

# CAMPAIGN BRIEFING

The CLPD publication for CLPs and Labour Party members. For detailed and exclusive NEC and NPF reports, internal Labour Party news, and debates visit [www.clpd.org.uk](http://www.clpd.org.uk) (where this newsletter can be downloaded), [www.facebook.com/clpd.labour](https://www.facebook.com/clpd.labour), or [twitter.com/clpd\\_labour](https://twitter.com/clpd_labour)



Edition 83  
Autumn 2023

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## Celebrating 50 Years of CLPD

# Only a Democratic Party Can Provide the Policies this Country Needs

*Jeremy Corbyn describes how transformative policies depend on empowering the membership.*

### Historic advances in Party democracy

I was at the founding meeting of CLPD 50 years ago. At the time, democracy in the Labour Party was lacking in almost every respect. The Parliamentary Labour Party (PLP) elected the Leader, regardless of what Party members wanted, and once you became an MP your position was protected for evermore. CLPD's demands were simple: Party members should elect their Leader, and CLPs should be able to hold their MPs to account. As Tony Benn pointed out, these were not cold

constitutional points, but fundamental to the cause of democracy, both in the labour movement and in wider society.

Thanks to the dedication of campaigners, we delivered significant advances in Party democracy: a wider franchise for the election of the Leader and Deputy Leader and what is now the re-selection trigger ballot system for sitting MPs.<sup>1</sup>

### Strength from empowering the membership

When I was elected Leader, I recognised that I had been put there by my fellow Party members. The main challenges ahead of me would come from MPs in the PLP hostile to my leadership, which took a great deal of time



Photo: Alisdare Hickson

and resilience to resolve. Some people thought this should be solved by imposing candidates, imposing deci-

*(cont. overleaf)*

# Labour Must Have a Positive Vision for Scotland

*Katy Clark warns how SNP failures aren't enough to win back traditional Labour voters.*

### SNP losing support after nearly a decade

For almost a decade, the SNP has been the dominant force in Scottish politics. The 2014 independence referendum delivered a sig-



nificant shift in the political landscape north of the border, with support for Scottish Labour plummeting and the SNP winning election after election. Labour lost the trust of many who had traditionally supported the party but who no longer thought that we were on their side.

Many traditional Labour voters in working class communities who had supported a 'Yes' vote in the referendum switched their allegiance to the SNP and Labour was reduced to the third party in Scottish politics. There was no longer a class basis to Labour's support in Scotland, with working class communities no more likely to

support Labour than other parties. For as long as the SNP has continued to enjoy the support of these voters, it has remained the dominant political force in Scotland.

However, it now appears for the first time in years that some of these voters are beginning to lose their faith in an SNP which is increasingly looking tired, divided, incompetent, and devoid of ideas. Nicola Sturgeon's resignation followed by a fractious SNP leadership contest and the ongoing police investigation into the handling of the party's finances has led to a de-

*(cont. overleaf)*

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

*(Jeremy Corbyn cont. from previous page)*

sions, and imposing diktat. To me, Party democracy was far too important.

Real strength comes from empowering the mass of the membership and the affiliated unions. My philosophy was to improve Party democracy; that's why we undertook the Democracy Review and introduced more democratic ways of policy making. It is no coincidence that membership rose to 600,000.

## Natural justice under threat

Sadly, the Party is now in a situation where things are going in the opposite direction. Numerous members have been suspended and expelled from the Party, and bans and proscriptions have been introduced. I received the same letter as others when my membership was temporarily

suspended in 2020. I was reinstated unanimously by an NEC panel (which, it is important to note, was not dominated by allies). Subsequently, my membership of the PLP was withheld and the ensuing story is well-known. I am immensely grateful to the Party members and the people of Islington North for the friendship and support they have shown me over many years.

We are now in a situation where Party democracy is up to the discretion of the General Secretary, who determines to which organisations CLPs can affiliate, what actions they can take, and which parliamentary candidates they can select. At the request of the Party Leadership, the Party has even removed the concept of natural justice from the Rule Book.

Party members are ignored when it comes to policy formulation. This is not coincidental to the drastic po-

litical shift away from our transformative programme. When I was Leader, I supported a Green New Deal, a foreign policy based on peace and justice, public ownership (including of our health service), workers' rights, and the dignity of migrants and refugees. These policies were not imposed from the top. They were developed, formulated, and defended by members and affiliates.

Democracy is the foundation of the Labour Party. It is essential to a healthy, creative, and collective movement. And, ultimately, only a party that empowers its members can generate the transformative policies this country desperately needs.

*Jeremy Corbyn is MP for Islington North.*

*1. We originally won a full re-selection process every Parliament; the current trigger ballot system was introduced later under Neil Kinnock as a retreat from a fully-democratic selection.*

*(Katy Clark cont. from previous page)*

cline in the party's support in recent opinion polls. The Tories in Scotland are unable to make headway given their UK freefall.

## Labour still needs to inspire

However, this fall in SNP support doesn't necessarily represent a permanent shift from the party or an automatic boost in support for Labour.

Yes, traditional Labour voters who backed independence and switched their support to the SNP post-referendum may be looking at our party once again. But if we are to convert that into solid support for Labour, we cannot simply rely on the SNP's continued disintegration. Labour must have a positive vision for Scotland – one which inspires voters after years of SNP and Tory austerity and mismanagement of our public services.

People in Scotland face the same significant problems as working class people in the rest of the UK with the cost-of-living crisis, growing NHS waiting lists, a lack of affordable housing, poor public transport provision, and rising levels of inequality. The poverty and deprivation associated with deindustrialisation continues to blight large parts of the country. These challenges can't be addressed solely through better management of public services than that offered by the SNP and the Tories: they require

significant policy change and political will.

Some of the party's recent policy announcements for Scotland are welcome, such as GB Energy and the significant investment it will bring for green jobs and infrastructure across Scotland. However, Scottish Labour continues to be taunted by the 'Red Tory' attack line. And whilst social attitudes in Scotland are very similar to the rest of the UK, the political centre of gravity in Scotland is significantly to the left of the Westminster political dialogue.

## Progressive taxation

We must look at progressive taxation for Scotland. Research from the Scottish Trades Union Congress (STUC) has highlighted the extensive taxation powers available to the Scottish Government which could raise up to £1bn in additional revenue per year for public services. These powers include the ability to introduce a wealth tax and land taxes – but the SNP has paid nothing but lip service to the idea of using these powers.

Labour must be bold and commit to delivering a truly progressive taxation system for Scotland, including wealth and land taxes to ensure that the wealthiest pay their fair share towards funding public services and tackling the inequalities in wider society.

## Industrial strategy

A positive vision for Scotland must also

deliver an industrial strategy, including a proper ferry procurement strategy which is crucial for island communities and for rebuilding shipbuilding.

An industrial strategy which delivers well-paid, secure, and unionised jobs through the delivery of crucial infrastructure such as green technologies and shipbuilding would not only be positive and transformative for Scotland but would also demonstrate a sharp contrast between Labour and the SNP in terms of the parties' willingness to use devolved powers to deliver transformative change.

It falls to us as a Labour Party to be the champions of positive and transformative change for Scotland.

*Katy Clark is MSP West Scotland Region. (See also Jim Mackenzie on p21).*

## "Quote Unquote"

"Starmer's Labour Party is close to the point of no return. Blocking Jeremy Corbyn from standing as a Labour candidate is an affront to decency and a declaration of civil war within a party about to metamorphose from a broad church to a toxic sect."

**Yanis Varoufakis** Greek MP,  
[www.commondreams.org](http://www.commondreams.org)

# Reinstate Diane Abbott MP



In April this year an initial draft of a letter by Diane Abbott was mistakenly sent to the Observer. When this was pointed out, Diane immediately apologised, withdrew the letter and disassociated herself from its contents. Despite this, Diane was suspended from the Labour whip and at the time of publication she remains suspended.

There are widespread concerns about this suspension and the length of time the 'investigation' has dragged on: ■ Former Judge Peter Herbert OBE (Chair of the Society of Black Lawyers) has raised concerns about the impartiality of the investigation into Diane.

■ Martin Forde KC has said that he "can see no reason why [the investigation] couldn't be dealt with pretty promptly".

Labour Black Socialists (LBS) has launched a petition calling for the whip to be restored to Diane Abbott. Amongst others, LBS, CLPD, Momentum, the Labour Assembly Against Austerity, and Jewish Voice for Labour have all called for Diane's reinstatement.

**Sign the LBS petition:** [ipetitions.com/petition/reinstate-diane](https://www.ipetitions.com/petition/reinstate-diane).

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Unless specifically stated, the views expressed in this publication are not necessarily those of CLPD or of the organisations of which each author is a member. However, CLPD welcomes open discussion of these issues within the Labour Party and supports the democratic right of all members to voice their opinions without fear of factional intimidation.

## Labour Conference 2023: 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](https://www.clpd.org.uk), we'll send a digital version of Yellow Pages to your inbox every morning of Conference.



## Conference 2023 CLPD Conference Fringe Meetings

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

6:30 pm, Saturday 7th October &  
6:30 pm, Tuesday 10th October

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

Not to be missed!

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# Labour Has Shot Itself in the Foot Over Corbyn

*Diane Abbott argues that there is no good reason to block Jeremy Corbyn as a Labour candidate.*

## Without logic or precedent

No good reason has been offered for the blocking of Jeremy Corbyn as a Labour candidate at the next election. There was certainly no good reason advanced in the motion that went to the NEC.



Instead, the flimsiest pretext was offered in the text of the motion itself, which I criticised at the time as being without logic or precedent. The stated reason for blocking him was that "the Labour Party's interests, and its political interests at the next General Election, are not well served by Mr Corbyn running as a Labour Party candidate."

The rationale for this judgement was threadbare, simply arguing that Labour's very bad result in the 2019 general election, which no-one disputes, was sufficient to claim that Corbyn being a candidate at the next election would 'diminish' Labour's electoral prospects nationally and that this was sufficient grounds to block him.

## A subjective and tactical judgement

It is worth noting that there is no attempt to bar Corbyn as a member of the Labour Party. This would follow, for example, where a member was held to have brought the party into disrepute or some other serious charge. Corbyn faced no such charge and will remain a member of the Labour Party. As such, it cannot logically be argued, even by his most vocal critics that he has done anything which in principle justifies blocking his candidacy.

Instead, the proponents and supporters of the motion seem to rely solely on a subjective and tactical judgement that Corbyn would be bad for Labour's prospects. They may not like Corbyn and Corbynism but many

millions of voters still do. Barring Corbyn narrows our appeal to them. It is a bizarre approach.

