

# CAMPAIGN BRIEFING

CLPD CAMPAIGN for LABOUR PARTY DEMOCRACY

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## Labour Should Be Leading the Fight-Back

**Katy Clark, MSP West Scotland Region**

The cost of living crisis, the increase in industrial militancy, and the UK Labour Party leadership's stance on picket lines have brought the Labour Party's



relationship with working class struggle into sharp focus. Our Leader in Scotland, Anas Sarwar, has made it clear to the Scottish Parliamentary Labour Party that he expects MSPs to support workers and show solidarity. In Wales too, Mark Drakeford has adopted a significantly different approach to the cost of living crisis and the various ongoing disputes.

### Old battles

Neil Kinnock wouldn't support the picket lines during the 1984-5 miners strike. The next Labour government failed to overturn strike-breaking legislation introduced by the previous Tory government, and Blair boasted that Britain had the "most restrictive Labour Laws". The call to "repeal the anti-trade union laws" was a major campaign throughout the 1997 to 2010 Labour Government, but of course Labour in government did not get rid of the Tory laws. So these issues are not new.

We now hear the argument that Labour has to be a Party of government, not protest, and that in government Labour need to govern for the "whole country, not just the working class".

This misunderstands how power works, how we change society, and Labour's role within the political landscape. It also fails to understand how we build the support

needed to get rid of the Tories. The interests of profiteers, developers, and landowners are already represented by the Conservative party. Labour was set up to be the party of working people, their voice. Working class communities look to us to fight for their interests.

In practice that must mean confronting those who operate against the vast majority of the population, rather than standing back as a neutral arbiter. Whilst working class communities have expectations of Labour, they often feel let down and do not believe we are worthy of their support. The 2017 election slogan "For the Many, not the Few", which originally was used by New Labour, was chosen because it had the potential to resonate with millions. We knew we had to build a politics based on hope that gave working class communities and movements the confidence that it is possible to achieve change.

*(cont. overleaf)*

**Support this vital rule change at Labour Conference**

## Enough is Enough! Labour's Broad Church Must Include Jeremy

**Barry Gray, member of the CLPD Executive**

### Justice 4 Jeremy

This year's Labour Party Annual Conference seriously needs to address the deepening cost of living crisis and set out how the Party will tackle it. It should also halt the attacks on Jeremy Corbyn as these divert attention from addressing this crisis. The Party is a broad church and Jeremy should be a Labour candidate at the next General Election (GE).

Unfortunately, the leadership are preventing his re-selection.

Following Jeremy's measured response to the 2020 report of the Equalities and Human Rights Commission (EHRC), the leadership suspended him from the Party. When, however, his remarks were considered by a National Executive Committee (NEC) panel, it lifted his suspension and concluded the case. The NEC did not decide to bar Jeremy from standing as a Labour parliamentary candidate.

*(cont. overleaf)*



Photo: Garry Knight

**PLEASE PASS THIS NEWSLETTER ON TO ENSURE A WIDE CIRCULATION.**

*(Katy Clark cont. from previous page)*

## New movements

Labour has of course lost the support of many working class communities since we were last in government at a UK level, not least in Scotland where Labour has still not recovered from the disconnect with communities created by the 2014 independence referendum campaign. Large numbers of working class people in England have also deserted Labour in recent decades.

Whilst we continued to have strong support amongst many Black, Asian, and ethnic minority communities, amongst young people, and in cities, the class composition of Labour's support had significantly changed. These trends intensified in 2019, but had been developing over a number of decades, with different parts of the country seemingly having very different attitudes to issues such as immigration and Europe. Many of the communities which Labour lost electorally are currently taking a battering – as inflation soars, energy costs spiral, and wages and living standards continue to stagnate and fall. The Conservative government which pledged to 'level up' these areas is not willing to take the action required to address these challenges. Labour, and more importantly the communities we seek to represent, can't afford to get sucked into fabricated culture

wars. At a time of crisis we need bold policies: redistributive taxation, state intervention to control the price of essentials, and common ownership of utilities. We need to fight to explain why another world is possible, that it is not inevitable that profits soar and that billionaires and international corporations continue to get richer whilst the rest get poorer.

Tens of thousands of workers have taken or are taking industrial action this year. Thousands more are pledging support for campaigns against the cost of living crisis and soaring energy bills. The Enough is Enough campaign picked up hundreds of thousands of sign-ups within days of launching: their demands include inflation-proofed pay rises, slashed energy bills, an end to food poverty, good housing for all, and taxes on the rich. As these campaigns and social movements develop, Labour must offer support or risk alienating those who are desperate.

Dozens of Labour candidates for the next General Election have already been selected. Very few come from Black, Asian or ethnic community backgrounds. The number of MPs we have from working class backgrounds has been falling since the 1980s and there is no sign from the selections which have taken place so far that this is going to change. We need candidates who look like and can relate to the communities we want to represent.

## Lessons to learn

I was Labour MP for North Ayrshire and Arran between 2005-15. We only won most of that seat for the first time in 1987. But much of the West Scotland Region I now represent as a List MSP was represented by Labour politicians for decades. Many of these former industrial heartlands are now represented by the SNP.

We won't win back voters in these areas, or the many in other parts of the UK who left Labour because of Brexit in 2019, unless we show clearly that we are on their side and have a strategy to deliver renewed prosperity for communities. Many up and down this land do understand how the economy works, and that wealth and power is being sucked away from working people. But we need to explain the massive redistributions of wealth which have taken place from the poor and from those on moderate incomes to the rich. Most of all we need to convince people that what is happening is not inevitable and that movements can win.

There will be massive struggles as the economic crisis intensifies over the coming months. Labour needs to be part of those campaigns and provide leadership to ensure that the Labour and trade union movement, and other progressive forces, win those battles, and are equipped and confident to build a better society.

*(Barry Gray cont. from previous page)*

Unable to overturn the due process of this NEC decision, the leadership then acted to do so indirectly. It removed Jeremy's membership of the Parliamentary Labour Party (PLP) by withdrawing the Labour whip from him. According to the Party's Rule Book, only PLP members can be considered by a CLP re-selection 'trigger ballot'. So Jeremy's suspension from the PLP is blocking him from a trigger ballot in Islington North. The leadership (using the office of Chief Whip), supported by the PLP, have undermined Party democracy and due process.

It is not democratic that component parts of the Party, in this case the leadership and PLP, have given themselves the power via a back door to undermine the disciplinary process of the NEC – the Party's most authoritative body between Annual Conferences. It is a Rule Book anomaly that the leadership and PLP have this unintended ability to overrule the NEC over re-selections in this way. It needs to be corrected.

## Fight the Tories – not JC

A rule change, submitted to this year's Conference by Islington North and seven other CLPs, seeks to rectify the anomaly and remove this leadership/PLP veto over parliamentary re-se-

lections. This rule change is not just about one individual (Jeremy), it's about the movement as a whole. It must be supported.

Regrettably, the leadership is opposing this rule change. It is keener on the Tories' policies than those the Labour Party campaigned for in 2017 and 2019. A growing number of workers are saying 'Enough is Enough', with the public supporting them. The Party ought to be showing solidarity, but instead it's discouraging its MPs from showing public support for those striking in opposition to the Tories' attacks.

## A potentially dangerous media diversion

It's not up to us to speculate what Jeremy will decide to do after so many years of loyal service to the Party. And when we win this rule change it won't even be an issue. But just imagine the damage to Labour's GE campaign if – hypothetically – Jeremy found himself forced to stand as an independent.

He would become the sole focus of attention for the mainstream media, to the exclusion of the real issues our spokespeople will want to drive home and of the devastation wreaked by the Tories. There would be a knock-on effect throughout the country as 000s of Labour voters show their disap-

proval of his exclusion by staying at home in key marginals. And equally embarrassingly, the certainty of him wiping the floor with any 'official' candidate standing against him, coming through in poll after poll during the campaign, will completely undermine any claims by our Party that we are capable of winning an overall majority.

As above, this rule change isn't just about Jeremy, and nor should the GE be. So let's make sure this doesn't happen.

## Defend our broad church

The Party has traditionally been a 'broad church', always including significant currents that oppose the establishment's agenda, alongside those on the right that acquiesce to that agenda. That principal of political breadth is now under attack. The right wing, currently controlling the Party, are determined it should rigidly toe the establishment's line. They consider Jeremy and his supporters could seriously undermine that line, so are working to remove them from the Party.

Those seeking a progressive advance at this year's Conference need to stand up against the right, support those struggling against the Tories' attacks, defend the Party's political breadth, and agree the rule change so Jeremy can seek re-selection in his CLP.

# Defend Annual Conference

## Billy Hayes, member of the Conference Arrangements Committee

(In a personal capacity)

Our Annual Conference is increasingly under attack and our time together is being eroded by those who think that Conference is no more than a massive photo shoot, or material for a slick video peppered with sound bites.



### It wasn't always so

For some 70 years...

- Conference consisted entirely of policy debates; now much time is given over to 'special' speakers, videos, and platform 'events' – anything to sideline Conference from having genuine debates.
- Conference lasted until lunchtime on Friday; now it's over by Wednesday lunchtime.
- All delegates and CLPs were sent 400-page verbatim reports of every second of Conference; now nothing.

### Important policy developments

This may appeal to cynics, but the evidence shows that Conference is when and where some of our most successful policies have

been developed and have changed the national political terrain. The National Living Wage started out as a minority position but eventually, through Annual Conference, became a manifesto comment. Nowadays recognised as a transformative policy for the UK, The Green New Deal is now highly relevant to our times in a similar manner. Using focus groups to simply play back popular prejudice is the stuff of jaundiced slide-rule apparatchiks.

We need to discuss with each other the lived experience of our members and affiliated organisations, whether with those engaged with their local communities, with our trade unions defending their members against the rich-created 'cost of living' crisis, or regarding the issues highlighted in the many fringe meetings now crammed into the restricted time available.

### Engaging with fellow activists

Aside from the formal processes, Conference is also the time to catch up with friends and fellow activists from across the UK. Face-to-face remains important to building solidarity between different parts of our divided nation.

Labour is still the biggest social democrat party in Europe (see p17). Our activism matters, debate and discussion matter. Downgrading Annual Conference by stealth, cynicism, or indifference undermines Party democracy and engagement with our members, and will create an energy crisis among our activists.

Defend Conference!

## In This Issue

	Page
Leading the Fightback	1, 2
The JC Rule Change	1, 2
Defend Annual Conference	3
CLPD Yellow Pages	3
The Railworkers Dispute	4
The Ukraine War	5
Welcoming The Forde Report	6, 7
Changing the Voting System?	7
Time to Sanction Israel	8
Review: 'The Starmer Project'	9
The Economic Alternative	10
The National Policy Forum	11
Defend By-election Selections	11
Councillor Selections	12, 13
Victory in Worthing	14
CLPD Campaigning	14
Latin American Sovereignty	15
Women's Conference	16
Islamophobia in the Labour Party	16
Rule Changes Matter	17
Educate, Agitate, Organise	17, 18
Wales vs Westminster	18
Tel's Tales	19
Centre Left Grassroots Alliance	19
Left Successes in the 2022 Ballots	20
Conference Fringe Meetings	20
Online Information	20
CLPD and Party Democracy	20

More articles can be found online at [www.clpd.org](http://www.clpd.org).

