" and "bads". The bads cause troubles in people's lives which when politicised become issues. The key concept in considering the concentration of wealth is "inequality in bargaining power between capital and labour". He is excellent on the violent history of industrial relations in the USA, and on the use by oligopolistic firms to avoid violence today by globalising jobs



to countries with poorer workers and stricter discipline. However, instead of the class struggle as such, his main concern is the market power gained by successful firms through the "economies of scale". Market power he defines as "the ability of firms to influence prices and engage in anti-competitive behaviour". Larson's third issue is the effect of neo-liberalism on financial activities. Deregulation has allowed accumulated wealth to flow around the world destabilising countries like Argentina, whole areas like South-East Asia and finally the UK and the US, followed by the whole world's financial system. Deregulation set wealth free in the "Big Bang", globalisation allowed it to slosh around the world, the accompanying loss of social services ensured that the most vulnerable paid the price, and privatisation accumulates concentrated and centralised wealth into fewer hands in a very short time. This wealth then allows the plutocrats power over politicians, and Larson's oppositional heroes are the Occupy Wall Street movement.

Larson is one of a "new breed" of social scientist and empirical economists. The old neo-classical economics of the 1960s were mainly theoretical and mathematical, but did accommodate Keynes' rule that when people were spending the government was not, but when the people were not spending the government was. Empirical economists, on the other hand, are committed to using the "laws" of supply and demand as hypotheses to be tested through observation and empirical generalisation leading to revision of economic theory.

My problem with his view that "the law of diminishing returns" to the production process does not work in this instance, since

it is trumped by "the law of increasing returns to increased scale" is that he cuts down his definition of diminishing returns to make it work. If he had allowed that changing one factor of production, say increasing labour, results in diminishing returns to efforts, unless all other factors are increased as well, then he could have accounted for the economics of the expansion of capitalism into the whole world, and explained "increasing returns".

Don't be put off by the economics terms, Larson is an excellent guide in the use of economics to explain the mysteries of our contemporary life, even if like me you find the use of Marx's methods more rewarding.



BITEBACKS

'How can the government keep on talking about us all being in it together with a straight face? The bankers were substantially responsible for creating this financial mess, yet whenever there is talk of limiting the bonus culture that incentivised all the absurd risk-taking that got us into this trouble, the government steps in to side with the wealthy.'

(Twitter: @gilesfraser).

'Shareholder value has been destroyed, capitalism has been given a bad name, key measures of the market have been manipulated for cynical gains, taxpayers have shelled out billions to bail banks out, and yet vast rewards packages are still being handed out.' (Simon Walker, Head of the Institute of Directors, *Guardian* 16/3/13).

'So the failed bankers of HBOS lost £47bn and caused a £20bn taxpayer bailout (Report 5 April). Personally I blame the welfare state.' (Rev Peter Godfrey, *Guardian* 6/4/13).

'Why do the elites insist so dogmatically on this disastrous political and economic path? We believe that their aim is not to solve the debt crisis but to create a new regulatory framework throughout Europe that is based on cheap labour, deregulation of the labour market, low public spending and tax exemptions for capital.'

(Alexis Tsipras, president of Greece's Syriza-United Social Front, *Guardian* 9/10/12).

TEL'S TALES

THE LEGACY OF MARGARET THATCHER

The *Daily Mirror* has exposed exactly where 'right-to-buy' has ended up. It has ended up benefiting wealthy landlords. The *Mirror* studied the records of 13 local councils and found that no less than 32% of former council properties have been sold on and are now in the hands of private landlords. Charles Gow, the son of Thatcher's housing minister, owned as many as forty ex council flats in one single block. Incidentally, the *Guardian* has revealed that as many as a third of MPs are buy-to-let landlords.

THE UNIONS ARE THE LABOUR PARTY

Most of the discussion in the media about the unions and the Labour Party is wrong-headed. The impression given is that there is an entity known as the Labour Party and that somehow the unions are separate and merely link up to the Party. In fact our Party is not a singular body: it is a federation. An NEC document written in the 1960s spells this out: 'The Labour Party was established as, and remains a federation.' It then goes on to quote the first line of the 1906 Constitution: 'The Labour Party is a Federation consisting of Trade Unions, Trade Councils, Socialist Societies, and Local Labour Associations.'