There is nothing in the Labour Party Rule Book or its practice over decades to suggest electoral failure is a bar to being a candidate, as Neil Kinnock and many other less exalted figures could testify. In recent memory, Gordon Brown also led the Party to severe electoral defeat at a national level. So too did Jim Callaghan before him. Further, and despite what his supporters might claim, Tony Blair led the Party to a disastrous set of local election results in May 2007. We lost a calamitous 665 seats and he had to resign just days later. Under John Smith in 1993 we had a little over 9,200 councillors. Under Blair the total plummeted to little over 2,200.

All of these Leaders would no doubt have argued that a certain set of political circumstances conspired against them, with some justification. And they could further argue that any failure was a collective one of the party as a whole. Yet no other Leader has faced this type of ban on standing in a following election. On more substantive grounds, Corbyn has not brought the party into disrepute, and there is nothing in the Rule Book which supports this type of sanction against him.

On the contrary, the power to select candidates for elections clearly rests with the party in the constituency, as the rules clearly state.

## Starmer's abandoned pledges

A statement from the officers of Islington North CLP makes it crystal clear where they stand: *"We believe in the democratic right of all constituency parties to choose their prospective parliamentary candidate. Therefore, we reject the NEC's interference in Islington North, which undermines our goal of defeating the Conservatives and working with our communities for social justice."*

Like many others, the CLP officers also point out that this action taken against Corbyn stands in complete opposition to the repeated assurances from Keir Starmer himself about local party democracy, including in his

'Ten pledges' where, under the tenth pledge to "offer effective opposition to the Tories" he said he would "Unite our party, promote pluralism, and improve our culture."

## Attacking the left is not effective opposition to the Tories

This is perhaps the most damaging part of the latest move against the left of the Party and its most prominent Leader. It is a point not lost on the officers of Islington North. It may also be the uppermost consideration for those members and affiliates not caught up in this factional battle. This is the question of whether this helps or hinders the fight against these Tories, and our campaign to oust this rotten government.

Vigorously attacking the left is not effective opposition to the Tories, nor should it ever be seen as a substitute for it. Following the bitter election defeat in 2019 the Tories are only too happy to talk about Corbyn because they have effectively demonised him – at least in the eyes of some voters. But they have been doing this for years now and yet they are languishing in the polls. The effectiveness of this strategy is highly questionable.

The one way it could gain traction is if Labour's Leadership chimes in. When both sets of leaders of the main parties are saying the same thing, many voters will tend to believe the consensus. But if anyone in Labour reckons this will boost our electoral prospects, as the motion suggests, they are guilty of reckless naïveté at best.

Starmer cannot rewrite the historical record that he served in a Corbyn Shadow Cabinet and publicly praised him. The Tories are trying to use that fact as an albatross to hang around Starmer's neck. Running around shouting about the dangers of albatrosses will not do Starmer any good. Or the Labour Party.

Instead, as Corbyn said in his own statement: *"Keir Starmer has broken his commitment to respect the rights of Labour members and denigrated the*

*(cont. on next page)*

*(Diane Abbott cont. from p4)*

*democratic foundations of our party."*

Very many members – and not all of them committed supporters of Corbynism – share that view. Some have forecast that arbitrarily blocking Corbyn as a candidate is a sign that further measures against the rest of the left are in the pipeline. In reality a string of strong candidates with wide local backing have already been blocked from shortlists or selection.

The action against Corbyn is part of an established and deeply undemocratic trend.

## Unite the Party

There is an alternative. It would begin with our main task, which is to unite our party in preparation for the next general election and to fight the Tories. This would require at the very least a sharp reduction in factionalism, an end to spurious claims and catch-all

complaints. We need to genuinely shift to 'promoting pluralism and improving our culture'. Crucially, it would entail rescinding this unprecedented sanction against Corbyn and the restoration of the rights of Labour members.

*Diane Abbott is MP for Hackney North and Stoke Newington.*

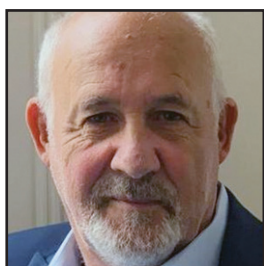
*Republished from the Morning Star, 31st Mar 2023, [www.morningstaronline.co.uk](http://www.morningstaronline.co.uk)*

# We Won't Win Back the Red Wall by Restricting Democracy

*Jon Trickett warns of the dangers of London-based interference.*

## No representatives are safe

Over the last year I have lost count of the number of reports about Labour Party democracy being undermined by London-based



officials. They are intervening in local party matters on an unprecedented scale, often to ensure their favoured candidates are selected to stand for the Party. The apparent removal of sitting North of Tyne Mayor Jamie Driscoll, from the North East Metro Mayor longlist is just one in a string of such actions.

They gloated over the fact that they removed the democratically-elected leader of Scottish Labour. They took control from on high of the Birmingham Labour Group. Interference from above in members' rights when it comes to candidate selections is now the rule, not the exception.

Labour Party democracy has never been perfect, but this latest trend undermines our core democratic principles and the traditional autonomy of local party members. In the past our representative posts – MPs, councillors, even school governors – were determined locally. Our representatives were meant to give expression to the wishes of the movement, not vice versa.

This was how Jamie Driscoll was first selected and then elected. He was

a product of the North East. He was accountable to his electors and to the wider Labour movement there. After the decision to block Jamie, we must face the stark reality that no elected Labour official is safe. No longer are the Party's representatives answerable primarily to voters or Party members. Rather their position increasingly depends on arbitrary and capricious decisions made in London.

## We must listen to our communities

It is a profound mistake for Labour to allow a Blackfriars-based clique to determine who can or cannot stand for the Party. In order to win the General Election, Labour must win back communities in the Red Wall who felt that we'd stopped listening to them. This will simply not happen unless the Party listens to voices in the Red Wall. The same applies to other parts of the country.

So there is a danger that an elitist and authoritarian culture will imperil an incoming Labour government. We cannot give voters the impression that we don't trust them to make decisions for themselves. We are at our best when we are a movement for social justice, rooted in communities, and profoundly democratic.

I believe it is incumbent on all democrats in the party, including the Labour left but also beyond it, to make a stand in defence of Party democracy and local autonomy. This should embrace every level of the party, including members of the Shadow Cabinet, the Parliamentary Labour Party, leaders in local government, the affiliated unions, and local parties and activists.

If the Leadership of the Party doesn't trust our members or affiliates then how will we persuade the public to trust us with power?

*Jon Trickett is the Labour MP for Hemsley.*

## "Quote Unquote"

"The financial sector is fuelling climate change. If the investments made by the banks, venture capitalists and asset



managers of the City of London were their own country, it would sit above Canada and Germany as the world's ninth-largest polluter. The financial markets continue to pour trillions of dollars into fossil fuel industries, new oil and gas projects, and carbon-intensive activities. In doing so they are driving themselves, and the planet, towards a cliff edge. The task of redirecting these investments towards the goal of achieving net zero carbon emissions by 2050 is as mammoth as it is crucial if the goal of limiting warming to 1.5°C above pre-industrial global temperatures is to be achieved."

**Barry Gardiner**, Labour MP for Brent North, 23rd May 2023, *New Statesman*

# Patriotism: the Last Refuge of a Right Wing Leadership

*Richard Price explains how 'country before party' only serves the 1%*

## Authentic what?

Back in February 2021, a leaked internal strategy presentation called for a new Labour patriotism: "The use of the flag, veterans, dressing smartly at the war memorial, etc give voters a sense of authentic values alignment". The fact that this was aimed at Red Wall voters didn't stop many in those swing seats finding the new line clunky, patronising, and inauthentic, as well as being a positive turn-off to younger voters.

Undeterred, the Labour right pressed ahead, and Starmer's speech to last year's Conference was framed by references to 'country before party'. It's a phrase that historically has come up more often in the United States than Britain. When it has been used, it's traditionally been the language of national governments, of coalition, and of Ramsay MacDonald.

## Which country?

It might seem a question with an obvious answer, but what is this 'country' that Starmer refers to? Does it refer to a single geographical unit, (ignoring the history of our strong national and regional identities)? Is it the people who live in this space? Is it its institutions (many of which have been mired in scandal in recent years)? Is it the national economy? Is it a distillation of those 'shared British values' that most of us can't seem to agree on? Or some combination of all these things?

Whatever it is, it is clearly closely related to our old friend 'the national interest', neatly defined by one academic<sup>1</sup> as "a vague and ambiguous term that carries a meaning per the context in which it is used by the statesmen and policy-makers for justifying the actions of their states".

## Whose interest?

Cast your mind back to the Brexit crisis of the summer of 2019, when PLP discipline completely broke down, and any number of Labour MPs were



working 'across the aisle' with MPs of other parties. Despite many of them fighting for different solutions, almost without exception they claimed to be working in the national interest. These days, of course, having 'liked' a solitary tweet from Caroline Lucas or Nicola Sturgeon can get you barred from standing as a Labour candidate.

So who defines what the national interest is? Politicians tend to sidestep the question by talking, more or less sincerely, about 'an economy that works for everyone'. It's true that at some points in history – during the long post-war boom and to some extent during the early Blair years – working class living standards rose, even while the rich concentrated greater wealth in their hands, demonstrating that the economy is not a zero sum game.

But since 2010, while real wages, under the impact of austerity and inflation, have fallen by record levels, the number of UK billionaires has grown from 53 to 177, so any talk of an economy that serves both billionaires and people using food banks is for the birds. Unsurprisingly, the so-called national interest is closely aligned to the interests of those with a large stake in the economy.

## At what cost – and to whom?

So if the party and the people it represents must forego things and make sacrifices in the higher interests of the country – the 'tough choices' we are

constantly reminded must be taken – it is obvious who benefits. The desperate efforts to rebrand Labour as the party of business, while barring Shadow Cabinet members from supporting picket lines, only serve to underline this. The current Leadership has rowed back from an ever-growing list of pledges and commitments, including increasing tax on high earners, nationalising utilities and rail, universal child care, a transformative green new deal, scrapping tuition fees, abolishing Universal Credit, and reviewing UK arms sales. All have been scrapped or placed in cold storage, and all involve acting against the interests of those whom Labour claims to represent.

According to this logic, a 'democratic socialist party' should not enact even vaguely socialist measures during periods of downturn and turbulence, nor should it in periods of upswing for fear it might harm growth.

*Richard Price is a member of Leyton & Wanstead CLP and the CLPD Executive.*

1. Shahid H. Raja.

## "Quote Unquote"

"We note that the Labour Muslim Network has produced an excellent report on Islamophobia in Labour Party. We hope that the Party will consider this report carefully."

**Martin Forde KC**, Forde Report



## Bitebacks

"[People smugglers] are some of the most evil, most pernicious people in society. You have to match them."