## CLPD's Yellow Pages

# Daily Briefings for Conference Delegates

If you're attending Annual Conference and want to understand what's happening, don't forget to pick up your daily copy of Yellow Pages.

Printed on yellow paper by CLPD and handed out free outside the conference centre, Yellow Pages provides delegates with up to date information, advice, and reports on what's taking place at Conference.

And if you complete the CLPD delegate form available at [www.clpd.org.uk](http://www.clpd.org.uk), we'll send a digital version of Yellow Pages to your inbox every morning of Conference.



## Bitebacks

"In spring 2020 a group of prominent British Palestinians sent Keir Starmer five separate letters asking him to redress the increasingly 'hostile environment' for Palestinians within the Labour Party. They received no reply." Oliver Eagleton, 'The Starmer Project'.



## Bitebacks

2019 General Election: "All but two of the constituencies that switched from Labour to the Conservatives had voted to leave (the EU)." Oliver Eagleton, 'The Starmer Project'.

# The Railworkers' Dispute

## Albert Perks, Labour Party and RMT member

The rail unions ASLEF, RMT, and TSSA held more strikes in August in our ongoing dispute against Network Rail and Train Operating Companies (TOCs), for pay increases to keep up with rising prices, and against proposals by rail bosses and the Department for Transport (DfT) to cut £billions from the rail industry.

## Grant Shapps's plans for the railway

Rail industry bosses have told the unions that their plans to cut £billions from rail are dictated by the Department for Transport (DfT), and include:



- Pay increases below the rate of inflation, after several years of pay freezes;
- Closure of most or all ticket offices across the country;
- Lower pay and longer hours;
- Mass job cuts, including compulsory redundancies;
- Introducing 'Driver Only Operation' across the railway network, which the RMT has resisted for years;
- Proposals to worsen the Railway Pension Scheme which would make railworkers pay higher contributions while working but get lower pensions on retirement;
- Making Network Rail track and signalling maintenance equipment workers do more nights and weekends than they do now.

In negotiations, which have been going on for a long time, rail bosses have made it clear that the government are telling the employers what they can and cannot do. So the RMT has asked Transport Minister Grant Shapps to be in the room and to take part directly in the talks, but he has refused.

RMT's demands are:

- For a pay rise to keep up with inflation and protect members' living standards;
- For guarantees of no compulsory redundancies;
- Against threats to worsen terms and conditions by imposition.

If the DfT wants to cut government subsidy to rail, it should look at the £1 billion that goes out of the railway every year into

the pockets of shareholders of the Rolling Stock Companies (ROSCOs) which own most of Britain's trains and lease them to the TOCs; of the TOCs themselves; and of the companies that Network Rail still subcontract some maintenance and renewal work to.

## Media lies

The mainstream media, briefed by the DfT and rail bosses, have repeated many lies and half-truths about railworkers during this dispute. It would take too much space to rebut them all but, to take one example, they say that Sunday working is "voluntary", and that this is an "antiquated" agreement that needs changing. But in fact, railworkers' contracts under British Rail included a commitment to work one in three Sundays or more. And most railworkers' contracts still include compulsory working on some Sundays.

## An autumn of discontent?

Our strikes are taking place in the context of growing opposition to real pay cuts across the trade union movement. This year Unite have won pay rises for Stagecoach and Arriva bus workers, sometimes after strike action. For example, Arriva Yorkshire bus workers were on strike for much of June and July and won a 9% pay rise. CWU has held strikes by Post Office and BT workers; the National Education Union (NEU) will be balloting schoolteachers; public sector unions are threatening industrial action in lo-

cal government and the health service; even barristers are taking industrial action; and there are more.

With real pay falling after years of stagnation or decline, and a general labour shortage, more industrial disputes are inevitable. And, at the time of writing, the growing support in the trade union movement for co-ordinating these disputes may well be the main theme of this year's TUC Conference.

## Labour's response

Starmer's sacking of Sam Tarry, and his instruction to Shadow Ministers not to support picket lines, were disgraceful acts which have been widely criticised. Even Jon Cruddas MP, not a usual critic of the Labour leadership, wrote on Labour List that:

**"Labour must support those fighting to defend their living standards when, in effect, they face pay cuts nearing 10% – if it doesn't, you wonder what the purpose of the party is. We must support unions when they contest this unparalleled attack on workers' incomes."**

Unite General Secretary Sharon Graham told the Labour leadership:

**"It's time to decide whose side you are on. Workers or bad bosses."**

The Labour leadership must support railworkers and other workers taking action to protect their real pay in the face of rising prices.

- Contact RMT for speakers or to show your support at: [info@rmt.org.uk](mailto:info@rmt.org.uk). ASLEF and TSSA are also affiliated to the Labour Party. Why not invite a speaker to your CLP meeting.



RMT General Secretary Mick Lynch on an RMT picket line during the rail strikes

# Ukraine: The War Is Closer Than You Think

**Carol Turner, Chair of Labour CND, author of *Corbyn and Trident: Labour's Continuing Controversy*<sup>1</sup>, and member of the CLPD Executive**

The war in Ukraine might seem a long way from the shore of Britain but it's closer than you might think, so please read on...



Tensions between Russia and the United States have been growing for more than two decades. Prompted by the US, NATO has expanded its area of operation and accepted the majority of Russia's neighbours into full membership or bilateral partnership. Russia and the US have almost 1,200 nukes between them; around 150 US nukes are stationed in Europe; and British and French nuclear arsenals are committed to NATO should conflict break out.

When war broke out in February, the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament and Stop the War Coalition condemned the entry of Russian troops into Ukraine and called for their withdrawal and for peace talks. Stalled attempts at negotiations between Russia and Ukraine, the Minsk talks, had been floundering over several years and strains between Russia and Ukraine rumbling up to the surface.

## Diplomacy is more urgent, not less

The Ukrainian peace movement condemned "all military actions on the sides of Russia and Ukraine in the context of current conflict. We call the leadership of both states and military forces to step back and sit at the negotiation table." Peace activists in Russia have made similar calls.

CND continues to argue that the entry of Russian forces into Ukraine makes diplomacy more urgent, not less, to avert the risk of nuclear war which is closer than it's been for decades. Knowing the risks, however, the US and UK have led the charge to war, using the terrible plight of Ukrainian people as part of a propaganda campaign, talking up the Russian threat, and disparaging diplomatic initiatives aimed at decelerating the conflict.

As a nuclear weapons state and a member of a nuclear-armed alliance with a first strike policy, Britain is on the front line in any conflict. Labour CND took issue with



*Protests at Lakenheath, Suffolk, May 2022*

Keir Starmer's announcement that "Labour's commitment to NATO is unshakable" and his attempt to smear those who disagreed as showing solidarity with Putin. We dissected his attempt to reconcile this stance with selective and inaccurate statements about the defensive and democratic character of the North Atlantic Alliance. We called for "de-escalation and dialogue, not a build-up of armaments and troops leading to the brink of a war in which the people of Ukraine will be the losers. This is a strategy of sanity, in contrast to Britain and the US which fan the flames of war in Europe".

## Protesting US nukes in Britain

Early in April an announcement by the Federation of American Scientists (FAS) brought the Ukraine conflict even closer to Britain. Hans Kristensen alerted the world to US plans to site their nuclear weapons in Britain again, discovered by ploughing through US Department of Defence budget documents. Five European countries – Belgium, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Turkey – already host US nuclear weapons and Britain will become the sixth.

The British government refuses to acknowledge this. Questions in parliament produced the response: "The Ministry of Defence is unable to comment on US spending decisions and capabilities, which

are a matter for the US Government". Sadly, the Labour front bench is ducking the issue too. At a meeting of Labour's Britain in the World Policy Commission in April, I asked Shadow Foreign Secretary David Lammy if Labour's front bench were aware that US nuclear weapons are coming back to Britain and what attitude they would take. He responded that Labour Party policy was to support Trident. Keir Starmer was asked about US nukes at an NEC meeting in June, professed himself unaware, and undertook to raise it in the Shadow Cabinet. We've heard nothing more.

US nukes will be arriving at RAF Lakenheath in Suffolk. The new-generation US fighter bomber aircraft, the F-35A Lightning II, has already arrived, capable of delivering nuclear gravity bombs – the sort that were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, but many times more powerful. The silos for storing these types of nukes in Lakenheath already exist.

CND held our first protest in Lakenheath on 21st May. Our second, on 17th September, was being prepared as I write. Siting US nukes here paints a target on the back of everyone in Britain. CND protests will continue. Please support us, it could be a matter of life or death.

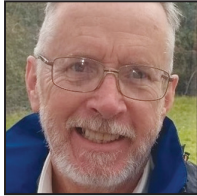
1. Available from CND or Public Reading Rooms Books.

# Why We Must Welcome The Forde Report

**George McManus, Secretary of Beverley and Holderness CLP, and member of the CLPD Executive**

## A damning indictment on Labour HQ

The Forde Report should be read by everyone with any interest in the future of the Labour Party and our democracy. Its contents are truly shocking and illustrate what we've known for a long time. This didn't start with the election of Jeremy Corbyn as Leader; it's been going on for years.



I believe we owe a debt of gratitude to those who compiled and leaked the 800+ page report into what went on at Labour HQ, without which the truth would have never been exposed.

Forde, an eminent QC, forensically examined the leaked report and its background. He has exposed that the senior staff we employ and pay to work on our behalf, who were meant to act in a politically neutral way, were actually working to undermine the Party's elected Leader and his team. And that the fundamental rule of the Labour Party, that 'we exist to maximise representation in Parliament' was being sabotaged by our own side.

Sadly, after more than two years' investigation, and with only three specific terms of reference, Forde admits he's unable to shed any light on who was responsible for the report or its leaking. But his conclusions are a damning indictment on practices at Labour HQ.

Forde investigated a number of issues including the discriminatory culture (*see p16*), poor staff management, and failings in the disciplinary processes, all of which pre-dated Jeremy's leadership.

## Factional and discriminatory WhatsApp messages

Forde describes a Labour Party where a toxic culture exists and where racist tropes are used by senior members of staff, and his comments on the Senior Management Team's WhatsApp messages are damning.

When the leaked document first emerged, it was alleged that members on the left were 'cherry picking' quotes for partisan reasons. Forde disagreed: **"We find that the WhatsApp messages are deplorably factional... and at times discriminatory**

attitudes are expressed by many of the Party's most senior staff." He goes on: "Criticisms of Diane Abbott... are expressions of visceral disgust, drawing on racist tropes." And: "We were told that many of the comments were made in jest. For Party staff to consider such 'jokes' acceptable suggests they have become detached from professional and personal norms."

## A different view on antisemitism

His comments on antisemitism are scathing.

When Panorama broadcast its 'Is Labour Antisemitic?' programme, Ofcom received a flood of complaints. All were dismissed. The programme was nominated for a BAFTA.