PRIMARIES – AN EXERCISE IN WISHFUL THINKING

Party members are constantly being patronised and told that they are valued and will be given real power in the Party. The truth is somewhat different. Take Arnie Graf and Ed Miliband's idea of USA-style primaries for choosing Labour's Mayoral and parliamentary candidates. Party members would be expected to pay some £45, work hard all through the year, and yet have no more influence on key Party decisions than someone who walks in off the street, pays nothing and registers at the last minute in a primary. Ed seems to think this will re-energise our Party and somehow lead to more working-class candidates. This is wishful thinking at its most extreme. Experience shows that success in primaries invariably becomes the preserve of the rich. It has been estimated that a candidate would need some £750,000 to run an effective campaign in a London Mayoral primary.

Ian Williams, writing from New York for *Tribune*, points out that primaries are the major route by which money exercises its

pernicious influence in American politics: 'primaries would open the last barrier to self-indulgent affluent individuals and groups with cheque books, and ideas that do not necessarily harmonise with what we would like to think of as the traditional Labour ideas.'

MACHINE POLITICS?

In comparison to the machinations under so-called New Labour, the goings-on in Falkirk didn't amount to much at all. This is no doubt the real reason why the Party won't publish the report of its investigation. The *Guardian* has had access to the report and described it as 'very thin gruel.'

We are also unlikely to hear anything from the police in Falkirk. This seems to have been an intimidatory ploy. As Len McCluskey has said: 'people mention the police because it creates fear, and the outside perception is that there must be something in this. It is the oldest tactic in the book.' In fact the police have always made it clear that they are not interested in internal Party matters that can be dealt with by the Party's own procedures.

A few years ago the Erith and Thamesmead parliamentary selection ballot box was broken into at the Party's HQ and ballot papers interfered with. Readers might think that something as serious as this should have been referred to the police; but the HQ, under Ray Collins no less, thought differently and the matter was quietly dropped.

And only a few months ago there was the Rotherham parliamentary selection, which local Party members felt was an appalling stitch-up by the Party establishment. At the selection meeting there were some 125 angry Party members. They were presented with a shortlist of two-two fewer than the NEC'S own guidance-with good local candidates excluded. Some 100 members either walked out or spoilt their ballot papers in protest. Which was the greater insult to Party members? Rotherham or Falkirk?

SPOTLIGHT ON TORY PARTY FUNDING

Labour needs to go on the offensive over the scandal of how the Tory Party is funded. Steven Crone and Stuart Wilks-Heeg have peered into these murky waters. They found that some 15 very rich families account for 'donor groups' that contribute almost a third of all Tory funding. A classic example is JCB billionaire Sir Anthony Bamford, a regular guest on the Prime Minister's trade missions. Between 2001 and mid 2010 there were donations from Bamford himself but also from Mark Bamford, George Bamford, JCB Bamford Excavators, JCB Research and JCB World Brands. In total the contribution from this single family 'donor group' was almost

£4 million. And it is worth noting that in 2010 the donations from those in the financial services 'industry' accounted for over half of all Tory funding

HANDOUTS FOR IAN DUNCAN SMITH

This unctuous Tory presumably calls himself Duncan Smith because he would regard plain 'Mr Smith' as rather too common. Nothing is more vomit-inducing than listening to him whingeing on about benefit claimants. Particularly so given that Smith lives on an estate owned by his wife's family, a family that over the past decade has received some £1.5 million in income support from the state in the form of farm subsidies. J. K. Galbraith got it right when he observed: 'The modern Conservative is engaged in one of the oldest exercises in moral philosophy: that is the search for a superior moral justification for selfishness.'