**Robert Jenrick**, Minister of Immigration, House of Commons, 29th Mar 2023, [theguardian.com](https://www.theguardian.com)



## Celebrating 50 Years of CLPD

# Fighting Neo-Liberalism Since 1973

*Bryn Griffiths describes how the left continues to oppose neo-liberalism within the Labour Party*

## Wilson's dismissal of public ownership

Vladimir Derer once explained why he helped form the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy (CLPD)<sup>1</sup>: "In 1973 there was a programme and this included a demand for 25 companies to be taken into public ownership. When this was published in June 1973 Wilson said we cannot do anything about it and unilaterally dismissed it... and that was when a number of us came together in June 1973."



## Healey set the scene

Margaret Thatcher is credited with the arrival of neo-liberal Britain, the idea that there can be no alternative to a deregulated market with privatisation, austerity, and a reduced state role in the economy. But perhaps Denis Healey's rush back from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to address the 1976 Labour Party Conference makes him a contender for that dubious crown? As Labour Chancellor, Healey told Conference that he was negotiating with the IMF based on "Labour's existing policies". Amidst boos and calls for him to resign he said: "When I say existing policies I mean things we don't like as well as things we do like. It means sticking to the very painful cuts in public expenditure on which the Government has already decided. It means sticking to a pay policy which enables us... to continue the attack on inflation".

Healey's IMF negotiation resulted in a 5% pay policy that led to what the mainstream media dubbed the 'Winter of Discontent' in 1978-9, brought the post war consensus crashing down, and ushered Thatcher into office.

## Opposition to Benn's alternative strategy

As the eighties started, CLPD support-

ers were becoming more influential on Labour's National Executive Committee (NEC). At the same time, CLPD sought to involve the public sector unions, after they had clashed with Healey over his 5% pay policy.

In 1980 a huge breakthrough was made when Conference decided that the procedure for the election of Leader and Deputy would have a wider franchise. Younger Labour Party members should note two things: firstly, without the left, party members would have no say in the election of our Party's Leader; and secondly, the trade unions did not secure more influence by disaffiliating, a self-defeating protest, but by asserting control over the party they created.

A conference at Wembley to determine the electoral mechanism was booked but the Parliamentary Party (PLP) moved fast, realising Tony Benn was an obvious candidate with his commitment to an Alternative Economic Strategy. The PLP held their own exclusive election and elected Michael Foot, previously of the left but now a willing prisoner of the right, to lead the Labour Party.

The PLP's quick footwork meant that the left fell back on the Deputy Leader post and the Benn for Deputy Campaign was launched. Unfortunately, some key soft left figures (most notably Neil Kinnock) defected, to gift former Chancellor Healey victory by a fraction of a percentage.

The defeat of Benn followed by the defeat of the miners meant that Labour failed to transform its economic policy. By the time Labour returned to government Thatcher was claiming, because of this, that Blair was her greatest achievement.

## Corbyn challenged austerity

Jeremy Corbyn represented a break from neo-liberalism and his leadership campaign was dubbed an anti-austerity movement. A pivotal moment in the leadership campaign was when Jeremy defied Harriet Harman's instruction to abstain on the Tories' Welfare Bill and defied the whip. In 2017 Labour's anti-austerity programme, with John McDonnell's fully-funded manifesto, proved to be

hugely popular and delivered the biggest Labour swing since 1945.

## Starmer's retreat into failed neo-liberalism

After the 'Get Brexit Done' election defeat, Labour has gone full circle and embraced a set of economic mantras of the 1976 Healey vintage.

Starmer and his Shadow Chancellor Rachel Reeves went to Davos to calm the nerves of global finance. Meanwhile Wes Streeting's commitment to National Health Service reform and a role for the private sector even secured the approval of Jacob Rees-Mogg, who took to Twitter to enthuse that "Labour's Wes Streeting has opened the door to a conversation on reform of the NHS" (see also p8 on public ownership).

## Economic policy remains the battleground for trade unions and the left

Starmer's team are undermining local democracy because they know, as the history above shows, economic conflict keeps reviving the left. Vladimir always understood the importance of economic policy but he also understood that to do something about it the trades unions must assert their democratic influence within the party.

Sharon Graham, the General Secretary of Unite understands what the current round of NEC interventions in local selections are about: "What is emerging from Labour is a pattern of behaviour to literally take out any MP or mayor who backs key manifesto demands on the re-nationalisation of energy, action on rampant profiteering and investment in UK steel... These actions by Labour are a major mistake and have serious consequences."

Looking back to how the left made gains in the early 1980s the trades unions must assert themselves at Conference. When Sharon does that, she will have CLPD by her side.

*Bryn Griffiths is a member of Colchester CLP<sup>2</sup> and of the CLPD Executive.*

1. See p18.

2. Writing in a personal capacity

# Public Ownership is Vital to Our Future

*Matt Willgress demands the Party Leadership embraces this clear vote-winner.*

## Water is just the latest outrage

Not a week goes by without more stories about the scandals and problems besetting Britain's private water companies, most notably the possible collapse of Thames Water. 69% supported nationalisation of water when asked by Survation last year, and this is only likely to be increasing. The case for it is crystal clear. Water is a natural monopoly and there is no 'market' for consumers – which is why 90% of the world runs water in public ownership, including Scotland.

We Own It research notes that: "Publicly-owned Scottish Water has spent £72 more per household per year (35% more) than the English water companies. If England had invested at this rate, an extra £28 billion would have gone into the infrastructure to tackle problems like leaks and sewage."

This contrast illustrates how in



water – and many other examples of privatisation – private companies are making obscene profits from what should be public services. These massive sums could be invested to improve services, to give their workers a pay increase, and to lower costs for consumers.

## Labour's leadership should not be back-tracking

Water nationalisation has been established Labour Party policy for a number of years. But just as the situation has made the need for it even more obvious, the front bench has moved away from it, with media reports even stating that the shift is partly due to responding to water companies lobbying Labour to warn them off nationalisation!

As readers will know, this is the case with other parts of the economy too, including energy, where the Party Leadership has made clear its intention to ignore Conference policy. Again, this is nothing to do with popularity – 66% support public ownership of energy.

The crises caused by soaring energy bills and the scandal of raw sewage being dumped into rivers have highlighted the failures of privatisation.

They also give the perfect opportunity for Labour to put forward a vote-winning agenda of a clear commitment to extending public ownership of key utilities and public services, including, but not limited to, energy, water, railways, buses, social care, the Royal Mail, and the NHS.

That Labour's Leadership will not grasp this is all about their growing commitment to the austerity agenda and neo-liberalism (see p7). Our movement must firmly oppose these U-turns at every opportunity.

*Matt Willgress is National Organiser of Labour Assembly Against Austerity and a member of the CLPD Executive. Follow LAAA at [twitter.com/LabourAssembly](https://twitter.com/LabourAssembly)*



# End Early Years Neglect

*Lizzy Ali calls for radical statutory state intervention.*

## The full-blown childcare crisis in Britain

The cost-of-living crisis has had a severe impact, for both parents with young children, and for those who would like to have children but can't afford it. The average age of mothers at the birth of their first child in England and Wales has risen steadily from 23.7 years in 1971 to 29.1 years in 2020. This is unsustainable for the future, and contributes to the problems of an ageing society.



There are clearly several drivers to this, including access to contraception and changing attitudes to marriage, but right now the two biggest factors are the cost of renting or buying property and the lack of affordable quality childcare.

Between 2021 and 2022, 7.7% of private early years providers closed down. More than a third of maintained nursery schools in England have closed since 1980. Changes to the early years funding formula five years ago have accelerated nursery school closures because it is cheaper to employ unqualified staff in other types of early years settings.

A 2021 report from London Mayor Sadiq Khan showed that two thirds of nurseries in London were at risk of closure. Labour's National Policy Fo-

rum (NPF) notes that "under the Tories there are two children for every early years childcare place in England", and according to the children's charity Coram, the average cost of full-time nursery childcare in England for a child under two is now nearly £15,000 per year. As the report notes, there are now "four million children living in poverty".

## Warm words are not enough

Whether or not the final year NPF policy documents shared with CLPs in May will form the basis of the next manifesto remains to be seen. If they do, anyone looking for radical ideas for early years childcare and education is going to be disappointed.

Academic research demonstrates



# Another Summer of Solidarity

*Mick Whelan dismisses the disinformation campaigns against strikers defending their living standards.*

## Persuading our opponents is part of the process

I do like railing against the right-wing media or right-wing politicians, although it's not my default position. At ASLEF we engage with everyone – well, pretty much everyone – because persuading your enemies, or opponents, as well as those somewhere in the middle, is always going to be part of the process. We engage with politicians of all parties. Throughout the COVID pandemic, and especially during lockdown, we worked closely with the government and rail industry to keep essential goods, and key workers, moving around the country.

But that won't stop me here. Because some right-wing politicians – especially those on the extreme right of the Tory Party, the ones that David Cameron referred to as 'swivel-eyed loons' and John Major called 'bastards' – often acting in concert with tame hacks at The Sun, Daily Mail, and Daily Telegraph, broadcasters such as Nick Ferrari at LBC, and everyone at GB News – peddle an über-right agenda, seeing conspiracies around every corner, usually in the face of the facts.

## Our demands are not unreasonable

The Tories and their chums in the media are obsessed with the idea that trade unions – usually, you will note, led by a 'union baron' – are making 'unreasonable demands' and 'trying to wreck the British economy'.

No, we're not. My members at 15 train companies, who have not had a pay increase since 2019, simply want to be able to buy, this year, what they could buy then. The same applies to university lecturers, to schoolteachers, to civil servants, to doctors and nurses, and to care workers. It's not a conspiracy. It's not unreasonable. It's basic arithmetic.

## Inflation is not the fault of working people

Inflation, which has been running north of 10%, for much of the last year, is not the fault of working people. It's the fault of the Tory government. Working people should not pay the price – the super soaraway prices, as one newspaper might like to put it – for government ineptitude.

What has happened is that working people in this country are suffering from 13 years of Tory misrule. What Tan Dhesi, speaking to our annual con-

ference in May, referred to as 'the Lost Decade'. Successive Tory Prime Ministers and Chancellors of the Exchequer – I find it hard to keep up with the revolving door outside 10 and 11 Downing Street – have allowed prices to spiral while wages have been held down.

## Solidarity until we win

That's why hundreds of thousands of workers have been standing up, and taking industrial action, for fair pay and union recognition. That's why we had a summer of solidarity. That's why we are continuing the fight. Until we win.

And, finally, let's nail the lie peddled by economically illiterate politicians and their chums in the right-wing media. A decent pay rise for workers who deserve it has not fuelled inflation in this country. That's down to Boris Johnson, Liz Truss (remember how she tanked the British economy in 45 days), and Rishi Sunak.