The programme alleged interference by Jeremy Corbyn's office, suggesting that his office had aggressively imposed themselves on the disciplinary process to get his allies off the hook. Forde has a different view. An eminent and learned, cautious, legal expert QC, Forde refers to such media reports as "wholly misleading" and concludes that the issue of AS was treated "by both factions as a factional weapon". This is a stake through the heart of an issue which caused so much damage to Labour's election chances.

But there can be no equivalence in how both factions responded to AS. The right had clearly identified this as an issue to beat the left with, and when Panorama got on board it was raised to a new level. This was at a time when senior figures on the right were demanding that Jeremy Corbyn should intervene to kick people out of the Party and then alleging misconduct because he was intervening in the process. Activists will recall how for over a year, on a daily basis, we were hearing media reports of how AS was a scourge in the Labour Party and not being taken seriously because Jeremy Corbyn was an antisemite. It came up time and time again on the doorstep.

## Anti-left SM investigations

Forde writes in detail about the validation exercises employed in 2015 and 2016 ahead of ballots being issued in the leadership elections. Hundreds of abusive search phrases were used in social media searches to root out infiltrators. But Forde found there had been no legitimate reason why such phrases focussed only on abuse from the left, whilst attacks on left MPs including Jeremy were ignored. He concluded that the intention of the exercise was to remove ballot papers from Corbyn supporters.

## Sabotaging the 2017 GE

For many activists the most damaging part of the Forde report relates to activities surrounding the General Election of 2017.

Forde found that senior staff siphoned off £135,000 of Labour Party funds to be used as national spend in seats held by anti-Corbyn MPs rather than in winnable Tory seats. This fund was set up covertly, without the agreement of the Campaign Committee: they broke the rules if not the law.

Instead of a single election strategy there was the Party strategy and the covert Ergon House strategy. The former targeted Tory winnable seats, the latter on shoring up anti-Corbyn MPs. Forde says he could neither prove nor disprove whether this approach cost us a Labour victory, although he thought it unlikely. Either way, Labour lost a number of Tory seats by small margins whilst majorities in some Labour seats were piled high.

Forde concludes that "the Ergon House operation was wrong" and that "it was unequivocally wrong for HQ staff to pursue an alternative strategy covertly... and that the anger amongst the membership on the issue is justified".

## Recruitment bias

Forde is also scathing on recruitment. Long term nepotism and cronyism is cited by members of the GMB; many attitudes were "deep rooted"; and a "Mono Culture" had developed in which staff were not recruited on merit but because they were a mirror image of those doing the recruiting.

This was reflected in a lack of diversity and the under-representation of BAME and women, which Forde goes into in some detail. Forde goes into depth into the allegation that a racist, sexist, and otherwise discriminatory culture exists in Party workplaces. This is an area of greatest concern for a Party which exists to oppose all forms of discrimination and to be champions of diversity.

Problems were cited not only in LOTO and Labour HQ but also in regional recruitment. Staff were appointed and promoted not so much on merit but on a factional



## Bitebacks

"Using antisemitism to peddle the right's 'anti-woke agenda' is below the belt. The oldest form of racism is not a tool to use in the divisive culture war nonsense."

Margaret Hodge MP, 12th Aug 2022  
@margarethodge

basis. Evidence is listed of staff feeling unsupported and overlooked in a culture which was deeply embedded pre-Corbyn.

## Forde concludes that there are serious problems

Forde feels that the principle of staff being the politically neutral ‘Civil Service’ of the Party has been seriously undermined and paints the picture of a **“working environment totally at odds with the values the Party stand for”** and of **“senior levels of management actively engaged in this sort of abuse”**. He points out that if recommendations from this report are ignored, then the **“hostile, exclusionary monoculture in Labour HQ will leave the deep-rooted problems untouched”**.

Forde talks of the **“undoubted overt and underlying racism and sexism in WhatsApp messages from senior staff”**, of the Party’s failure to deal with staff complaints, and of many examples of staff reporting abuse. He accepts the leaked report’s allegation of a toxic

culture in the Party, and provides the evidence to back it up, including sexism and bullying.

Forde insists that the culture must change, and his recommendations are extensive, covering areas including the disciplinary process, complaints process, rights of appeal, transparency and time limits, sanctions, reforming party culture, social media policy, recruitment and management of staff, and relations between LOTO and HQ/Regions. Political education and training will be key, and he’s “disappointed that there has been a refusal [by the Party] to engage with Jewish Voice for Labour’s proposals for training and that CLPs are not even allowed to enlist their help”. He recommends clear and transparent Codes of Conduct, especially for staff, which some have been demanding for years.

## We must act on Forde’s recommendations

Forde’s recommendations must all be taken on board – and seriously. The Labour

Party must now agree to fully implement these recommendations, because if change doesn’t happen then factionalism will remain at the heart of the Party’s problems, and will only be solved by a large section of the Party walking away and setting up a new party.

It’s not good enough for the Leader’s office to say that factionalism has been rooted out, or for the General Secretary’s office to act in a manner which appears to be diametrically opposed to the recommendations. Measures taken over the last two years clearly work against Forde’s principles.

Nor has anybody been held accountable. That wasn’t in Forde’s remit, but someone led on the Ergon Strategy, someone decided the priorities for the 2015-16 validation exercise to root out Corbyn supporters, and someone failed to address the discrimination which was reported.

The Forde Report is not a whitewash. It must now be implemented and not swept under the carpet.

## Opinion Piece

# Can Changing The Voting System Change Our Prospects?

## Fred Demuth

Even within CLPD some comrades remain undecided on whether they’d like to see a change to the electoral system, what such changes should be, and – if anything is changed – whether those changes would provide the opportunities democratic socialists want to see. Within this debate however, there remain five undeniable issues.

### 1. FPTP delivers majority governments

A radical Labour government will need a parliamentary majority to be strong enough to carry out a socialist programme. And First Past The Post (FPTP) appears to be the only way to achieve a majority government with a mandate for policies that a large number of the electorate voted for.

We know all too well how the establishment will throw its weight behind preventing the possibility of a socialist government, but this is nothing to do with the electoral system – indeed, many point out that PR would make it easier for it to do so.

### 2. PR delivers vulnerable coalitions

Under PR we invariably get a coalition government that no one voted for, with policies

cobbled together in private backrooms by the leaders of all the coalition parties – with next to no democratic accountability – to party members or to the electorate.

Coalitions and electoral pacts might be necessary from time to time, but they shouldn’t become the norm. Some comrades might think a coalition wouldn’t be as bad as what we currently have, but in reality it would only tweak the current neoliberal agenda.

Radical manifesto policies would be watered down or abandoned altogether. And individuals or parties within those coalitions would be able to bring down the government on the slightest excuse if it attempted anything radical. It’s bad enough coping with saboteurs in our own party, there are plenty more elsewhere.

### 3. There would no longer be a strong party of the left

There would no longer be a major party of the left, involving the trade unions and upholding the interests of the working class (*see p17*). The Labour Party would fragment into at least two smaller and less effective parties; there’d be a centrist party working with the Lib Dems and their fellow travellers, while parties to the left are likely to win only a handful of seats and be left shouting from the sidelines.

Without going into the details of the plethora of different systems for PR and/or transferable voting and/or hybrid combinations, it

is unlikely we’d end up with one which would enable socialists to take power. Most would involve ‘party lists’ by which candidates would be selected and prioritised according to those most favoured by the party bureaucracy. It might be bad now, but many believe it would be worse under PR.

The working class and advocates of socialist programmes would, in effect, be cast adrift from any significant influence in Parliament, and the far right would exploit this.

### 4. A huge boost for the far right

For the first time ever, the far right would become a powerful and legitimate force in British politics. Under PR the leader of the National Front won a seat in the European Parliament in the North West of England; and under PR UKIP would have won around 80 seats in Parliament in the 2015 General Election. Many of them would still be there.

### 5. The battle is not about the electoral system

We still have many issues to address, from the continuing neoliberal and anti-union agenda of the Tories, to improving democratic accountability within the Labour Party. But changing our electoral system appears to be no more than a distraction that risks making things worse, not better.

# Time to Sanction Israel for the Crime of Apartheid Against Palestinians

**Naomi Wimborne-Idrissi, Jewish Voice for Labour media officer, Chingford & Woodford Green CLP**

## The unequivocal decision of last year's Conference

Last year's Conference passed a ground-breaking motion noting the unequivocal conclusion from two leading human rights organisations that the Israeli government



“is practising the crime of apartheid as defined by the UN”. It called for sanctions to ensure Israel “brings down the wall [in the West Bank] and respects the right of Palestinian people, enshrined in international law, to return to their homes”. The motion, backed by a large majority of trade union and constituency delegates, further called for “an ethical policy on all UK trade with Israel”, an end to “any arms trade used to violate Palestinian human rights”, and an end to “trade with illegal Israeli settlements”.

It was a proud moment for our party, acknowledging (at least in part) the Palestinian call for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) as a peaceful and legitimate means to hold Israel to account.

## A glaring lack of balance

Then Shadow Foreign Secretary, Lisa Nandy, despite having been chair of Labour Friends of Palestine and the Middle East, instantly repudiated Conference's commendable show of solidarity with the Palestinian people: “We cannot support this motion... It does not address the issues in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in a comprehensive or balanced way”.<sup>1</sup> Keir Starmer followed suit, telling Labour Friends of Israel at a lunch in November: “The Labour Party does not and will not support BDS... it would cause huge damage to the relationship between Israel and the United Kingdom”. Richard Burden, who chaired the Britain-Palestine All Party Parliamentary Group between 2001 and 2019, wrote disparagingly that “Palestinians will feel the glaring inequalities in the Labour Leader's speech”.

We saw a stark illustration of ‘balance’ in the way the government and media, mim-

icked by our party leaders, greeted yet another Israeli assault on Gaza in August, euphemistically code-named Operation Breaking Dawn. They talked about “clashes” and called on “both sides” to cease hostilities, while Israel's unprovoked three-day assault resulted in the deaths of 49 Palestinians, 11 of them children aged between 4 and 14.<sup>2</sup> There were no Israeli casualties.

Calls for balance were conspicuous by their absence when the whole gamut of boycott, divestment and sanctions were deployed against Russia for Putin's war on Ukraine. Boycotts, it seems, are acceptable when backed by the Daily Mail, the White House and Johnson/Sunak/Truss. Backing BDS in support of Palestine would mean confronting them and the rest of the Western alliance for whom Israel is a key military and trading ally. Even a report from Amnesty International in February,<sup>3</sup> calling Israel's cruel system of apartheid domination a “crime against humanity”, could not swing distinguished human rights lawyer Keir Starmer to support Conference policy.<sup>4</sup>

In April, he pulled out of a Ramadan interfaith event because the organisers had said they support the boycott of dates grown in illegal Israeli settlements.<sup>5</sup> The Muslim Association of Britain called his decision “bewildering”, citing a YouGov poll suggesting 61 percent of Labour Party members were in favour of BDS targeting the settlements. But the party leadership is close friends with the Israeli Labor Party<sup>6</sup> which, until early this summer, was part of the ruling coalition presiding over relentless expansion of those very settlements.