THE LEGACY OF DAVID MILIBAND

For years CLPs and their members have been urged to get out on the doorstep, do the voter ID and assemble a marked up register. It was an issue stressed by the candidates in the leadership election. Oxford East, for example, has a marked register of some

(cont. on p19)



BITEBACKS

'One significant plank of Thatcherite privatisation was in the housing market, by championing free-market consumerism at the cost of planned social housing. The current economics of this principle make stark reading. Last year £23 billion was paid out in housing benefit. £9.2 billion of this public money was paid directly into the pockets of private-sector landlords charging market-determined (one might argue exploitative or extortionate) rents. Social-rented sector tenants receive on average £ 81 per week while private-sector tenants receive on average £106 per week. Public sector funding is propping up private sector landlords. Last year £21 billion was paid out in tax credits to in-work families. It can be estimated that £17 billion has been paid to those employed in the private sector. Yet another example of the public purse subsidising public sector greed.'

(*Guardian* 12/4/13).

5 DAYS IN MAY

MIKE GRIFFITHS, FORMER NEC AND FORMER CHAIR OF THE PARTY, REVIEWS ANDREW ADONIS' ANALYSIS OF THE GENERAL ELECTION

Years ago, a young Executive member of the National Graphical Association (the printers union) spoke for the Executive at his national conference against a motion calling for support for PR. Reading Andrews Adonis' book all these years later, I can recall clearly the arguments made by myself then.

Democracy cannot be defined as a pure arithmetic count of representatives = votes cast. It needs to be a broader test: of accountability; the ability of the electorate to call the government to account; knowledge of actions made by those that represent us and the carry through into government of the will of the electorate, based on informed discussion and reported through the election campaign.

I argued then that PR would continually ensure that small groups, in secret, would determine policy and outcomes after the polls were closed and without any accountability to the electorate.

Reading *5 Days in May* the situation then was far worse. The Lib Dems represented primarily by the economic views of Nick Clegg and David Laws (later to be sacked for fiddling his expenses), trashed their own arguments on the central theme of the 2010 election campaign – “the economy”. The Lib Dem manifesto stated: “If spending is cut too soon, it would undermine the much needed recovery and cost jobs”.

This book demonstrates that, rather than carry through the common argument made in the election campaign to support Alistair Darling's plan proposed by Labour and Liberal Democrats, Clegg and Laws readily agreed with the Conservatives' austerity plan.

We now know the disastrous outcome of Clegg's position but importantly Adonis shows it was a decision made not because he had to do so but because he wanted to! “Clegg turned Right not Left and a Tory-led coalition was the result”.

Adonis' rationale for this is that Clegg and Laws, whom he describes as neo-liberal, are at heart Tories with Laws so close to Osborne and his economic position that he was asked to join the Conservatives before the election.

Adonis' book is not just a fascinating read. He produces a style that contemporaneously takes us through the days and nights from election night, to the resignation of

Gordon Brown and the Labour government, with real detail and diary style accuracy.

He gives space to the arguments around seats in the Commons following the election with the Conservatives on 307 seats and needing 326 for an overall majority.

The Lab-Lib total was 315 with support coming from the 5 SDLP, Alliance and Independent members from Northern Ireland and the one English Green MP.

In addition the Welsh and Scottish Nats could never side with the Tories and be forgiven with their electorate if they put them into government. Finally the DUP in Northern Ireland had fallen out with Cameron following his decision to support their rivals the Ulster Unionists.

This gave a total of Lab/Lib with supporting parties of 315 plus 28, a working majority in the commons of about 30. Adonis presents evidence that the closest vote representative of this position “in the present parliament, when the Lib Dems voted with Labour to delay the redrawing of parliamentary boundaries beyond 2015, saw the Conservatives lose by 334 to 292 a majority of 42.”

Adonis has added to his account of events at the time with an analysis of the coalition government since. He finds that rather than a moderating force within a Tory government the Lib Dems have been largely irrelevant due to mistakes made in placement of senior Lib Dems in government. Adonis writes: “it is hard to conceive that the Lib Dems could have negotiated a worst allocation of ministerial posts”.

He sums up the outcome of the pact to form a government between the Tories and the Lib Dems with the quip: “in 2010 the Lib Dems went into government but not into coalition”.

Equally fascinating within the “Three Years On” section of the book is a possibly unintended reflection by Adonis. It is the power struggle within the Lib Dems for their party's future direction.

This fight between the traditional Liberals and the emerging new Liberals that support the Orange Book (jointly edited by David Laws and a fellow financier in 2004), defining themselves as Tory/Liberals “committed to small state” and espousing “the failure of the social-democratic experiment.”