The dead hand of the government is trying to sabotage a pay deal, not just in the rail industry, but for workers in the public sector. It's time for the government to stop being a barrier to reaching a fair settlement for people who deserve it.

*Mick Whelan is General Secretary of ASLEF*

the value of nursery education – as opposed to simple childcare – and particularly for disadvantaged children. Yet there is no mention in the NPF document of reversing nursery school closures and cuts to Sure Start, or of restoring previously state-funded day care provision. Nor is there any mention of children whose carers are not working, who currently only qualify for 15 hours' childcare per week.

The NPF document states: "We want a broad and rich set of opportunities for every child in their early years and around the school day, supported by a childcare system that runs from the end of parental leave to the end of primary school". But parents, and particularly younger parents, need more than warm words. Subsequent to this, in a clear attempt to manage down expectations, a Labour spokesperson announced that "An expansion of childcare to all chil-

dren is not Labour's policy", but left the door ajar for 'a means-tested offer'.

## Private provision cannot deliver what's needed

It is clear that the private sector is unable to fulfill the demand in terms of the number of places or the cost and quality of provision for all that need it. The NPF document states: "A Labour government will remove the barriers that prevent local councils from opening more nurseries and childcare provision when parents need it". This is welcome, as is the commitment to breakfast clubs in primary schools, but too much else is vague, along with the tendency to treat 'childcare' and 'education' interchangeably.

The only solution to this developing crisis is substantial state interven-

tion. Childcare should be seen as a right based on need, as it is Scandinavian countries, rather than an 'offer'. These rights should be nailed down, rather than non-statutory, as is the case at the moment. And, as has been seen with youth services, non-statutory services are always the first to be cut.

Nursery provision is, and always has been, a class issue, because the rich will always be able to provide adequately for their children. Nurseries were pioneered by socialists including Robert Owen, Margaret McMillan and Sylvia Pankhurst, and we should be proud of their achievements. Sure Start was a genuine Labour success story that has been trashed by successive Tory governments. There needs to be urgent and radical reform of the entire early years sector.

*Lizzy Ali is Vice Chair of Leyton and Wanstead CLP, and Co-chair of CLPD*

# Defend the Union-Labour Link

*Adrian Weir reminds us of the importance of the union voice in Labour's policy commitments.*

## Unite keeps its voice in the Labour Party

The encouraging result of the Unite Political Fund ballot was that 91% of members who voted wanted to keep the Fund. In one of the most politics-averse big unions, members recognised the need to maintain a political voice.

The positive Unite result was quickly followed by delegates at the Unite Rules Conference decisively throwing out rule amendments, seemingly emanating from the Socialist Party, which would have allowed the union to support candidates in public elections other than those of the Labour Party. Had the amendments been carried and acted upon then expulsion from the Labour Party would have been automatic.

## Biased Tory legislation

Unite's Political Fund ballot result reminds us of the biased framing of the 1984 Tory anti-union law, which requires unions to hold a decennial ballot to maintain a Fund. This is a law aimed solely at the unions and through them Labour; corporations

don't have to ballot shareholders over political donations.

## Unions have an important seat at the table

It is the affiliated unions' institutional relationship with Labour that is so important. Individual members of the Party may feel their role has been reduced to leafleting, stuffing envelopes, and knocking on doors, but our affiliated unions collectively have important access to the Party's two policy-making forums: the National Policy Forum (NPF) and Annual Conference.

Over and above the NPF and Conference, our affiliated unions have seats at the table at the Clause V meeting that will draw up Labour's Manifesto for the 2024 General Election, when unions will want to make their voices heard.

## Defending Labour's Employment Rights Green Paper

At the Clause V meeting affiliated unions will want to argue for the inclusion of proposals set out in Labour's Employment Rights Green Paper – *A New Deal for Working People*. Most importantly the Green Paper says that "Labour is committed to repealing anti-trade union legislation... in order to remove unnecessary restrictions on trade union

activity." This is even more important after the passing into law of the Strikes (Minimum Service Levels) Act.

However, at the NPF in July (see p20) there was a move backwards by the Leadership on its employment rights commitments. According to the Financial Times the retrenchments included no single status of "worker" which would have been particularly helpful in dealing with bogus self-employment. There is also no commitment to sectoral collective bargaining beyond the care sector. It is the collapse of sector-wide collective bargaining that is the root cause of the collapse of working class incomes and living standards under neo-liberal Tory policies.

Hopefully the push back against the Leadership will be articulated at the TUC Congress in September and taken to Party Conference in October, probably the last before the General Election. With participation in the Clause V meeting only available to our affiliated unions, this remains an essential part of the campaign for trade union freedoms.

*Adrian Weir is the TULO Officer at Hornsey & Wood Green CLP and the Assistant Secretary of the Campaign for Trade Union Freedom. Follow on X (Twitter): @AMJWeir and @ctufevents.*

# Labour Needs a Party Ombudsperson

## Redress for poor administration

The need for a Party ombudsperson is an idea whose time has come. Such a post would deal with complaints from ordinary members about maladministration and would be independent from both the NEC and, more importantly, the General Secretary.

While the ombudsperson's role would not impinge on disciplinary cases (covered by a separate section of the Rule Book), members, affiliates, and party units which have suffered from poor administrative processes would have the right to redress, or at least an examination of the circumstances.

This could prove necessary should a General Secretary choose to ignore the Rule Book. The courts have already indicated that, as a private

organisation, the Labour Party is responsible for its own decision-making and they are reluctant to rule on internal Party matters. In situations where the courts are prepared to consider a case, this can prove exceedingly expensive for a Party member to pursue. Currently, this leaves most ordinary members with nowhere to go when their rights have been ignored or transgressed.

## A litany of factional abuse

Parliamentary and Mayoral selections are being conducted outside the Party's normal procedures. Sitting candidates with a legitimate claim to be considered for a new seat are left off longlists, alienating and demoralising local members and affiliates. CLPs are left in 'special measures' for unreasonably long periods or even unfairly

placed there in the first place. Labour Groups on local authorities are arbitrarily placed under investigation by NEC Campaign Improvement Boards, with democratically-elected Labour Leaders removed and NEC-preferred candidates imposed. Following recent local elections, resulting in more hung councils, the NEC has approved some bizarre political coalitions without local consultation.

And no-one needs to be reminded of members in Islington North being denied the right to choose their Parliamentary candidate.

## Accountable to Conference

An ombudsperson should be elected by Annual Conference for a three-year renewable term. This process would

*(cont. on next page)*

# What Role for Progressive Jews in the Party?

*Marion Roberts highlights the importance of the NEC and NCC in mitigating the worst excesses of the Party machinery.*

## A continuing wave of expulsions

It has now become a legitimate question to ask whether there is any role for progressive Jews in the Labour Party. Starmer's efforts to "rip antisemitism out by its roots" have led to a wave of resignations, suspensions, and expulsions of members, Jewish or not, who are critical of Zionism's political ideology and of the actions of the Israeli state in its oppression of Palestinians. Martin Forde KC had the courage to call out factionalism and to assert the weaponisation of antisemitism (AS).<sup>1</sup> Unsurprisingly his report has been buried, kicked into the long grass of endless NEC sub-committees with no publicity given to its findings.<sup>2</sup>

Over the last three years, internal democracy in the Party has been dispensed with when the Leadership finds it convenient to do so. Members are not allowed to discuss any aspect of disciplinary processes at Party meetings, nor to protest at the shameful and egregiously awful



***"Accusations of AS and of undermining the Party's ability to fight racism have been deployed, regardless of evidence or rationality"***

treatment of our former Leader, Jeremy Corbyn. Accusations of AS and of undermining the Party's ability to fight racism have been deployed, regardless of evidence or rationality. Party members with a proud history of standing up for the oppressed black majority in South Africa, and of supporting the rights of Catholics in Northern Ireland have been disciplined as racists. Principles of natural justice have been overturned, with members accused of breaking rules which weren't actually in place when the supposed offence took place.

## Cognitive dissonance re Israel and Palestine

These anti-democratic measures have helped lead the Party into a state of cognitive dissonance with regard to Israel and Palestine. Conference has passed motions in 2018, 2019, and 2021 in support of Palestinian rights and criticising breaches of international law. Conference noted "the unequivocal 2021 reports by B'Tselem and Human Rights Watch that conclude unequivocally that Israel is practising the crime of Apartheid as defined by the UN". Yet under Starmer's Leadership MPs have offered unwavering friendship to the current Israeli government, with barely the mildest of concerns ex-

pressed about its ministers from far-right political parties.

## The role of the left on the NEC and NCC

The Party machinery does offer some ways in which principles of natural justice and democratic process can be asserted. Left members of the National Executive Committee (NEC) can raise their voices to affirm democratic procedures and principles in general, and to raise specific objections. Most recently these have been about the interpretation of rules and a lack of progress on appeals against expulsion. The National Constitutional Committee (NCC) hears such appeals and has a role to play in determining fairness and objectivity, and to mitigate the most extreme impacts on individual Party members. This will only be possible if we elect members who are committed to correcting any abuses of power or process.

I am standing on the CLGA<sup>3</sup> slate for the NCC and these are my personal views. The slate includes Dave Levy, Harry Stratton, Jabran Husain and Annabelle Harle. We stand for democracy and justice. Please support us.

*Marion Roberts is a member of Camberwell & Peckham CLP, the Jewish Voice for Labour Executive, and the CLPD Executive.*

1. [labour.org.uk/fordereport](https://labour.org.uk/fordereport)

2. See p12.

3. Centre Left Grassroots Alliance, see p15.

*(Ombudsperson, cont. from p10)*

remove the potential conflict of interest with an NEC-appointed candidate.

While CLPD has ensured the Party has made democratic advances in the past 50 years, there is still a way to go to become the democratic socialist party of the Rule Book and we must continue on that path. Establishment of an accountable ombudsperson would be the next step on that path.

A Labour Party ombudsperson is one of the policies campaigned for by CLPD (see p14).



## Bitebacks

"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."

**Keir Starmer**, Feb 2020

## "Quote Unquote"

"Deeply concerning news of the Israeli military's attack on Jenin. Once again we see why our Government must not only condemn such attacks but use its weight to help bring about an end to the illegal occupation of Palestine including by a suspension of all UK arms sales to Israel."