## Challenging the leadership's inconsistencies

It is essential for us as Labour Party members to stand by the 2021 Conference decision on Palestine and challenge the inconsistencies in the leadership's position. Many members have been disciplined for doing this, accused of ‘antisemitism’ and of inhibiting the Party's campaign against racism.



16 dead Palestinian children in Gaza after Israeli offensive<sup>2</sup>

Such a stance is increasingly untenable now that the Forde Report has exposed the factionalism at the heart of Labour's disciplinary processes and the way allies of the current leadership side-lined multiple, clear cases of anti-Black and Islamophobic behaviour (*see p6 and p16*). Black members made their views on this abundantly clear, demanding accountability for the anti-Black racism revealed by Forde.<sup>7</sup>



There is more that needs to be done to engage members in following up on last year's excellent motion with action in solidarity with Palestine. Labour & Palestine<sup>8</sup> is an organisation set up to do just this. Readers can also follow Jewish Voice for Labour (jvl.org.uk, @jvoicelabour) for top quality coverage of this and related issues.

1. <https://www.jewishnews.co.uk/lisa-nandy-labour-cannot-support-pro-palestine-motion-at-conference1>

2. [https://www.dci-palestine.org/16\\_palestinian\\_children\\_in\\_gaza\\_dead\\_after\\_israeli\\_military\\_offensive](https://www.dci-palestine.org/16_palestinian_children_in_gaza_dead_after_israeli_military_offensive)

3. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2022/02/israels-apartheid-against-palestinians-a-cruel-system-of-domination-and-a-crime-against-humanity>

4. <https://tribunemag.co.uk/2022/04/keir-starmer-labour-party-israel-apartheid-palestine-amnesty-report-jewish-chronicle>

5. <https://english.alaraby.co.uk/news/uk-labour-leader-facing-criticism-iftar-withdrawal>

6. <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2022/apr/28/keir-starmer-hosts-israeli-labor-party-in-charm-offensive-ahead-of-local-elections>

7. <https://form.jotform.com/222117766737361>

8. <https://labourandpalestine.org.uk>



## Book Review: 'The Starmer Project' by Oliver Eagleton

# Starmer: a Nightmare in Four Chapters

**Rachel Garnham, Vice Chair of CLPD**

The recent Oliver Eagleton book *The Starmer Project: A Journey to the Right* is a devastating critique of Keir Starmer's right-wing credentials, dating back to his lawyer days, and well worth reading if you need a reminder that Starmer has been a tool of the establishment for many years, and remains so.



Even for those of us who knew when he stood as Labour Leader that he was a creature of the Labour right and had no illusions in the deceptions masquerading as pledges he made to achieve his goal of being elected Leader, there are parts of the early chapters of this book that are shocking. The latter parts of the book are less convincing. The critique of how Labour's Brexit policy developed over time, to me, confuses Starmer's duplicitous shenanigans with other pressures on Corbyn's leadership team and therefore doesn't add as much value as it might if it had taken a more nuanced view and stepped away from the pro-Brexit lens that appears to have been applied. Likewise the section on Starmer as candidate.

The book starts with a detailed analysis of Starmer's career prior to entering Parliament. There is not much about his early life and relationships, which would be an interesting addition to inform the origins of his ruthless ambition and deceptiveness, judging by Starmer's appearance on Desert Island Discs – for another book perhaps.

### A 'blind-spot' on women

For me, some of the horrors that stood out are Starmer's attitude and approach to women during his time as Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP), in particular his authoritarianism and his international agenda. For example, Eagleton notes: "Surveying... Starmer's DPP record, one might wonder whether he has a particular blind-spot on women's issues". In just one example he notes Starmer elected to prosecute 35 people for making allegations of rape, 6 for making allegations of domestic violence, and 3 for making allegations of both. From 2011-2014 the number of people charged with rape declined by 14%, following the issuing by

Starmer of new charging guidelines which enhanced the power of police to determine the 'credibility of victims'.

### 'An unabashed authoritarian'

There is a huge amount of detail about Starmer's cavalier, at best, approach to civil liberties. For example he drew up prosecution guidelines that made it easier to prosecute peaceful protestors. His criteria included if "significant disruption was caused to the public and businesses", ie effective protest. His attitude to those involved in the 2011 riots is also shocking, and a demonstration of the deceptions to come. Eagleton notes that Starmer: "famously told journalists that he opposed harsh sentences...

when in fact he had taken concrete steps to increase their severity". He adds: "His assertion that there was no blanket policy to refuse bail was apparently contradicted by a leaked Met document... Denying bail as pre-emptive or informal punishment is prohibited by British law, yet Starmer seemed willing to overlook this technicality".

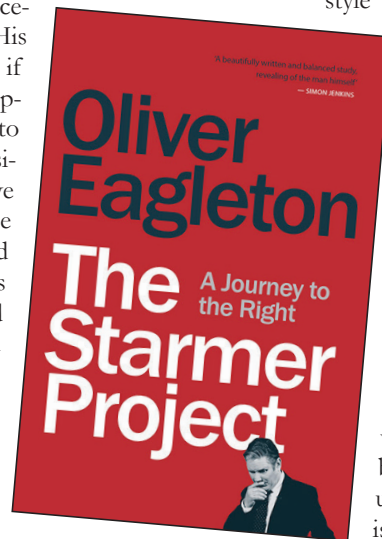
### Starmer the 'diplomat'

Starmer's expansion of the Crown Prosecution Service International Division, his work with the Foreign Office on the 'war on terror', and his interventions into other countries are all worthy of the attention given in this book – including how these led to "propping up criminal justice systems with uniquely draconian drug laws" while a source is noted "who described how Starmer applied pressure to foreign governments that were reluctant to follow the UK's instructions".

### Flaws both personal and political

Terrible politics combined with huge incompetence appear to be the hallmarks of Starmer's term as Labour Leader to date and aspects of his inability to lead, inspire,

and organise are foreshadowed in Eagleton's book. Eagleton notes a "growing bureaucratic mentality" and that "Starmer's technocratic method compensated for an inability to make swift or definitive decisions", while a 'staffer' is quoted saying "He doesn't like to stick his neck out. He prefers to hide behind other people". Of course, primarily, it is Starmer's politics and those around him that are the problem – but his 'leadership style' certainly doesn't help.



### Undermining Corbyn

Starmer's role as a less than loyal member of the shadow team is well-documented – including his resignation as part of the 'chicken coup' in 2016 which forced Jeremy Corbyn to prove once again that he had huge support amongst members and trade unionists, when he should have been allowed to get on with the job he was elected to. The analysis in this book of how and why Starmer used Brexit to undermine Jeremy is flawed in my opinion, as someone who followed close-up how

and why policy changed – as both an NEC member and as a CLPD activist supporting delegates at Conference; so I won't go into it here. Suffice to say there can be no doubt, including from his new-found role as Brexit champion, that Starmer used the situation as best he could to advance his own leadership ambitions.

### Return to centrist respectability

Finally, the section on Starmer as Leader examines in close-up Starmer's leap to the right and his treatment of Corbyn and 'Corbynistas' with which we are all too familiar, noting: "Not only would [Starmer] refuse to oppose the Tories; he would wage war on anyone who did". It also notes "Starmer brought Labour in line with the New Cold War against the West's strategic rivals... The Party demanded tougher action against China".

In summary, this book is a devastating critique of Starmer's early years, revealing him, in my opinion, as deceptive, authoritarian, and a pillar of the establishment. Do read the first part of the book if you want to be better armed with the detail of this. And the sooner we get rid of him as Labour Leader, the better.

## The Economic Alternative

# We Need to Tackle the Crisis

### Matt Willgress, Labour Assembly Against Austerity and member of the CLPD Executive

We are in the middle of a deepening cost-of-living crisis, ruining the lives of millions, yet the Tories – including both candidates in the recent leadership contest – are more interested in doing the bidding of their rich backers than saving lives, jobs, and livelihoods.



They are however facing massive resistance, including from the RMT, TSSA, ASLEF, CWU, Unite, NEU, UCU, NAS-UWT, and others in a strike wave which is undoubtedly backed by most Labour Party members and affiliates, although not so much by Keir Starmer who, rather than stand by trade unionists in struggle, decided to sack Shadow Minister Sam Tarry for visiting an RMT picket line.

As well as failing to stand by the growing resistance to the Tories' offensive, the Labour Leader and his team have also failed to put forward a radical and far-reaching alternative to Tory inaction on the biggest crisis in decades.

Rather than tinkering around the edges, we need Labour to propose urgent, bold, and transformative action – from upping the

minimum wage to taking energy into public ownership.

LAAA's 'Workers Can't Wait' statement – signed by over 17,000 Labour members and supporters – puts forward an alternative economic strategy for CLPD members to discuss in their CLPs and beyond, including these 10 measures:

- ☑ Britain needs a pay rise – National Minimum Wage raised to £15 an hour for all; the pay rise public sector workers are asking for; full union rights to bargain for better pay.
- ☑ Increased Statutory Sick Pay now for everyone – at a real living wage of £320 a week from day one.
- ☑ A social security system to end poverty – reverse the Universal Credit cut and extend the uplift to legacy benefits; boost benefits; for a minimum income guarantee.
- ☑ Extra resources to create universal, comprehensive public services – stop cuts and privatisation; Save our NHS – for a national care service; properly fund local government.
- ☑ Stop the corporate rip-off – public ownership of energy, water, transport, and mail to bring bills down and end fuel poverty.
- ☑ Homes for all – no evictions or repossessions; for renters' rights and rent controls; tackle the homelessness emergency; fix the housing crisis with a mass council house building programme.



- ☑ Make education a right not privilege – end tuition fees and the student debt scandal; for publicly-owned, free broadband to assist learning.
- ☑ For the right to food – enshrine the right to food in law; universal free school meals all year; for a National Food Service.
- ☑ Decent jobs for all – end insecure working including through banning zero hours and fire-and-rehire; for the right to flexible work on workers' not bosses' terms.
- ☑ Massive investment in a better future with full employment – reverse austerity; for a Green New Deal as part of a #PeoplesPlan for jobs and livelihoods.

- Add your name at [bit.ly/workerscantwait](https://bit.ly/workerscantwait)
- Follow LAAA at [www.facebook.com/labour.assembly.against.austerity](https://www.facebook.com/labour.assembly.against.austerity) and [www.twitter.com/LabourAssembly](https://www.twitter.com/LabourAssembly)
- Sign the petition *Keir Starmer – Back Workers Taking Action!* at <https://actionnetwork.org/petitions/keir-starmer-back-workers-taking-action>

### Join our rally of resistance in Liverpool!

## Take the fight to the Tories, for socialist solutions to the crisis

Sun, 25th September, 17:30–19:00  
ACC Liverpool, Kings Dock Street,  
Liverpool L3 4FP

Please note: you need a Labour pass to enter the venue.

■ John McDonnell ■ Dave Ward, CWU General Secretary ■ Diane Abbott MP  
■ Mick Lynch, RMT GS ■ Shami Chakrabarti ■ Mark Serwotka, PCS General Secretary ■ Bell Ribeiro-Addy ■ Ruth Hayes, Unite EC & Labour Women's Committee ■ Kim Johnson ■ Richard Burgon.