This struggle may yet have profound implications for British politics. Tradition-



ally the Lib Dems and the Liberals before have been anti Tory.

If Nick Clegg, whom Adonis states is set “apart from the previous generation of progressive Left SDP and Lib Dem leaders,” succeeds in taking the Lib Dems permanently to the right, then minority Tory governments could be kept in office for generations to come.

However, to end on a more positive note: the recent publishing of the Lib Dems' achievements in coalition

makes interesting reading and many argue that it is a poor record in government given the choice they rejected to form a progressive alliance with Labour. If the electorate decides that coalitions are not what they want, then the Lib Dems will be the victims at the next election.

Adonis argues it is all there to play for, with “One Nation Labour” the route to travel. I agree the outcome of the next election is far from decided and with the appropriate broad based progressive appeal, a majority Labour government could still be the smart bet to make.



BITEBACKS

‘It is becoming increasingly evident that, whatever the reasons and the origins of the crisis, it is being used by an international “neo-liberal” establishment to promote a new model of social, labour and economic relations across the western world.’

(Isidoros Diakides, *Chartist* September/October 2012).

‘No one voted for NHS privatisation. It's not in the coalition agreement. It will squander money. It will harm us.’ (Dr Clare Gerada, Chair of the Royal College of General Practitioners, March 20, 2013, quoted in *The Original Labour Briefing* May 2013).

‘The coalition government's policies on low incomes and unemployment return the UK to the pre-Beveridge era's emphasis on poor law deterrence and the demonisation of paupers.’ (Professor John Veit-Wilson, Newcastle University, *Guardian* 11/12/12).

TELSTALES*(cont. from p17)*

75%; Plumstead in South East London, which has had Labour councillors continuously since 1907, has a marked up register of around 35%. During the South Shields by-election the marked-up register for that CLP was revealed to the website LabourList. The figure was an appalling 0.2%. As LabourList commented: 'this suggests that little or no canvassing had ever been done.'

NOT TO BE MISSED**2014 CLPD AGM**

Saturday March 1, 11.30am,
Conway Hall,
Red Lion Square.

*Report of 2013 AGM available
on CLPD website.*

**CLPD'S
CHARTER FOR
A DEMOCRATIC
CONFERENCE**

- At least 50% of conference time should be reserved for contributions in policy debates by delegates
- The criteria for motions should be flexible and fair
- Conference should choose the right policies, not rubber stamp them
- Conference decisions and all papers should be available online to party members
- The structure of conference therefore needs a review by the Conference Arrangements Committee

**BITEBACKS**

'According to Alison Garnham, chief executive of CPAG: "The coalition is on course to leave behind the worst child poverty record of any government for a generation." Julia Unwin, head of the Joseph Rowntree foundation adds: "I am more convinced than ever that we have a perfect storm brewing; the reforms to welfare, the economic slowdown and spiralling costs, together with an increasingly spiteful tone in how we describe people in poverty, risks the UK becoming a nation where people face destitution".'

(Guardian 1/4/13).

'We are still far from a proper functioning democracy.'

(Michael Meacher MP, Campaign Briefing 77 p2).

ABOLITION OF THE AGRICULTURAL WAGES BOARD**ANN PHILLIPS,
CLPD SUPPORTER FROM ST
AUSTELL AND NEWQUAY CLP**

Yet another way that the Government has changed the law without a proper Parliamentary debate has been by bungling the abolition of the Agricultural Wages Board (AWB), into a much wider enterprise and regulatory reform bill. When the issue returned to the Commons, it was not even debated but forced through by guillotine without a vote.

Nationally we have 150,000 rural workers in England and Wales that were protected by this Board with their pay, holidays, sick pay and housing. Many farm workers rented tied housing with the job. From April 16th all this is abolished and the spectre of poverty embracing the countryside is now very real and will seriously affect those living in the tied accommodation as they face the threat of higher rents or even lose their homes to private rents.

The Wages Board set annual pay rates for agricultural workers from grade 1 at

£6.21 ph to experienced farm managers at £9.40ph. Agriculture is classed as the UK's most dangerous industry with its long and difficult hours an average worker age of 55 years involving years of training and expertise, together with immense experience. Now all this will count for nothing as employers decide not to pay workers any increases in pay. They may even lower their pay.