**Richard Burgon**, Labour MP for Leeds East, 3rd Jul 2023, @RichardBurgon



# Don't forget Forde

*Rachel Garnham urges that the issues raised by Forde still need to be addressed.*

## A reminder of the key issues

It is now over a year since the Forde Report was published, and more than three since the 'leaked report' revealed huge issues of fac-



tionalism, misogyny, and racism in the Labour Party, as well as pointing to potential electoral malpractice with unapproved resources diverted during the 2017 general election. Both reports highlighted deep flaws in the Party's disciplinary process, and the serious efforts under the Leadership of Jeremy Corbyn and Jennie Formby to resolve these issues. Comrades could be forgiven for believing things have now become far worse.

As a reminder, there were four important elements of the Forde Report, with accompanying recommendations:

■ The first relates to the 'monoculture' of Labour's workplaces and the resulting factionalism that we see, from Labour's national and regional offices, as evidenced in the Report. Members have experienced this for decades, and continue to do so. Certainly reports from Conference suggested that ballot papers may have been distributed factionally and delegates reported being advised on voting by staff. Reports also suggest that Labour's NEC has rejected proposals for a more 'Civil Service' style approach to staffing. So we can expect more of the same, hence CLPD's suggested rule change on the issue.

■ The second element relates to the 'Ergon House project', and the specific undermining of efforts by the Leadership during the 2017 General Election for Labour to win more seats. This part of the Report was genuinely shocking, with Forde finding that funds were siphoned off, outside of usual controls, to shore up seats of MPs opposed to Corbyn.

■ The third element of the Report shone a spotlight on the racism

and sexism that appears to pervade Labour workplaces, and the Party more broadly. This appeared both overt and embedded institutionally through unfair recruitment practices. The introduction and decline of the Community Organising Unit is noted under the section on factionalism, but it was most notable as an attempt to diversify the staff base to better represent the communities Labour seeks to serve – progress dismantled under the current Leadership.

■ The fourth element drawn out by the Forde Report was the completely dysfunctional complaints process inherited by Corbyn's Leadership and his effort, with Jennie Formby, to turn that around. The use of the disciplinary process to undermine the democratic process is detailed most fully for the exclusion of Jeremy Corbyn supporters from voting in the 2015 and 2016 Leadership contests. The lack of engagement with Jewish Voice for Labour and issues with the antisemitism training introduced were also noted as problems.

## Forde remains unhappy with Labour's response

Head Office may claim to have taken on board many of the recommendations, and also suggests reforms undertaken following the EHRC report supercede Forde's proposals. However it's clear that Martin Forde himself has not been happy with the Party's response. And for us as grassroots members, the situation in the Party appears worse than ever.

Selections demonstrate pure factionalism in excluding excellent, union-backed potential candidates from shortlists, while candidates who appear hand-picked by Head Office, often white and male, are given an easy ride. The downgrading of Labour Women's Organisation and the failure to implement structures, agreed by Conference, for Disabled, and Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic members, alongside the treatment of Diane Abbott MP and others, show the value that is actually placed on a diverse membership and promoting equality. The disciplinary process is perceived as purely a factional means of ridding the Party

of left members, and clearly lacks the confidence of large sections of the membership.

With rules ignored and representatives already raising issues at every available opportunity, it is difficult to make progress. However, we must continue to remind our elected representatives of the issues raised by Forde and to urge that these are taken seriously and addressed, not left to gather dust.

*Rachel Garnham is Co-Chair of CLPD and a member of the NPF.*

## "Quote Unquote"

"The big difference between the current environment and previous downturns is the strength of the labour market... After 40 years in which the pendulum swung firmly away from labour towards capital, it may be no bad thing that it is beginning to move back... If companies have to invest more in their employees at some cost to their margins, but society in aggregate is better off, that's not a bad outcome."

**Richard Buxton**, Investment Manager, The Sunday Times

## "Quote Unquote"

"The Tories' anti-strike bill is an attack on human rights and civil liberties, which the trade union movement will oppose in the courts, in parliament, and in the workplace."

**Mick Lynch**, General Secretary, RMT, 11th Jan 2023, Guardian

# Wages Not Weapons

*Carol Turner outlines how high military spending constrains protection of the public sector.*

## Sunak's dishonest platitudes

Since he took office in October last year, Rishi Sunak has been promising an end to the cost-of-living crisis is on the horizon. He 'gets it' when working people complain about rising grocery bills and mortgage costs; he's 'totally on it' in the fight against inflation.



Sunak's dishonest platitudes defy economic reality. In the third quarter of 2023, core inflation was the highest of any G7 country and rising, the Bank of England is putting up interest rates, and mortgage repayments are going up.

UK workers are in the midst of the longest pay freeze in two hundred years according to the TUC.<sup>1</sup> Its senior economist Geoff Tily reports that real wages recovered faster during the Great Depression and after the Second World War. Britain is experiencing the biggest strike wave for decades and many wage claims remain unsettled. Is it any wonder strikes are continuing?

## Militarisation is the elephant in the room

The Labour front bench continues to attack the Tories over Britain's poor economic performance, and rightly so. But there's an elephant in the room: they have steadfastly refused to face up to the increasing cost of militarisation.

UK military spending is the highest in Europe and the fourth highest in the world as a percentage of Gross Domestic Product (GDP).<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, Chancellor Jeremy Hunt announced in his Spring Budget Statement that the Ministry of Defence (MoD) budget would go up by an inflation-proofed £5bn in the next two years, with a total increase of £11bn over the next 5 years. Hunt told the House of Commons: "A £5bn package of funding for the Ministry of Defence,

an additional £2bn next year, and £3bn the year after... I confirm that we'll add a total of £11bn to our defence budget over the next 5 years, and it will be nearly 2.25% of GDP by 2025. We were the first large European country to commit 2% of GDP for defence and we will now raise that to 2.5% as soon as fiscal and economic circumstances allow."

This is madness – and not only on economic grounds. The political and military establishment is attempting to protect and maintain its place in the international order by allowing US nuclear weapons to return to Britain, accepting the costs of new undertakings such as the AUKUS treaty and the UK-Japan military agreement, not to mention talking up the war in Ukraine instead of helping to broker peace talks. These account for the lion's share of the increased MoD budget. All of them come in addition to the ongoing costs of replacing Trident.

At the same time as Hunt was announcing the Spring Budget, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) was pointing out that the UK was the worst performing of the G7 economies. It is forecast to shrink by 0.3% by the end of 2023 and on course to be the worst performing of all G20 economies.<sup>3</sup> The Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) concurred with the view that the UK economy would shrink, anticipating that real pay will fall by 1% this year.<sup>4</sup>

Labour's response to the announcement of a military spending hike was lamentable. Keir Starmer responded to the MoD increases with one sentence: "We will look carefully at details of the military spending announcement," he said, "and we will support it".

## War and weapons solve nothing

None of the problems facing Britain can be resolved by war or weapons. Increasing the MoD's budget does nothing to protect the UK from the economic and social challenges this country faces. Instead, it helps build up growing tensions with China and Russia, and – in the case of the Ukraine



war – brings the world closer to nuclear war than it's ever been.

Meanwhile, the UK's disproportionately high military budget is depriving the NHS and other public services of vital resources. If Labour comes to office at the next General Election we will confront a damaged economy, reduced living standards, weakened public services, and inaction on climate change.

Labour CND believes these are the crucial issues an in-coming Labour government must prioritise. We call for the next Labour government to return the defence budget to its previous level of 2% or below to help fund the different choices needed to rebuild Britain. Join our call for the Labour Party to commit to:

- Increasing investment and promoting economic growth;
- Improving public services;
- Providing an emergency support package to off-set the cost-of-living crisis; and
- Taking effective action to tackle climate change.

*Carol Turner is a member of Labour CND and the CLPD Executive.*

1. TUC, 17-year wage squeeze the worst in two hundred years, 11th May 2016 and Budget 2023 – was that it?, 15th March 2023

2. SIPRI, the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, Trends in World Military Expenditure 2022 bases its calculations on 2021 figures. Given the UK's commitment to AUKUS, the Ukraine war, and other military developments since then, these figures are likely to have increased.

3. IMF World Economic Outlook: A Rocky Recovery, 11th April 2023, forecasts that the UK economy will shrink by 0.3%, compared to US and Euro-area growth of 1.6% and 0.8% respectively in 2023.

4. Office of Budget Responsibility (OBR) Economic and fiscal outlook, 15th March 2023, concurs with the IMF, predicting a 0.2% decline in the UK economy in 2023. It anticipates that real pay will not reach its 2008 level until 2026.

# US Adds Theft to Aggression Against Venezuela

*Francisco Dominguez calls for the return of Venezuela's stolen assets*

## US decline in Latin America

Whilst the world economy's dynamics is dominated by a growing number of nations de-dollarising their foreign trade, Latin America has undergone a sharp left shift with the election of Lula as Brazil's president. The former accelerates US decline and the latter reduces, but does not eradicate, its ability to intervene in Latin America. US decline intensifies its aggressiveness and warmongering in a dangerous effort to stop the inexorable rise of a multi-polar world.



## The Bogota conference on Venezuela

Colombia's President Gustavo Petro called an International Conference on the Political Process in Venezuela in Bogota on 25th April, attended by official representatives from 20 nations – including the US, Brazil, the EU, the UK, Mexico, France, Germany, Portugal, Chile, Bolivia, and others, as well as a delegation from the Unitarian Platform, the extreme right-wing political coalition to which Juan Guaidó belongs although he was not invited.

The central issue discussed in Bogota was how to make progress after the Dialogue talks in Mexico with the Maduro government became jammed. This was due to the US' non-fulfilment of the agreement to return the illegally-retained US\$3.2bn to Venezuela, to be used to finance health, education, and public services.

The Bogota conference produced interesting though unsatisfactory results: it linked the 'gradual lifting' of sanctions against Venezuela to 'progress' made in US-suggested reforms of its electoral system. President Maduro's government stated that to resume the Mexico talks there was "the need to lift each and every one of the unilateral, illegal, and harmful coercive measures contravening international law that constitute an aggression against the entire Venezuelan

population and that hinder the development of the economic and social life of the country." The US and its EU accomplices have slapped 927 illegal sanctions on Venezuela.

## Venezuela demands the return of its assets

Well over US\$8bn that belong to the Venezuelan people, notably 31 tons of gold held in the Bank of England, are illegally retained by various international financial institutions.

The Venezuelan government demands the return of all the assets belonging to the Venezuelan state, illegally retained by foreign countries and financial institutions, and the immediate release of Venezuelan diplomat Alex Saab, unjustly imprisoned in the US. US and EU sanctions against the people of Venezuela are not only illegal in international law but have also been deliberately harmful: as a consequence since 2015, the country has lost US\$350bn.

Venezuela's actual National Assembly unanimously passed a law for the protection of assets abroad (16th May 2023). This law involves applying severe sanctions against individuals involved in the dispossession of property and assets that belong to Venezuela, including law firms and lobbyists that have participated in the theft of Venezuelan assets.