Register at Eventbrite at: <https://bit.ly/3RjNTvY>

Labour fringe & Liverpool leg of our rallies of resistance events.  
Hosted by Arise – a Festival of Left Ideas & the Labour Assembly Against Austerity.



## “Quote Unquote”

“These companies are household names, some of the biggest in British industry; Tesco, Argos, Sainsbury's, Wextabix, British Gas; these are brands that we all know, and they have all done exceedingly well during the lockdown. But they are prepared to put thousands of workers and their families out on their ear – no regard for loyalty, or for being some of the frontline key workers during the pandemic who actually created the profits for these companies. Fire and rehire isn't right and shouldn't be happening in Britain today, but it is.”



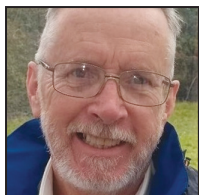
**Barry Gardiner MP**  
June 2021, *The Big Issue*

## Labour's National Policy Forum

# Looking into the Crystal Ball

**George McManus, Secretary of Beverley and Holderness CLP, elected NPF delegate from 1997-2018, and member of the CLPD Executive**

The late John Smith set up a provisional National Policy Forum (NPF) in 1993. He wanted to avoid rancorous divisive debates at Conference which had been the hallmark of previous leaderships. The aim was a deliberative rolling programme of policy development which gave more say to CLP reps and limited the power of the unions. Members of this NPF were appointees.



When Tony Blair became Leader, he promoted Partnership Into Power which would democratise the process by which NPF reps were elected to the forum. Policy debates would take place between Confer-

ences, and Conference would become a showpiece for all that was good in the Labour Party. The public would see a disciplined, grown up, united party capable of rule.

All very laudable, but in reality, when voters delivered the 1997 landslide, the principles were sidelined. Internal debates would be sanitised. Conference would become a rubber stamp. Hurdles would be put in the way of anything radical. Labour wanted to command the centre ground, and for that to happen the NPF had to become a talking shop, with Conference becoming a meaningless rally (*see p3*).

So it was until 2017, when the NPF began working as it was meant to. Real discussion was backed up by compromise, with input from all sections. The 2017 manifesto was the result: attracting 40% of votes vs the Tories' 41%, it almost delivered Labour to power. So it can work.

But for the NPF to work in future, it needs to change. This will only happen if radical policies can find a voice. There's no reason why our national Conference

shouldn't present all that is good in Labour, but it will inevitably descend into farce if the deliberative rolling process advocated by John Smith is neutered.

To be successful, Conference must be disciplined without being sanitised. Insurmountable obstacles which prevent radical ideas from being discussed need reform. Hurdles for minority positions must be lowered. The leadership must have the confidence in their proposals to allow open debate.

**Labour** policy forum  
Have your say in the development of Labour policy

And NPF CLP reps must be given more financial and office support. Policy officers should work with regional members, not in isolation. Affiliates must feel they're involved at all levels. Members must feel they have ownership.

Only then will the members get behind the next manifesto and promote it on the doorsteps. We can win. We must win.

## Defend the 2021 Candidate Selection Rule Change

**Ollie Hill, member of the CLPD Executive**

### Local control of the by-election selection process

The most significant democratising rule change at the 2021 Labour Party Conference was undoubtedly the proposal from Southport and City of Durham CLPs to create a new process for the selection of candidates in by-elections and snap elections. By ensuring the local party controls the selection process, it prevents the leadership from stitching up shortlists or imposing candidates – a highly unpopular practice for many years. So it was no surprise that it passed so decisively, receiving 61% of the vote in the CLP section and by far the most support of any CLPD-backed rule change.

### Ignored by the Party bureaucracy

Shockingly, despite the simple and unambiguous nature of the rule change, the leadership and the NEC hasn't implemented it since it became policy. This happened nota-

bly in Wakefield, where the CLP Executive Committee resigned en masse following a failed attempt to parachute in the leadership's chosen candidate, Kate Dearden. Various excuses were offered at first, including spurious concerns about timetables and suggestions that CLPs lack the 'expertise' of the NEC, but it soon became clear that the bureaucracy simply had no intention of following the Rule Book.

### Undermining the sovereignty of Conference

Campaign Briefing readers know that the Party's approach to internal democracy has left a lot to be desired throughout its long history. However, the extreme factional polarisation initiated by the Party's right wing under Jeremy Corbyn's leadership has left basic norms of democracy and due process eroded to an unprecedented degree. The Party's leadership, with the support of the NEC, has flagrantly disregarded a clear and unambiguous rule change, and did so from the moment it was passed by Conference.

This deeply concerning development

completely undermines the sovereignty of Conference as the Party's decision-making body (*see p3*). As a right-wing attendee apparently informed the NEC, Conference is only sovereign during the four days of Conference, after which anything goes. If this behaviour continues unchecked it will undermine the whole basis of democracy within the Labour Party.

### What is to be done?

The record of legal challenges in overturning NEC rulings is mixed at best (thanks to rule 5.1.2.), and grassroots organisations usually lack the financial means to pursue these. However, a political solution offers the way forward: a broad coalition in defence of Conference's sovereignty can and should be assembled in the coming months and years. CLP delegates all want their voices to be listened to, and unions of all ideological leanings will be unwilling to see their constitutional trump card on the Conference floor being taken away without a fight.

Allowing the Party to become an elective dictatorship is in no-one's interests.

## Local Government Selections

# A License To Cheat?

**Richard Price, Leyton and Wanstead CLP and member of the CLPD Executive**

## How democracy was denied in London

The London local government elections in May 2022 provided the most important test yet for how candidates are selected under Keir Starmer's leadership – not for any London-centric reasons, but because they were conducted across 32 boroughs that contain around a fifth of Labour's UK membership (about 75,000 members).

What should have been a mass exercise in democracy turned into a shabby and often chaotic mess in which, at best, rules were applied unequally and guidance not followed, and at worst included outright cheating and institutional racism.

## Eliminating the opposition

A key feature of this selection round was the elimination of sitting councillors at the interview stage. The guidance in the Rule Book, Appendix 4, E, 1a states:

**“The LGC Officers, or a panel duly authorised by the LGC, may request an interview if the reports raise concerns about discipline, attendance, campaigning record or competence.”**

However, an additional 73-page guidance document, *Selection of Local Government Candidates 2022*, issued in May 2021 only to LCF/LGC and Labour Group Secretaries in England, and not to CLPs or affiliates, contained the following opaque paragraph:

**“Advice on whether or not to interview a sitting councillor can be obtained from the Regional Director, and the Regional Director does have the authority to instruct the LCF/LGC to carry out an interview having given such reasons.”**

This was interpreted by LCF officers across a number of London boroughs, with the evident support of the Regional Office, as a license to interview all sitting councillors with the object of eliminating any potential sources of opposition or alternative leadership within Labour Groups.

In some boroughs the culling of sitting councillors took a strongly racialised form. Enfield had a foretaste of this in 2018, when all sitting black councillors were de-selected by supporters of Labour First's Nesil Caliskan.

In Waltham Forest, all four councillors failed at interview were from BAME backgrounds. One was a councillor of Pakistani Muslim heritage with 27 years' experience, who had served as a Cabinet member under five successive leaders. At the Labour Group AGM in May 2021, he narrowly missed becoming Leader, losing by 23-21. He was confirmed as a Cabinet member in September 2021, only to be failed at interview in October. Another failed at interview was the longest serving Afro-Caribbean councillor, who had been elected Deputy Leader of the Group at its AGM.

Persuasive evidence has emerged that in a number of boroughs leading councillors met with the assessment teams prior to interviews being carried out, and that lists of councillors to be failed were agreed in advance.

In Harrow, Cllr Pamela Fitzpatrick was expelled shortly after being elected to Labour's National Women's Committee, having fallen foul of the notorious retrospective justice rule for having given an interview to Socialist Appeal – a group that had existed in the party for three decades. Labour went on to lose control of Harrow Council.

## Composition of assessment teams

Throughout East London boroughs, assessment teams, both for sitting councillors and for new applicants, were dominated by overwhelmingly white Labour to Win and Jewish Labour Movement sitting councillors, even though it is the most diverse part of Britain.

The right of CLPs to nominate to interview panels, as set out in the Rule Book, (Chapter 12, Clause IX, 1), was removed across London without meaningful explanation. It was claimed this was because panels would be “external” (ie councillors would not be sitting on panels in their own boroughs) but this does not explain why CLP nominees were prevented from sitting on panels outside their own constituencies or boroughs. In Haringey the LCF was excluded from the process entirely and it was run by a Regional Officer.

## Conflicts of interest

Any situation in which the Leader of the Labour Group and a handful of “senior councillors” exercise the primary role in determining the composition of their own team is self-evidently fraught with conflicts

of interest, particularly when in Labour-held boroughs there is around £1m of patronage to distribute.

Chapter 12, Clause 9, 2 of the Rule Book states:

**“Labour Group members and all members who have expressed an interest in standing as candidates in the next local election must declare an interest and not participate in any meeting about candidate selection, for that election until they have been selected.”**

This was widely ignored.

*Selection of Local Government Candidates 2022*, (p.26) states:

**“Party staff will not use or abuse their position, Party resources or time in the process of an internal selection or election so as to further the interests of themselves or their personal preferred candidate(s).”**

This was not only widely ignored but actively undermined, with party staff arranging phone banks to lobby for preferred candidates.

In Waltham Forest, two councillors from external boroughs sat on a large number of candidate interviews, despite both being directors of a company that has over 30 contracts with the council for delivering public engagement surveys.

## Discrimination against new applicants

*Selection of Local Government Candidates 2022*, (p.5) acknowledged the **“need to increase the number of candidates and councillors who reflect the full diversity of our society in terms of gender, race, sexual orientation and disability, and to increase working class representation”**.

In practice, what we saw across London was the empowerment of white, middle class candidates, while the commitment to deliver gender equality fell well short in some boroughs where wards ran out of female candidates as a result of so many women applicants being failed at interview – despite being eminently qualified.

In Waltham Forest, only two out of 15 Muslim new applicants passed at interview. The only feasible explanation for this was to reduce the proportion of Muslim councillors in view of the closeness of the leadership election in May 2021. The justification advanced was that, whatever the outcome of interviews, the Group would remain diverse.

If an employer said the reason for 87%

of applicants of a given ethnicity failing interviews for a tranche of 60 jobs was “we’ve already got enough of them”, it would be the strongest grounds for action at Employment Tribunal or through the courts on grounds of racial discrimination.

There was also widespread political discrimination across London. Any evidence of disagreement over policies at any point in the last decade was considered sufficient grounds for failing an applicant at interview – even where the policies had changed!

In Waltham Forest, one applicant was failed for advocating against cuts in Special Educational Needs funding on the grounds that this was against Labour values! Another applicant, who three years ago occupied one of the most senior positions in the Party, was failed because seven years previously she had posted on Facebook that she had nearly been knocked down by a car on a shared-space crossing, without attributing blame to anyone except the driver. This was deemed to be an attack on the council! Another young Muslim applicant was failed on the grounds that she had posted on Facebook, when still a teenager, against Chuka Umunna after he had left the Labour Party!