Yes, we know that there are problems for the industry – health crisis, blight, floods, drought – but there are no prizes for guessing who will profit from the demise of the Board. Not the workers. And the NFU says it wants to be treated like any other industry in the 21st century, but what other industry enjoys an annual subsidy of £34bn and an opt-out from the working-time directive? Now on top of that they want the tax-payer to subsidise their wages bills by paying in-work benefits to workers paid poverty wages.

Let's not forget that the big profiteers are the supermarkets and food manufacturers including Morrisons and Sainsburys along with people like Lord Vestey, owner

of Stowell Park, a business that lobbied in favour of the AWB's abolition. These Companies profit handsomely from the tightening grip of retail on our food industry. For them, the AWB stood in their way of ever larger profits whilst workers rarely attract a living wage.

Here in Cornwall, in 2010, a large proportion of our Gross Value Added comes from the Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing output totalling £206 million, equal to 2.8% of the total GVA for Cornwall and the Isle of Scilly – which was £7.313 million. The comparative figure for the UK was 0.7%.

So now, many agricultural workers will wait till October 1st when they could face losing their homes. This could be a challenge to the European Court of Human Rights as well as being in breach of the UK's International obligations.

Let's hope that the employers do not take advantage of the loss of the AWB to make more poverty for Cornwall. And, of course, agricultural workers everywhere in the country will feel the effects of these pernicious reforms.

CLPD fringe meeting at TUC 2013 conference in Bournemouth

TUC conference highlight

Tuesday 10 September, 12.30, Bournemouth Hermitage Hotel (opposite conference centre). Free admission.

Speakers: Diane Abbott MP
 Professor Keith Ewing
 Billy Hayes (CWU)
 Len McCluskey (Unite)
 Steve Murphy (UCATT)
 Hazel Nolan (GMB rep on Young Labour National Committee)
 Mick Whelan (ASLEF)
Chair: Peter Willsman (CLPD secretary)

CLPD Conference Assessment and review of the week

Tuesday 24 September 6pm Royal Albion Hotel (very near pier). Entry £3 (conc £1).

Speakers: Tony Benn ● Ann Black (NEC) ● John Cryer MP ● Bryan Gould, former Labour opposition cabinet minister ● Billy Hayes (CWU) ● Kelvin Hopkins MP ● Conrad Landin (Young Labour national committee) ● Kate Osamor (CLPD) ● Mark Seddon (CLPD) ● Christine Shawcroft (CLPD) ● Salma Yaqoob (journalist and broadcaster) ●
Chair: Peter Willsman (CLPD secretary)

Brighton Labour Annual Conference Highlights

CLPD rally and delegates' briefing

Saturday 21 September 6pm, Royal Albion Hotel (very near pier)
 Entry £3 (conc £1)

Speakers: Diane Abbott MP ● Ann Black NEC ● Katy Clark MP ● Michelle Collins (Young Labour National Committee) ● Gary Heather (CLPD) ● Kelvin Hopkins MP ● Jon Lansman (CLPD) launching CLPD's Charter for a Democratic Conference ● Michael Meacher MP ● Christine Shawcroft NEC ● Mick Whelan (ASLEF) ● Peter Willsman (Special Briefing for Delegates) ● Chair: Lizzy Ali (Chair of CLPD)

RED ALERT:

Don't forget to read the Willsman Guide to Conference. 2013 edition now available and once again up to the usual exceptional standard of insight and intrigue.

The indispensable handbook for all delegates (better than ever 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

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 'modernisation' and, ironically, 'extending Party

democracy'. For example, recently CLPD campaigned for, and achieved, OMOV for the CLP section of the National Policy Forum. CLPD continues to campaign for a real policy-making conference and an effective and accountable NEC.

■ 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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TU..... Date

Annual rates: £20 individuals; £5 unwaged and low waged (under £8,000); £25 couples (£6 unwaged and low waged); £25 national & regional organisations; £15 CLPs, TUs and Co-op Parties; £5 CLP branches. Young members (under 27) introductory sub £3.