Venezuela's Colombia-based petrochemical company Monmeros, illegally confiscated under the presidency of Ivan Duque, was returned to Maduro's government by President Petro.

## Continuing US aggression

The US response has been swift and nasty. The US Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) issued General License 42 'authorising' deputies of the extinct National Assembly, whose mandate ended in 2020, to carry out a sinister plan to sell CITGO (a US-based Venezuelan company that owns three oil refineries and over 10,000 gasoline stations in the US). President Maduro accurately described it as "one of the greatest robberies that has been committed against any nation in the world".

In December 2022 the opposition's parallel government removed Guaidó

as 'interim president', dissolved his 'government' and appointed a commission to 'govern' Venezuela's illegally seized assets. Farcically, the Biden administration recognises this extinct and illegal 'assembly'. As does the slavishly loyal Tory government. Outrageously, the US State Dept granted ex-Venezuelan MP Dinorah Figueroa access to US bank accounts with millions of illegally frozen dollars that belong to Venezuela.

## Lift all sanctions now!

The battle for the return to Venezuela of the gold in the Bank of England, \$bns held or frozen in US and European banks and CITGO, and all assets illegally retained or confiscated, can be won. Our solidarity for justice to prevail and Venezuela's sovereignty be respected must be intensified. Join the Venezuela Solidarity Campaign. Lift all sanctions now!

*Dr Francisco Dominguez is an academic specialist on Latin America and Secretary of the Venezuela Solidarity Campaign: venezuelasolidarity.co.uk*

## Celebrating 50 Years

### CLPD Campaigns For:

- A real policy-making Annual Conference;
- An effective and accountable NEC;
- The defence of the Trade Union link (see p10);
- 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 (see p10);
- A clear jobs and growth policy in sharp opposition to the Tories and austerity;
- And justice for Jeremy Corbyn.



# Australia: a Perspective on the ALP

*Dorothy Macedo examines the first year of the Albanese government*

## A well-timed visit

I spent five weeks in Australia, specifically in Western Australia, earlier this year. This doesn't make me an expert on Australian politics, but I offer some insights.



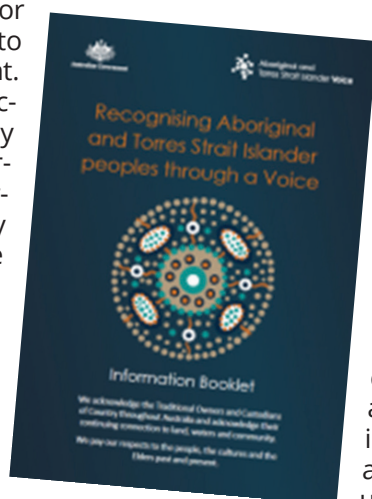
I arrived on 17th March which was auspicious timing as the Australian Labor Party (ALP) victory in the state election in New South Wales on 25th March meant that every state bar Tasmania now had a Labor government in addition to the federal government. Because Australian elections are by STV, many elections result in arrangements with minority parties, principally but not exclusively the Greens.

Then on 1st April the ALP also won a federal by-election in a suburb of Melbourne, Victoria, caused by the resignation of the opposition MP. This was a stunning event as no governing party had won a by-election from the opposition since 1920. The win increased

the Albanese government's majority from one to two.

## Delivering policies on a slender majority

Since becoming Prime Minister in May 2022, Anthony Albanese has not let the slender federal government majority prevent the implementation of key election promises. These include: emission reduction targets of 43% by 2030 with a target of net zero by 2050; the creation of an anti-corruption commission; better childcare provision; and improved paid parental leave. Power bills have also been kept down by government intervention in the energy market, along with targeted relief.



The government's housing plans have been less successful, held up by opposition, particularly from the Greens. Meanwhile its policy of improving relations with China has been controversial. And at an ALP branch meeting I attended in Perth a motion was passed unanimously which criticised federal support for AUKUS<sup>1</sup>, a policy inherited from the previous administration.

***"The ALP is doing many of the things we'd want to see a social democratic government do, but with the usual timidity on international issues"***

## Giving voice to the First Peoples

A key policy will be the referendum later this year known as The Voice<sup>2</sup>. This would enshrine in the constitution the right of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to make representations to parliament on matters relating to them. This would need to pass in every state to become law.

I was struck by the fact that acknowledgment of the position of the First Peoples is noted prominently, naming the original occupants of the land in public buildings such as hotels, the hospital, and the museum. When we visited the Mint to see a demonstration of gold smelting, the operative began the presentation with a statement honouring the tribes whose land we were on.

It may seem a small measure to attempt to redress the injustices of the past, but the opposition Liberal Party has decided to oppose it. Despite recent poor election results they seem wedded to the culture wars slogans familiar from the right in Britain and the US, but it remains to be seen whether this will improve or harm their position.

## A good start

The ALP is doing many of the things we'd want to see a social democratic government do, but with the usual timidity on international issues. Operating with a tiny majority, it often needs to elicit support from Greens and others and that doesn't always materialise.

*Dorothy Macedo is a member of Worthing West CLP and the CLPD Executive*

1. The trilateral security pact between Australia, the UK, and the US.

2. Referendum wording: 'A proposed law to alter the Constitution to recognise the First Peoples of Australia by establishing an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice. Do you approve this proposed alteration?'

## The Centre Left Grassroots Alliance

The Centre Left Grassroots Alliance (CLGA) has been in operation for 25 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, including its national Women's committees.

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

The CLGA includes CLPD, Momentum, Campaign for Socialism, Grassroots Black Left, Labour Black Socialists, 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.

# Why I Voted Against the NEC Motion to Block Corbyn's Candidacy

*Ann Black addresses the dishonesty of the NEC decision.*

## A fundamentally dishonest motion

My first reaction to the Jeremy Corbyn motion was that it was fundamentally dishonest, because the reasons given for blocking his candidacy were not the real reasons. As one member wrote: "Whilst I wouldn't consider myself a supporter of Jeremy Corbyn, I am concerned about the wording of this motion... it references Jeremy Corbyn's electoral performance as grounds to prevent him from re-standing as the Labour candidate in Islington North. This sets a dangerous precedent as Jeremy is not unique in having led the Labour Party to poor General Election results. I would instead ask the [National Executive Committee] to consider rewriting a similar motion citing Jeremy's unacceptable response to the EHRC report on antisemitism."



That analysis was reinforced at the NEC, where only 10% of contributions related to the words actually before us.

## The actual complaints vs a list of positives

Most of the anger dated from Corbyn's 2020 post: "One antisemite is one too many, but the scale of the problem was also dramatically overstated for political reasons by our opponents inside and outside the party, as well as by much of the media". At the very moment that Keir Starmer was responding to the Equalities and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) report on behalf of the Labour party. That post has never been regretted or removed, despite various bridge-building attempts, and continues to rankle.

Others added that serial disloyalty, with 400 votes against the whip under successive Leaders, could not expect loyalty in return. Mixing metaphors,

a broad church was a two-way street, and many had felt unwelcome under Corbyn's rule.

In favour of Corbyn, members highlighted his vision of a just society, the gains in the 2017 election, and his attraction among young people. Membership is still double the level of the Brown/Miliband years. An independent candidacy would be politically damaging, as when Tony Blair blocked Ken Livingstone in 2000, and party unity would be further fractured.

## The need to apply the same standards

Many messages demanded the democratic rights of local members to choose their own candidates and reminded Starmer of his previous support for the principle. However, that right has never been unconstrained.

***"The Jeremy Corbyn motion was fundamentally dishonest, because the reasons given for blocking his candidacy were not the real reasons"***

The NEC has removed candidates, notoriously Liz Davies in 1995, and in the current round of selections, a number of applicants have been excluded after due diligence checks. I would have preferred to take this route and evaluate Corbyn's actions against the same standard as other candidates, rather than make this a special case.

I read and took seriously all the comments that I received, including this: "His failure to acknowledge the EHRC ruling would lose us the 300,000 Jewish voters we have regained, them having believed Labour to be their natural home. Getting Labour mired in antisemitism (AS) was inevitable given the ammunition handed to our opponents. We now have a chance to win, let's not throw it away." But the motion made no reference to the EHRC or AS. In the end, I stuck to the words, where the named offence was losing the 2019 election, and voted against it.

## Losing is a collective failure

Leadership is a powerful factor in electoral success – the test of whether voters can see Michael Foot or Neil Kinnock or Ed Miliband or Jeremy Corbyn or Keir Starmer, entering No 10 Downing Street as Prime Minister. But losing is a collective failure. Leaving out the background lays open the possibility of barring other MPs if the NEC decides that the party's interests are not well served by their candidacy. And of future Leaders being removed for failing to win.

## Nothing is forever

Finally, a word of caution. In moving the motion, Starmer assured us that the party had irrevocably changed. Since Tony Blair said "we ran for office as New Labour, we will govern as New Labour", I've been through several regime changes, and however high our hopes, nothing in politics is forever.

The motion was carried by 22 votes to 12, with a few abstentions.

*Ann Black is a member of the NEC and former Chair of the National Policy Forum. Republished from LabourList, 29th Mar 2023, labourlist.org*

## "Quote Unquote"

**"Whatever happened to the Keir Starmer who stood for Leader describing Jeremy Corbyn as 'a colleague and a friend' who wanted to 'build on that legacy'? Many Labour members are clear that it was all a lie. Perhaps the biggest problem for Starmer will come if it begins to resonate with the public that he says one thing before an election and another thing afterwards."**

**Andrew Fisher**, former director of policy for the Labour Party, 28th Mar 2023, inews.co.uk

## Celebrating 50 Years of CLPD

# Don't Let the Front Bench Ride Roughshod over Candidates and Policies

*Rachel Garnham describes how democracy is an essential ingredient of a healthy party.*

## Attacks on democratic candidate selections...

Starmers' offensive on Labour Party democracy have plumbed some new depths this year, including Jamie Driscoll's exclusion from the longlist for North East Mayor despite (or perhaps because of) an impressive track record as a Labour Mayor and strong support in the region, allegedly for appearing alongside one of Britain's most famous film directors discussing his films. And on top of this some new 'legal' advice appears designed to stop members even discussing the exclusion for no apparent reason at all, other than a lack of being able to win the political argument and a tendency to authoritarianism.



Meanwhile in Merthyr Tydfil and Upper Cynon, a bizarrely constructed super-quick online selection, with allegations of a whole batch of irregularities, has apparently done its job in excluding current Cynon Valley MP Beth Winter – one of the very best MPs to join parliament in 2019 who's doing a brilliant job while also leading on key issues, such as the outrageous treatment of staff at a national level in higher education (see p22).