In Lewisham, one candidate was rejected for agreeing that there weren’t enough temporary toilets in one of the parks during lock-down. A selected candidate in Hackney was removed for campaigning for an arms-free ethical investment policy for the pension fund.

In Southwark, nutrition expert and anti-food poverty campaigner Dr Sharon Noonan-Gunning was selected, then de-selected by the London Region, on a trumped-up charge of wanting the council to set an illegal budget – something she strenuously denied. Other candidates across London were voided shortly before submitting nomination papers.

There was a failure to apply the rules on All Women Shortlists. One borough party had to make two calls for additional women candidates. The decision as to which seats were winnable and thus require a slate with 50% women was opaque. The erosion of membership democracy has been breath-taking.

## The pandemic as an opportunity

Only the most amoral twisted minds could see an opportunity in a pandemic that has cost over 200,000 lives – but they did. They’re the same types that Owen Jones described as “terrible hypocrites... and often just really horrible on a personal level”, and who should have no place in a democratic socialist party.

There is no question that meetings conducted by Zoom suited pro-leadership fixers to a tee. Anonymotter, where it is used without independent tellers, is a license to cheat. In

some wards, eligible members were brazenly excluded from meetings in sufficient numbers to affect the result of shortlisting and selection meetings. The drawing of lots to determine speakers was done by unelected officials in advance on numerous occasions, with the statistically remarkable result that favoured candidates always got to speak last. Control over the technology also gave officials the ability to mute people, and to close down meetings unconstitutionally.

## Hostile interviewing

A previously unknown level of hostile interviewing was apparent in some boroughs. One Muslim applicant with an eminent record of promoting inclusive grassroots sports for young people was so disgusted by his interview that he withdrew from the process straight after his interview finished. I came across the case of a sitting councillor who was criticised over her campaigning during a period in which she was receiving chemotherapy. Another, who lost five members of his family to the pandemic, was similarly criticised, *even though he had attended every campaigning session.*

## Farcical appeals

In a number of appeals, no case was presented by the LCF. In one appeal, evidence was provided by a “person unknown”, yet remarkably this unknown person knew the composition of the appeal panel! In the case of one senior councillor, the panel admitted not having read any of the lengthy and detailed evidence provided but decided against him nonetheless. One sitting councillor in Southwark was rejected at appeal, despite the LCF not bothering to present its case. In Ealing, the Deputy Leader represented the LCF in a number of appeals. In some boroughs, whips and branch secretary reports were made available to candidates, in others not.

## Chaotic organisation

The knock-on effect of Labour to Win re-jigging the composition of LCFs to their liking and generating large numbers of appeals through failing so many sitting councillors and new applicants at interview was that campaigning started later than anyone can remember. For weeks stretching into the short campaign, branches were left trying to campaign without leaflets, out cards, or policies. The net result was miserable – three councils won and three lost.

## Conclusion

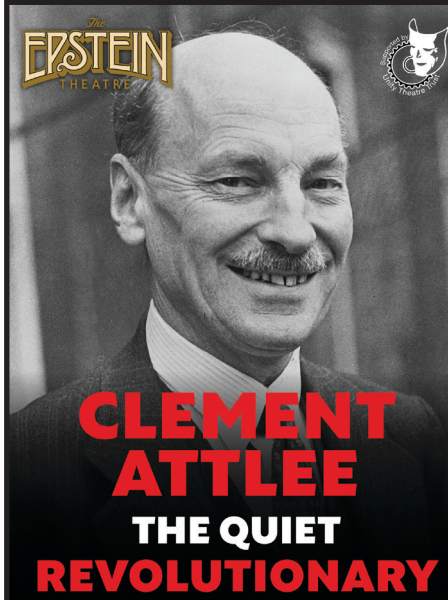
During his leadership campaign, Keir Starmer pledged:

**“The selections for Labour candidates needs to be more democratic and we should end NEC impositions of candidates. Local Party members should select their candidates for every election”** (4th February, 2020).

Instead, we have seen less democracy, less choice, and less accountability. CLPs and trade unions have been effectively removed as stakeholders by stealth and members left frustrated, angry, and alienated. In borough after borough, the picture was of candidates campaigning with very few supporters.

The right wing majority on the London Regional Executive was forced to acknowledge that rules weren’t followed equally across London, and has a remit to conduct a review to look into selection processes to ensure consistency in the future, which we welcome.

The failings were by no means universal, and in some boroughs the selection round was completed without major controversy. But the problems outlined took place in sufficient boroughs to render it broken overall. You have been warned!



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# Left Activists Deliver Victory in Worthing

**Liz Nicholson, member of East Worthing and Shoreham CLP Executive; Hilary Schan-Martyn, Election Campaign Manager of EWAS CLP; and Carl Walker, EWAS CLP and Deputy Leader of the council**

*(Based on earlier Labour List articles, Jun 2021, Jul 2022).*

Worthing Council used to be considered the typical safe Tory seaside borough. In 2016 there had not been a Labour councillor for over forty years. But in May 2022 Labour won control for the first time. How did it happen?

## New members and a commitment to win

The borough is split between two CLPs: Worthing West; and East Worthing and Shoreham. Like many other constituencies, these had an influx of new members in 2015 and 2016 following the election of Jeremy Corbyn as Leader. Suddenly activities that had previously been impossible were on the agenda.

In 2017 we won our first seat in a by-election. The borough has annual elections and four more seats were added in 2018, another five in 2019, and five more in 2021. Then this year the election of a further eight swelled the Labour Group to twenty three and gave Labour control. Many of our very marginal wins show that without the hard work from committed left-wing activists, we simply wouldn't have had these results.

## Year-round campaigning

One of the key reasons for this success is year-round campaigning, particularly listening campaigns where residents are not asked who they plan to vote for, but what issues they want the council to address. There have been town-wide surveys on topics as diverse as town centre regeneration and the cost of school uniforms. The results were then used to draft the election pledges in our manifesto.<sup>1</sup>

During lockdown there were online campaigns such as the one against the closure

of many children's centres by the County Council.

Above all, there was continual community activism: mutual aid groups, a non-referral food bank (Worthing Food Foundation) which currently feeds 500 people a week, and a school uniform exchange, plus working with local community organisations. The plan was to behave like the council we wanted to be before we actually had any power.



## Municipal socialism

Now that Worthing is Labour, the plan is to translate activism into radical municipal socialism. That began with the declaration of a cost of living emergency and setting out a strategy to combat it that involves working with health organisations, unions, further education facilities, and community groups. The aim is to follow ground-breaking councils like

Preston, implementing an economic strategy based on community wealth-building, to anchor jobs locally, broaden ownership of capital, ensure local economic stability, bring about living wage expansion and community banking, and encourage worker ownership and municipal enterprise, tied to a local procurement strategy.

The final part of the plan is to embark on a programme of radical democratic changes so the council looks like one that is run for and by the community. We have started a Big Listening Campaign going out into the community to find out what people would like Worthing to look like in the future.

The Council is supporting the Worthing Food Foundation national Right to Food event in November in Worthing that will bring together campaigners, politicians, and anti-poverty groups to develop a national campaign to work towards a right to food.

Worthing was a Tory stronghold for decades but something changed here, and it can change everywhere else too.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.worthingwestlabour.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/178/2022/04/Worthing-Manifesto-2022.pdf>

## CLPD Campaigns For:

- A real policy-making Annual Conference;
- An effective and accountable NEC;
- The defence of the Trade Union link;
- More progressive Labour candidates for elected office who are women, BAME, or disabled people; and, generally, for an increase in candidates with a working-class background, to counteract the unacceptable current under-representation;
- A local electoral college for choosing leaders of council Labour Groups;
- An internal Party ombudsperson;
- A clear jobs and growth policy in sharp opposition to the Tories and austerity;
- And justice for Jeremy Corbyn.



## Bitebacks

“The 2011 UK referendum on Parliamentary voting systems, came down decisively in favour of retaining the existing First Past the Post method of electing MPs – 68% to 32%.”  
Rachel Hopkins MP.

## “Quote Unquote”

“If we're going to limit climate change, than lots more of the economy is going to have to be under public ownership – including transport and energy.



An economic model based on the endless pursuit of profit got us into this mess. It won't get us out of it.”

**Richard Burgon MP**  
@RichardBurgon

# Labour and Latin American Sovereignty

**Dr Francisco Dominguez, academic, specialist on Latin America's contemporary political economy, National Secretary of the Venezuela Solidarity Campaign, and former refugee from Chile's Pinochet**

Since independence in the 19th century, Latin America has been struggling to develop a system that is inclusive, democratic, socially just, free from racism, discrimination, colonial and imperialist exploitation, and poverty; and that upholds all human and social rights.



## The achievements of The Pink Tide

With the election of Hugo Chavez in 1998 in Venezuela, the continent went through a decade of social progress and democracy. The Pink Tide transformed Latin America's political complexion and saw the electoral victories of indigenous leader Evo Morales, radical economist Rafael Correa, left wing Peronists Ernesto Kirchner and Cristina Fernandez, metal worker Lula da Silva and former political prisoner Dilma Rousseff, and Sandinista leader Daniel Ortega in Bolivia, Ecuador, Argentina, Brazil, and Nicaragua respectively.

During that golden decade, regional poverty declined from 48% to less than 26%. Key natural resources were nationalised and the revenues used to improve people's living standards. Illiteracy was eradicated in Venezuela, Ecuador, and Bolivia (and was being tackled in other countries). Education and health care were vastly expanded and provided free of charge, with four million free eyesight-restoring operations performed by Cuba and Venezuela. Women entered politics and the economy in massive numbers. Heavily-subsidised transport and housing were developed, with four million houses built for the poor in Venezuela; and dozens of universities created, including the first ever indigenous universities. Racism and all forms of discrimination were institutionally combatted and dozens of indigenous languages were granted official status. New regional and independent institutions were established. And much, much more. This was made possible by the state controlling key economic levers and resources, and playing a pivotal role in the national economy.



*Hugo Chavez, Evo Morales, Lula da Silva, and Rafael Correa join hands to push for sovereignty and social justice.*

## Labour must oppose US attacks on national sovereignty

The US and its Atlantic accomplices have sought to undermine our national sovereignty by both demonising left wing government as 'authoritarian' or 'dictatorial' while capitalising on the economic woes generated by the 2008 world crisis. This led to the ousting and/or electoral defeat of the left in Honduras (2009), Paraguay (2012), Argentina (2015), Brazil (2016), Ecuador (2017), and Bolivia (2019). Additionally, the US imposed a raft of nasty sanctions on Cuba, Venezuela and Nicaragua, whilst trying to violently oust their governments.

The left has elected presidents in Mexico, Argentina, Bolivia, Honduras, Peru, Chile, and now (June 2022) in Colombia, but although the region is entering into a Second Pink Tide it is still subjected to hostile acts of aggression by the US and its Atlantic accomplices, including the UK.

Labour must oppose US interference in Latin America. It must demand not only the immediate and unconditional lifting of all sanctions against Nicaragua, Cuba, and Venezuela but also that the gold held illegally by the Bank of England be returned to its rightful owners, Venezuela. Labour must campaign for the UK to stop subordinating its foreign policy to that of the US in 'its backyard'. It must constructively engage with Latin America's progressive governments. And it must defend our right to live in peace so we can build the prosperity of our peoples in a better world.



## Bitebacks

"Let's get this straight: how would it be if the United States were viewed by the rest of the world as interfering with the elections directly of other countries?"  
Joe Biden, 2021



*Bolivian indigenous women in the front line of the struggle for a better world.*

## Women's Conference 2022

# CLPD Working for Women's Voices to be Heard

### Jean Crocker,<sup>1</sup> member of the CLPD Executive

Women on the CLPD Executive Committee have been working to maintain a Women's Conference where women can speak freely and vote to make Party policy, and for the continued rolling out of the Women's Organisation. Our successful campaigning activities included the following:

- **Newsletter:** In July we produced a newsletter focussing on the question *Why is Labour Deprioritising Women?*<sup>2</sup> on issues women are facing, including Roe v Wade, and with a motion, drafted by Labour Women Leading, to defend our Women's Conference.
- **Key motions:** For Women's Conference this year, we proposed draft motions; after motion topics had been published, we encouraged Women's Branches and CLPs to choose the NHS, Social Care, Refugee Women, and Food Poverty in the priorities ballot, which determines which topics were to be debated; and we were pleased that all were selected.
- **Rule changes:** We also proposed rule changes, including one on the right of Women's Branch Secretaries and Women's Offic-

ers to have access to membership lists, which reached Women's Conference and was passed. We were disappointed that another proposal, for each affiliated organisation and Women's Branch/CLP to have the right to submit both a motion and a rule change, reached the floor of the conference but was defeated.

- **Delegates' briefing:** We held a Women's Conference Delegates' Briefing, and produced three issues of Yellow Pages for delegates and visitors. Working with other left groups, we offered advice on such potentially tricky issues as compositing, and successfully supported three Grassroots Left candidates for the Women's Conference Arrangements Committee (WCAC).
- **Motion priorities:** We recommended that CLP women voted for Women Refugees as their motion to go forward from Women's Conference to Labour Party Conference. Two go forward; the affiliate delegates choose one and the CLP delegates choose one. In this case, in both sections the motion on Violence Against Women and Girls was top of the poll. There is no rule about what to do in this case, though it was the understanding of a number of women that the next CLP motion, which was Women Refugees, would take second place. In fact what

happened was that the motion with the next highest number of votes was announced as the second motion. This was Women and the Economy, the second choice of the affiliate section. This is an important topic, of course, but we need much greater clarity and transparency on how decisions like this are made – a solution must be seen to be fair – and on issues like why motions might be ruled out, where left reps have been pushing the WCAC for more detailed guidance to go out in good time.

We are now working hard to ensure we have a stand-alone Women's Conference in Spring 2023, to produce resources for the National Women's Committee to allow them to fulfil their remit by continuing to encourage the setting up of Women's Branches, Women's Regional Committees, etc; to follow through on the decisions of Women's Conference; to monitor and improve women's representation; and to further develop a powerful Labour Women's Organisation.

1. E: [clpdwomen@gmail.com](mailto:clpdwomen@gmail.com)

2. <https://www.clpd.org.uk/2022/07/09/womens-newsletter>

# Islamophobia in the Labour Party: We must act on the Forde recommendations

### Mish Rahman, member of the National Executive Committee

#### We fought to see Forde published

When hundreds of thousands of Labour members were out campaigning for a Labour government under Jeremy Corbyn, a handful of Labour staffers were working to sabotage our efforts. Just one of the shocking findings of The Forde Report, which investigated racism and sexism within the Party, and the conduct of senior staffers (*see p6*).

Labour's leadership was terrified of what the report would say, and it was delayed again and again. As one of your NEC representatives, I fought for nearly two years to get it published. Now, we will work towards meaningful action on its findings. This pressure is vital.

#### These issues need to be fixed

The Party's leadership is acting as if the problems have been solved, and that we can move on.

Tell that to the Black Labour MPs who have called the leadership's response "a kick in the teeth". Tell it to the Labour Muslim Network sounding the alarm over institutional Islamophobia in the Party. Tell it to people of colour like Apsana Begum who have suffered racist and sexist abuse within the Party, without any support from the leadership. Tell it to the thousands of Labour members, from Jeremy Corbyn to Young Labour, who have been silenced or suspended under Keir Starmer's leadership.

These issues simply won't go away. They're too important. They need to be fixed urgently if we are to live up to our name as an anti-racist Party. They're crucial for a democratic and safe Party which is open to all.

#### We ignore Muslim voters at our peril

Labour must learn from the 2019 General Election and never take its core base for granted again. Starmer may be banking on the majority of Muslim voters having no other party to turn to, but if the recommendations of this report are not acted upon, we risk an exodus of Labour Party Muslim members. Moreover, we risk Muslims simply staying at home on polling day or voting for other parties, as did many former Labour voters in the 'Red Wall'.

We urgently need new democratic BAME structures so people of colour have our own voice within Labour. We need Forde's recommendations to be actioned, not shelved. We also need an end to the suspensions, rule breaking and candidate blockings, that Starmer has indulged in to marginalise the left. Our representatives in all corridors of power must stand up for democracy, workers, and socialism.



# A Reminder: Rule Changes Matter More Than You Might Think

**Dave Beadle, Enfield Southgate CLP**

## From branch discussions through to manifesto promises

Fighting austerity and the cost of living crisis, defending the NHS and other public services, supporting workers in struggle, standing up to racism and prejudice,



addressing the Climate Emergency, and solidarity with comrades internationally... motions on these and other policy issues can appear more interesting and can seem more important than the rule change proposals discussed at Labour Party Annual Conferences or recommendations on procedural strategies. However, the Rule Book and changes to it can have a far greater impact than the individual policy motions Conference discusses.

The policies we discuss and agree at our branches and CLPs, and eventually at Annual Conference, count for nothing without a democratic Party whose members have a real say in our manifesto commitments and whose MPs and leadership fight for what we've agreed.

Unfortunately, the Party currently has a leadership and PLP that is unwilling to respect Party democracy. So unless you're happy remaining no more than a foot soldier at election time with no say in the policies the Party champions, the Party's rules need to be changed. Which is why rule change proposals are so important. As are the strategies by which we can make things happen.

## What, where, when, how, and who

Which policy issues are discussed matters, as does where, when, and how that happens. All of which depend on the rules for our branches and CLPs, Labour Groups, Regional and National Policy Forums, and Conference itself. And guidance from CLPD and other campaigning alliances can

be crucial in composing and winning the priorities ballots.

Who decides what gets discussed matters, whether they're our Executive Committees, the National Executive Committee, or the Conference Arrangements Committee. And who represents us and fights for our agreed policies also matters, whether they're our delegates, local councillors, MPs, MSPs, MSs, or the Party's leadership. The Rule Book determines how we elect them and how they should act, as well as how the process should be overseen by the staff we pay for. Meanwhile, slates like those of the CLGA determine who's elected to such positions (*see p19*).

And let's not forget the checks and balances by which we can hold our representatives and employees to account, and by which we can defend ourselves against unfair accusations. The rules which enable these are crucial, as are the changes we need to ensure justice.

It's not even a question of left vs right (or 'Marxist hard left' vs 'moderates and modernisers'): many of us have had perfectly good working relationships for many years with comrades we disagree with on a range of policy issues, at the same time as we make our CLPs a welcoming place for all, whether we're sharing a drink down the pub, attending picket lines, or door-knocking in all weathers to fight the Tories.

## A democratic say for members



No, this is about political gangsters and sleepers and carpetbaggers who trample the Rule Book and Party democracy for their own ends and those of the establishment – before collecting their rewards as peers, knights of the realm, TV presenters, executive directors, grace-and-favour appointees in public sector organisations, or from JP Morgan-funded lecture tours.

The Campaign for Labour Party Democracy (CLPD) has been fighting to give rank-and-file Labour Party members a democratic say in how our party is run and what our policies should be since 1973 (*see p20*). The Rule Book matters, as do the strategies by which we ensure our policies reflect our socialist values, and how we elect the representatives who will fight for them.

# Educate, Agitate, Organise

**Julius Harney**

I recently attended a lively march against the proposed cuts in our local bus routes, where the banners of two local CLPs were prominent. The previous day I was at an RMT picket at my local station, along with five local Labour councillors. A Labour presence at such events may seem like a minor thing, but it is important.

## We remain a huge resource

Jeremy Corbyn's leadership of the Party inspired people and gave them hope. Another crucial effect was to gather thousands of these inspired and hopeful people, alongside existing activists, into the Labour Party as a single mass political organisation. Despite the fall in membership since then, the bulk of us with socialist views who are politically involved are still Labour Party members. This convocation of the left in one organisation, despite the hostility of its current leadership, remains a huge positive resource in our fight for a better society.

## Stay and fight: for more than just our internal battles

'Stay and fight' has been used, correctly so, to counter two illusory ideas since 2020: (1) that to call a one-sided truce with the 'centrists' and their allies can produce anything positive for the left (they continue to 'purge' us regardless). And (2) that there is greener political grass, even the mirage of a mass socialist party, to be found by those who've torn up their membership cards. The last two years has provided no evidence to corroborate these illusions.

The 'fight' has sometimes been taken to mean just the battles inside the Party, such as against the betrayal of socialist policies, the struggle for democracy in the Party, and in councillor and MP selections. CLPD's work here remains hugely important and necessary – more so when we're being forced back-

(cont. overleaf)

# Wales vs Westminster: No Sign of a Thaw

## Nick Davies, Swansea West CLP

*(Based on an article in Labour Briefing.)*

The defenestration of Boris Johnson shows no sign of thawing the frosty relations between the Welsh government and Westminster. Truss, not the sharpest knife in the drawer, nevertheless had sufficient raw cunning to tell the Tory backwoodsmen and women what they wanted to hear (the *Daily Telegraph's* unhinged vendetta against Mark Drakeford should be a clue). Sunak, playing catch-up in the culture wars, draped himself in the union flag, promising a clampdown on those who 'vilify' the UK – will those calling for independence for Wales and Scotland find themselves being referred to Prevent?

## Reforms for the Senedd

The stakes will have been raised by the votes by Welsh Labour and Plaid Cymru's membership for the parties to use the 'super majority' resulting from their co-operation agreement in the Senedd to increase the size of that body from 60 to 96, and for it to be elected wholly by proportional representation, the same method currently used for the regional seats. The aim is to strengthen Welsh democracy, allow for the increased workload of the Senedd since 1999, com-

pensate for the proposed reduction of Welsh Westminster MPs from 40 to 32 as part of the electoral boundary 'reforms', and help to take Welsh democracy into the 21st century.



**Senedd Cymru  
Welsh Parliament**

This reformed Senedd will soon have to choose whether to dodge or resist the clunking fist of Westminster Unionism. The Tories' plans to use agency workers as scab labour would involve Westminster repealing Welsh government legislation, namely the Trade Union (Wales) Act 2017, which prevents the use of agency workers against strikers in public services devolved to the Welsh government. If that isn't blatantly trampling over Welsh devolved government, what is?