These new outrages come on top of the ongoing suspension of the whip from Jeremy Corbyn and Diane Abbott (see pp1, 2), the removal of excellent union-backed candidates from parliamentary shortlists, failure to implement some of the key recommendations of the Forde report (see p12), an apparently non-existent appeals process for those unfairly expelled, and the flagrant ignoring of the Rule Book in the lack of implementation of disabled and BAME members' structures, alongside a running down of Labour's Women's organisation.

## ...and on democratically-decided policies

On top of this, Labour's front bench is ignoring its democratically-agreed policies, which will do it no favours in upcoming by-elections and a future General Election – and means it does not have the transformative policies needed in government to improve people's lives and start to undo years of Tory neglect and mismanagement.

Earlier this year, Rachel Reeves rowed back from an already minimal pledge of £28bn a year investment in green jobs and industry. This is absolutely essential to tackling the existential threat of climate change, as well as to grow the economy. Reeves' arguments are woeful. Wes Streeting is insistent that the private sector provides solutions to the crisis in the NHS, when what is needed is proper investment, an end to privatisation, and a decent pay rise for NHS workers. And while Labour is rightly on the attack about water companies' under-investment causing sewage to be pumped into our waterways, the front bench is ideologically opposed to the obvious and necessary solution: re-nationalisation.

This is why left members of Labour's National Policy Forum (NPF) worked together to try to ensure members' and trade unions' voices are heard and that Conference policy is adhered to, when the NPF met in Nottingham in July (see p20). We

submitted a host of amendments to the draft document to strengthen Labour's policies on such issues as ending private sector involvement in the NHS, reversing academisation of schools, ending tuition fees, building more council housing, as well as repealing regressive Tory legislation on migration and asylum rights, voter ID, and the right to protest. While the odds are stacked against us in this deeply undemocratic process, we continue to demand that common sense prevails on these key policies.

## Enabling members is essential

Enabling members – individually and collectively through trade unions and socialist societies – to select candidates and make policy is not just right in principle (and in the Rule Book), it is essential to a healthy, vibrant and inspiring Party. It ensures we draw on the strengths and knowledge of hundreds of thousands of people who are in touch with the hopes, needs and concerns of their communities. It should be an enormous strength – not the millstone it is apparently seen as. Without democracy, the Party becomes sclerotic and out of touch. Members' voices must be heard.

*Rachel Garnham is Co-Chair of CLPD and a member of the NPF.*

*Originally published by Labour Outlook: [labouroutlook.org](http://labouroutlook.org)*

## "Quote Unquote"

"This is the moment of maximum leverage for the union where we can hold Labour to account. Now cannot be the time to walk away. We would be weakening our own arm. It would be the worst time to leave the Labour Party when they

are in touching distance of power, if we leave we wouldn't influence that power. Labour must be Labour and the union must push them into that position, we must make them take different choices. We will not make the same mistakes of the past – there will be no blank cheques for Labour until we see tangible results."

**Sharon Graham**, Unite General Secretary, 10th Jul 2023



## Celebrating 50 Years of CLPD

# The Ground-breaking Work of Vladimir Derer

*Barry Rodin pays tribute to the ethos and strategies of CLPD founder Vladimir Derer (1919-2014).*

CLPD owes much of its success over the past 50 years to the long standing dedication and endeavours of many comrades in the Labour Party. For over three decades Vladimir Derer, one of CLPD's founders in 1973 (see p7), was an important leader and innovative strategist in the campaign to make the Labour Party more democratic and accountable to its members.



## Early years

Vladimir was born in Czechoslovakia. His father Ivan, a lawyer, was a Social Democrat Minister who served in various governments, including as Minister of Education and Minister of Justice, up to the 1938 Munich Pact. Vladimir escaped Czechoslovakia in the late 1930s to live in Britain.

During the war Vladimir initially worked in an armaments factory then joined the army, becoming an interpreter in prisoner of war camps. Following the war Vladimir worked as a tourist guide, leading tours to Eastern Europe and also studied at the London School of Economics. It was there that Vladimir met his future wife Vera, a psychiatric social worker who later became a lecturer in sociology. They married in 1951. Vera also contributed greatly to CLPD.

## A major contribution to democratic reforms

Vladimir and Vera joined the Labour Party in 1964. In the years that followed they became increasingly disillusioned in the way the Leadership and Labour Government operated (see also p7).

Vladimir played a vital role as CLPD Secretary in achieving major democratic reforms such as mandatory selection of MPs in 1980, election of

Leader in 1981, and winning greater representation for women and black members within the Party. The Derers' home in Golders Green became a centre of political activity – including meetings, planning, printing and administration to further the campaign, which was supported by hundreds of Labour Party activists in CLPs and affiliated trade unions throughout the country.

An important pillar of Vladimir's strategy was to blend representation and participation, whereby those elected (eg MPs and councillors) were to be transformed into effectively being a delegate of party members, focusing on implementing the manifesto on which they had been elected.

Tactics from the outset were primarily based on producing model constitutional rule changes and motions, and then campaigning nationwide for CLP branches and general meetings to support these and submit them to be voted on at Annual Conference, the Party's sovereign policy-making body.

## A united left within the Party's broad church

Although Vladimir firmly believed in socialist principles, he also exercised pragmatism and compromise when necessary to further the long-term strategy of the Labour Party becoming

a transformative movement based on grassroots democracy, inclusiveness, and diversity. This involved striving for a united left and reaching out to members in the centre of the Party and affiliated trade unions when their support was critical for obtaining sufficient support for key reforms or elections.

For instance, Vladimir Derer had a central role in setting up the successful Centre Left Grassroots Alliance (CLGA, see p15) of centre left and left groups and organisations in the Labour Party. This alliance has played a major role in electing left candidates to key posts such as the National Executive Committee (NEC).

## An enduring legacy

After over 30 years of tireless work in the Campaign, in 2005 the Derers wound down their involvement, although Vladimir retained the role of Political Secretary.

Vladimir had a major role in achieving reforms on the governance of parties that are taken for granted today. He believed in 'socialism from below' in the Labour Party. In collaboration with Tony Benn and other leading left activists in the Labour Party, he moulded the resurgence of the radical left in the 1970s and early 1980s, showing the way for future democratic advances such as those achieved in the recent Corbyn years.

*Barry Rodin is Orpington CLP Disability Officer and a member of the CLPD Executive.*



## Conference 2023 More Articles Online

Campaign Briefing and many other articles are available on the CLPD website at [www.clpd.org](http://www.clpd.org) – including the model motions and rule changes CLPD encouraged CLPs to submit to Conference 2023.

## Women's Conference 2023

# Swimming in Treacle

*Jean Crocker describes the obstacles being battled by members of Women's CAC and NWC.*

### Hoping to return to the vibrant 2019 stand-alone event

In the mid-2010s Women's Conference was much reduced from that in the 1980s, and included 'showcased' speeches. CLP representatives on the new Women's Conference Arrangements Committee (Women's CAC) worked hard for a democratic Conference, for example for motions to be voted on in 2018. It often seemed like wading in treacle, but the 2019 two-day stand-alone event in Telford was vibrant, diverse and well-attended; women spoke passionately from their own experience, and there was a constant buzz of networking. We were online during the pandemic, so for 2023 we hoped for a return to the Telford experience, but this time it has felt like actually swimming in treacle.



### Battling a series of difficulties

Women's CAC and National Women's Committee (NWC) argued for a stand-alone event, but it is back to one day

before Labour Conference. With considerable staff turnover and no dedicated National Women's Officer, there were no meetings at first. The CLP representatives discussed priorities, which Women's CAC later agreed (see Box 1). But little has fed into Conference planning, although we do have the Friday welcome reception, and we hope other early positive signs will still bear fruit.

NWC "oversee the overall direction of Annual Labour Party Women's Conference", so Women's CAC asked for a meeting in June but was told it wasn't needed because NWC "does not have a formal role in conference planning" for Women's CAC to feed into. CLP representatives on the two committees are meeting informally. NWC need more meetings (currently 4 x 2 hours per year) and resources.

Women's CAC were not consulted on the timetable of events leading up to Conference, as should happen by rule. As a consequence, compositing is online soon after the priorities ballot, like last year, when many delegates could not attend at short notice because of work or childcare. We tried to get it changed, but could only get the assurance that compositing would be in the evening. Also, Women's CAC have little time to read the motions, which come in Thursday, with our meeting on Friday. Some of us are preparing for no sleep on Thursday night! We have asked to receive motions that

come in early. The office proposes rulings, which can be very useful, but it is the duty of elected members to read the motions themselves and make considered, fair decisions.

On a positive note, we said it was hard to find the Conference on the website, and it is now immediately visible!

### Videos to help navigate Conference

In line with our election statements, the CLP representatives decided to produce videos, for example on writing motions which don't fall foul of the rules, and on what a delegate does, to help women avoid pitfalls and enjoy participating. Union colleagues have joined us, we have held additional informal meetings, and have had good staff support. To ensure that we ourselves are fully informed, we had a useful meeting with the Chair of Labour Conference CAC, learning for example that there are no unstated conventions when it comes to motions being in order (for tips on the latter, see Box 3). We also agreed wording for the delegate pack to emphasise that it is delegates who decide the final wording of composites.

***"When women members feel we and our views are welcome, it strengthens enthusiasm for election campaigning"***

### Women must feel welcome

When women members feel we and our views are welcome, it strengthens enthusiasm for election campaigning. A return to a well-resourced two-day stand-alone grassroots Women's Conference is key to this.

Of the six Grassroots women elected to NWC in 2021, only two remain. It is most important that delegates to this year's Women's Conference vote for the six Centre Left Grassroots candidates to the NWC (see Box 2).

*Jean Crocker is Vice-Chair, Women's CAC, writing in a personal capacity.*

#### 1. Women's Conference 2023

#### What we have argued for

A two-day stand-alone Conference, and when refused:

- Six debates on the Saturday (Women's CAC decides the number of debates by rule);
- Round table discussion sessions on Friday pm;
- Friday reception;
- Networking breakfast on Saturday;
- Maximum of two platform speakers (plus one at reception and one at breakfast);
- Stalls (not just setting up for Sunday).

Also:

- Working with Kathy Bole of Disability Labour to ensure good access;
- More notice of compositing meetings at times women can attend;
- An invitation to CLPs to put on fringe meetings for free;
- Videos to help navigate Conference processes.