There's opposition to Senedd expansion from both the Welsh Tories, who call for a referendum on the issue (without making the same demand in respect of Wales' Westminster seats being reduced), and from some of Wales' Labour MPs, notably Chris Bryant and Carolyn Harris. The Westminster MPs are a mediocre bunch on the whole, and generally on the right of the party, with the

notable exception of Cynon Valley's Beth Winter, but they nevertheless remain jealous guardians of their status as the custodians of the 'real' politics, as they see it. No stranger to a democratic deficit, Carolyn Harris was engineered into the position of Deputy Leader by a change in the rules from OMOV to an electoral college, despite being widely regarded as unfit for the role.

## What now for devolution?

Welsh devolution, already approved in two referenda in 1997 and 2011, seems to have to keep justifying itself. Although the small parties calling for abolition of the Senedd were electorally annihilated in 2021, the Welsh Tories are increasingly devo-sceptic, taking their cue from Westminster. Welsh Labour Unionists, with the probable exception of Lord Kinnock, who is consistently hostile to Wales governing itself, are prepared to tolerate the Senedd, but only in a firmly subaltern role to Westminster. So Welsh Tories and a vocal minority in Welsh Labour will converge in their opposition to Senedd expansion and to more powers being devolved to it.

Arguments that Wales has no right to govern itself because it is too small, too poor, or too stupid were previously aired in a context of anti-colonialist independence struggles, and demonstrate how dominance is exerted as much psychologically as militarily and economically.

How this will pan out depends on who succeeds Mark Drakeford as First Minister and on events outside Wales. Will Scotland go for IndyRef2? What Wales does depends to a large extent on what Scotland does, and former Plaid leader Dafydd Wigley has already stated what most people already acknowledge: that if Scotland stays, Welsh independence is less likely.

Will an administration led by Truss be too buffeted by multiple crises and its own incompetence to systematically sabotage Welsh devolution? We shouldn't bet on it. If, despite Starmer's best efforts not to engage the Tories in a battle of ideas, Labour forms the next government, will the emphasis be on a redesigned United Kingdom?

To some, these issues may seem secondary compared to the threat of mass fuel poverty, but they are important. They involve the Welsh government's departure, albeit not as much as we would like, from Westminster economic and political orthodoxy and the basic democratic principle of Wales being able to govern itself.

*(Julius Harney cont. from previous page)*

wards on these. However, these internal battles are only part of the struggle for a better society, a struggle for which the Party's mass of left members, branches, and CLPs can be mobilised for.

## Engaging members in more than just door-knocking

The current wave of strikes and the supportive public mood, combined with glimmerings of understanding of the capitalist causes of our present 'cost of living' crisis, provides the ideal terrain on which Labour Party organisations and our membership continue to be deployed and developed across the country – and successfully so (*see p14*), despite the national Party's lurch to the right.

Unions in dispute should be invited to address branch and CLP meetings, supported by discussions, newsletters, and political education to encourage

members to join picket lines and demonstrations. Members should be actively taking part in political campaigning work – as distinct from 'voter ID' door-knocking – such as through alliances between Trades Councils, unions, and community groups on the lines of the national Enough is Enough campaign. And left councillors and MPs must ensure their presence is visible in all these activities – to the membership and the public alike.

This is how we engage with our membership, build an understanding of the need for socialist change as the alternative to the exploitative and destructive nature of capitalism, and protect the long term future of the left in the Party. The slogan 'educate, agitate, organise', promulgated by William Morris and his comrades nearly 140 years ago, captures the activities that are needed and possible today. The Labour Party is still the base from which we achieve them.

## Tel's Tales

### Lest We Forget: False Claims of Antisemitism Were Made Against Jeremy Corbyn

Matt Hancock during the 2019 General Election campaign: "I am passionate about ridding from our politics... the antisemitic, outrageous, racist attitude of Jeremy Corbyn." *The Guardian*.

Nadhim Zahawi, Chancellor of the Exchequer, in his letter to Johnson on 7th July 2022, urging Johnson to resign: "No one will forget... [you] keeping a dangerous antisemite out of No. 10."

### The Landmark 1989 Children Act

"That legislation still underpins our care system and has at its centre the key principle of a child's welfare being the paramount consideration in determining their wellbeing... I doubt that even the staunchest free market Conservative MPs, back in 1989, could have envisaged the current acceptance of an average of 22.6% private profits being made on the back of the needs of our most vulnerable children (83% of residential care provision is now in the hands of private firms).

"To say that this country has gone markedly backwards since the passing of that legislation would be a gross understatement."

David Hinchliffe, Labour MP for Wakefield, 1987-2005, letter in *The Guardian*.

*Postscript:* The recent MacAlister Report sets out some 80 recommendations to radically improve children's social care. According to the report it will take five years and £2.6 billion to sort things out for vulnerable children.

### Laffer is a Duffer

Many Tory MPs, who know little economics, think that the Laffer Curve is something absolutely true. It 'shows' that above a certain level, raising tax rates will generate lower rather than higher revenue... "But real-world examples of this are hard to find."

*The Sunday Times* in-house economist.

*Postscript:* In February Rishi Sunak had this to say: "It is flippant to claim that 'tax cuts always pay for themselves'. They do not... It is hard to cut taxes at a time when demands on the state are growing."

### This Is What Poverty Can Lead To

"The 14.5 million living in poverty in the UK are ticking time bombs of increased tox-

ic stress, post-traumatic stress disorder, depression and mental illness, chronic fatigue, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, arterial disease, diabetes, hypertension, and autoimmune disorders."

Jack Munroe, *The Guardian*.

### A Funny Sort of Modernisation

May 1997: Tony Blair wins, pledging to modernise the UK.

June 2022: Tony Blair parades in fancy historical dress to receive an ancient knighthood from the monarch.

### Democratic Procedures in the US are Being Undermined by the Trumpist Hard Right

- In 2021 19 Republican-ruled states passed measures, the practical effect of which will be voter suppression – making it harder for low-income and minority Americans in particular to cast a vote.

- Several Republican state legislatures have sought to put themselves, or their allies, in charge of what in the past was non-partisan election machinery, installing Republicans – including 'Stop the Steal' Trump loyalists – in the offices where votes get counted and certified.

- "There are moves in Republican-ruled states to make the state legislatures the sole authority over elections, cutting out the courts altogether: so Republicans could decide that they, and they alone, will allocate their state's electoral votes, regardless of who the state's citizens actually voted for". *The Guardian*.

### Disingenuous and Fantastical Rhetoric Vis-à-Vis Reality

Tony Blair promoting the invasion of Iraq: "A majority of decent and well-meaning people said there was no need to confront Hitler and that those that did were warmongers... they made the wrong decision."

Response by the French Foreign Minister, Dominique de Villepin: "If a war is started it would be immensely difficult to restore stability in a country and region horribly affected by the intrusion of force."

*The Sunday Times*.



### Bitebacks

"Based on the moral case for socialism, here is where I stand."

Keir Starmer, <https://keirstarmer.com/plans/10-pledges>

## The Centre Left Grassroots Alliance

The Centre Left Grassroots Alliance (CLGA) has been in operation for 24 years and is an alliance of Labour Party organisations which co-ordinate their activity in relation to Labour's internal party elections, to ensure that the Party's membership is genuinely represented on Labour's national bodies.

In particular, it puts forward slates of progressive candidates for elections to the National Executive Committee (NEC), National Policy Forum (NPF), Conference Arrangements Committee (CAC) and National Constitutional Committee (NCC). Central to the CLGA's approach is the pursuit of maximum unity in these elections, which has consistently proved to be successful.

CLGA members include the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy, Momentum, Campaign for Socialism, Grassroots Black Left, Jewish Voice for Labour, Kashmiris for Labour, Labour Assembly Against Austerity, Labour Briefing Co-op, Labour CND, Labour Representation Committee, Labour Women Leading, Red Labour, and Welsh Labour Grassroots.

To secure a Labour government it is important the party's national committees genuinely reflect the membership's views and priorities. The CLGA plays its part in trying to achieve this.

## "Quote Unquote"

"Police like that used to be called stormtroopers... If Keir Starmer doesn't clarify the party's position, then it won't be drifting to the centre ground, it'll be wallowing on the far right."

Peter Martindale, former NUPE officer, re Angela Rayner's view on police action, *The Guardian*, 2nd February 2022

## Left Successes in the 2022 Ballots

Congratulations to the successful candidates announced so far<sup>1</sup> in this year's national Labour Party ballots for the National Executive Committee (NEC) and for Young Labour – testimony to the continuing effectiveness of the slate from CLGA (*see p19*) and especially so from For a Socialist Future<sup>2</sup> respectively. And our successes in Wales and the North show how important good regional organisation can be.

The thousands who left the Party in recent years were always going to affect some of our results, but many thanks to everyone who has remained in the Party to ensure the left remains represented in these important positions – we can still make a difference in these ballots.

The ballots for the local government reps on the NEC are ongoing at the time of writing, so please encourage your councillors to support Matt White and Aneesa Akbar.

And a reminder to this year's CLP Conference delegates that the ballot for the CLP section of the National Constitutional Committee (NCC) takes place at Conference, so please make sure your delegation votes for all three recommended candidates: Daniel Blaney, Khaled Moyeed, and Cecile Wright.

1. Listed on the national Labour Party website: <https://labour.org.uk/party-members>

2. <http://socialistfuture.com>

### Not to be missed!

## CLPD Conference Fringe Meetings

**6:30pm, Saturday 24th September**  
and **6:30pm, Tuesday 27th September**

Briefings and updates for delegates and attendees on composites, ballots, and rule changes – and much more.

Both are being held at the Friends Meeting House, 22 School Lane, Liverpool L1 3BT. All welcome.

## More Articles Online

Campaign Briefing and many other articles and updates are available on the CLPD website at [www.clpd.org](http://www.clpd.org) – including the model motions and the rule changes to support at Conference 2022.

# 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 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 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's Leader was 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.

Additionally, CLPD promoted a range of reforms to give Labour women (*see p16*) and black and minority ethnic members greater representation within the Party. The main demand for a woman on every parliamentary shortlist was achieved over the period 1986-88, soon followed by All-Women Shortlists.

CLPD will sometimes promote seemingly broader, non-democracy issues such as the significant extension of public ownership (*see p10*), defending the welfare state, and the First Past The Post electoral system (PR would mean no majority Labour Governments – *see p7*). All such policies derive from our commitment to socialist values and socialist advancement.

The major focus of CLPD's work in recent years has been to win back 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, 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.

CLPD gave its full support to Jeremy Corbyn while he was Leader, and under whose leadership we achieved several gains in Party democracy. Since then, it continues to be an issue of the utmost importance for CLPD that Jeremy should be able to stand as a Labour Party candidate at the next General Election (*see p1*).

To find out more about CLPD, visit our website at [www.clpd.org.uk](http://www.clpd.org.uk). CLPD can usually provide speakers for meetings, especially if requests are made well in advance.

## Make a Donation or Join CLPD Today

Help support the costs of our campaigning by making a donation at [www.clpd.org.uk](http://www.clpd.org.uk). Even better, sign up as a member and persuade your branch or CLP to do so at the same address.

Annual membership rates are:

£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; £3 young members (under 27).