## 2. Women's Conference Elections 2023

### Vote for the 6 CLGA candidates for the National Women's Committee

- Zoe Allan
- Claudia Bowes
- Chloe Hopkins
- Juliet Miller
- Helen Smith
- Cecile Wright

## 3. Guidance for future Women's Conference

### Keeping motions to Women's Conference 'in order'

- No more than 250 words. All words are counted, including notes, references etc (but not the motion title).
- Of relevance to women: For the best chance, include wording in the body of the motion, even if brief, to indicate why it's relevant to women.
- One issue only: Keep the actions that you call for within one policy area, eg women's rights at work, women's health.
- A policy motion, not an organisational matter: On what the policy of the Labour Party should be, ie something that would fit in a Labour manifesto, *not* on how the Party is internally organised, relations between parts of the Labour Party, etc.

# Prospect of Austerity Dominates NPF

*Rachel Garnham is concerned how July's NPF has yet to address the real issues facing the country.*

## Some improvements but a long way to go

Labour's four-year National Policy Forum (NPF) cycle culminated in late July in Nottingham with unions, members, and shadow ministers debating the final year policy programme. The final meeting was framed by the Shadow Treasury economic doctrine, which appears to be austerity in all but name, making serious progress extremely difficult.

But thanks to the contributions of representatives of CLPs, socialist societies, and affiliated trade unions in particular, both during the consultations and in Nottingham, the policy programme came out somewhat better than it went in – if still a long long way from where it needs to be.

## A process which aims to bypass Conference

The NPF process under Blair was specifically designed to take key policy decisions out of Annual Conference, where 50% of the votes are held by affiliates (mostly trade unions) and 50% by CLP delegates. The NPF, by contrast, includes large numbers of votes for the Parliamentary Labour Party, Shadow Cabinet, and local government, which significantly waters down the influence of trade unions and grassroots members.

The left and trade unions used the

very limited process to fight for workers' rights, against NHS privatisation, for investment in universal public services including free schools meals, against student fees and for civil liberties, and repeal of the Tories' most reactionary recent legislation such as the Illegal Migration Act, the recent Public Order Act curtailing protest, and the introduction of voter ID.

This time round the Joint Policy Committee and National Executive Committee had agreed a process for the NPF meeting involving a higher threshold for well-supported amendments to make it to Conference as 'minority positions'. So it was always going to be difficult for the left to have influence. However, CLP reps were able to improve the final document and the unions even more so.

## The hypocrisy of Labour's 'red lines'

However, this should not be overstated. The final NPF meeting happened days after Keir Starmer refused to confirm Labour would end the two-child benefit cap. Ending this "obscene and inhumane" policy (to quote Deputy Leader Angela Rayner) would appear to be an obvious inclusion in Labour's policy programme, supported by the vast majority of members and trade unions across Labour's political spectrum – a relatively low cost for its impact on child poverty, and targeted to make a real difference. However the Shadow Treasury's 'red lines' on not including 'new' spending commitments meant the NPF appeared powerless

to make a difference, although it could have done so had there been the political will of enough delegates present.

The hypocrisy of these supposed red lines should not go un-noted. There is always money for increased military spending and for the Tory spending commitments. And where delegates argued for progressive changes to tax policies such as equalising Capital Gains Tax and Income Tax, or increasing Income Tax for the top 5% of earners – as promised by Keir Starmer in his Leadership election – we met a brick wall.

## We need an anti-austerity government

So where do we go from here? The battle for the Labour Party to continue to be the party of the labour movement is very much work-in-progress. It is clear that the narrow group around the current Labour Leadership has no real interest in promoting green policies, defending civil liberties, or promoting an economic agenda that will address crises in the NHS, education, and housing.

The NPF is just one forum where this battle has been playing out. Left CLP reps and left unions must reach out across the Party's membership and be ready for further fights: the country needs a better opposition to this horrendous government, and in the longer term we need an anti-austerity Labour government which will save our public services and reduce inequalities. The fight goes on!

*Rachel Garnham is Co-Chair of CLPD and a member of the NPF.*



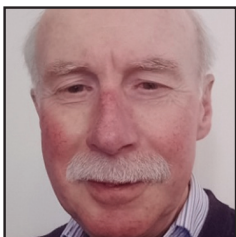
# Is There a Third Way for Scotland?

*Jim Mackechnie outlines the main barrier to a Labour resurgence.*

## Gross mismanagement by the SNP

As the Chief Executive, the Treasurer, and the former Leader of the SNP returned home after 'helping police with their enquiries' into the shady world of SNP finances, Panelbase's latest survey on General Election (GE) voting intentions in Scotland showed the SNP and Labour level at 34%, placing Labour on track to win 26 seats in Scotland – up from the single seat we currently hold. In Glasgow, Labour are predicted to win back six of the seven seats lost in 2019, which is a remarkable turnaround.

But it is not only the growing familiarisation of the SNP's former leadership with the interior of Police Scotland HQ. Gross mismanagement has been the hallmark of SNP governance over recent years, and this is coming home to roost: new lifeline ferries for the islands delayed by five years and three times over budget; legislation for a National Care Service kicked into touch because the botched plans engendered fierce opposition from the trade unions and caring professionals; a disastrous underselling of seabed leasing rights for offshore wind generation; a constant failure to address hospital waiting lists and missed targets for hospital treatment; a failure to reduce attainment gaps in schools; and the humiliating abandonment of



the deposit scheme for recyclables.

Much of this relates to devolved matters, but this constitutional distinction from a Westminster election could well be disregarded by the electorate. And although Labour has yet to produce its full election offering for Scotland, this may take a back seat as voters focus on the SNP government's rich seam of incompetence and ineptitude.

## Independence remains a challenge for Labour

However, Labour's advantage may be dissipated if the SNP brings the constitutional question to the fore, as they have done in the past. Separation after Westminster blocked 'Indyref2' is under debate by the nationalists, but if the SNP gets its act together, puts forward a new roadmap to independence, and places this centre-stage, it would challenge Labour's resurgence.

Despite the swing in GE voting intentions, polls still show electors roughly split 50:50 on independence and large numbers want to end Westminster's control over their lives. Labour should have been advancing bold and robust plans on how to do this without complete separation, but we have abjectly failed to step up to the mark, saying little more than the old 2014 referendum mantra that we are 'better together'.

Latterly, we had Gordon Brown's commission's proposals on the UK's Future. While his intentions on the second chamber at Westminster and on regional devolution in England have merit, his minimalist proposals for more powers for the Scottish Parliament are derisory. Control over JobCentres and the right to be consulted on the minimum wage is not going to set the heather on fire. So Brown's recommendations seldom feature in the wider constitutional debate in Scotland.

Holyrood currently has powers over only 32% of tax revenue and only 17% of social security expenditure. It has no powers on a whole raft of critical areas such as employment law, equalities legislation, financial services, and immigration – all matters which need to be addressed in a new constitutional settlement. And promoting the Brown Commission's paltry proposals for extending Holyrood's powers won't win over those looking to independence to improve their quality of life.

## The need for a genuine alternative

A positive way forward has been staring us in the face, only to be shunned by the Party's Leadership. The crying need is for Labour to enthusiastically embrace the 'third way' – 'Devo Max', 'Home Rule' or 'Independence within the UK'. Under such an arrangement, Holyrood would have full control over virtually all domestic matters, leaving only currency, foreign affairs, and defence in the hands of the UK Parliament. We should be presenting a well-worked plan which draws on the benefits of Home Rule advanced by the likes of Professor Ben Thompson and David Martin, Britain's longest serving MEP. There is also a wealth of good practice to be espoused by considering the constitutional arrangements that have allowed Home Rule powers to be successfully exercised by governments in the Canadian provinces, the Basque country, and especially the Faroe Islands.

It is also worth noting that Home Rule for Scotland was included in the founding programme of the Scottish Labour Party. It was wholeheartedly supported by Keir Hardie, and was not abandoned until the advent of the 1945 Labour Government.

Last year a Savanta poll showed 29% of respondents would either 'strongly' or 'somewhat' support the concept of Devo Max which is, in most respects, very similar to Home Rule. That's without any campaigning to promote it. Should Labour adopt Home Rule as its policy, we would therefore have a significant baseline from which to advance the proposition as a popular and appealing alternative to independence. Our prospects at the ballot box would be enhanced immeasurably as the constitutional question would cease to be our electoral Achilles heel. We would have a landmark policy that would appeal to Scots seeking the powers to respond to their distinctive needs and aspirations, without the disruption and uncertainties of total separation.

*Jim Mackechnie is Chair of Glasgow Kelvin CLP (writing in a personal capacity) and a member of the CLPD Executive. (See also Katy Clark on pp1-2).*



*Ferry Hull 802 – five years late and three times over budget*

# Co-operation delivers advances in Wales

*Maggie Simpson outlines the advances and challenges in Wales.*

## Landmark legislation to restructure the Welsh Parliament

Senedd reform has been urgently needed, as the further devolution of powers to Wales puts unworkable pressure on the current 60 members of the Senedd – far fewer than the Scottish Parliament (129 members) and Northern Ireland Assembly (90 members). After years of consultation, proposals are for 96 Senedd members, elected via closed party lists with integrated, statutory gender quotas and mandatory zipping<sup>1</sup>. Seats are to be allocated by the ‘D’Hondt formula’, with the 32 parliamentary constituencies used to create 16 Senedd constituencies, each electing six members. Welsh Labour and Plaid Cymru have formed a Co-operation Agreement in the Senedd and have agreed these proposals. Legislation is being prepared and should be agreed by Senedd for reforms to be in place for the 2026 Senedd election.



## Progress and problems

Amongst its initiatives Welsh Government action has brought 11,000 young people into work, increased the Education Maintenance Allowance from £30 to £40 a week for 16-18 year olds, is rolling out free school meals for all primary school children, banned single use plastics, created a Nation of

Sanctuary for refugees, and agreed Equality Action plans and an ambitious Net Zero action plan.

However, all monies for the HS2 project for England and Wales have been spent in England leaving the devolution settlement to Wales £5bn short. Also, inflation and UK government mishandling of the economy means a £4bn shortfall in the Welsh budget. Historic factors together with austerity and the cost-of-living crisis leaves Welsh GDP per capita at 74% of the UK level, some 34% of children living in poverty, and hourly earnings in Wales at £1 per hour lower than the UK level.

Clearly, to make the most of devolution a truly progressive Labour Government at Westminster is vital. Moreover, the Welsh Government needs improved borrowing powers to invest for the sustainable economic development that Wales needs.

## Social partnership makes a difference

Meanwhile the Social Partnership and Public Procurement Act became law in May 2023. It puts existing informal arrangements onto a firm, legal footing where government, employers, and unions engage. It makes a difference. In contrast to the UK government during recent pay disputes, talks were ongoing in the Social Partnership. As a result, using its reserves, the Welsh Government improved existing pay offers by 2%. Although still short of in-



flation, this was an improved offer unions could consult their members on.

## A strong left in the Welsh Party

Welsh Labour Grassroots<sup>2</sup> experienced a drop in outcomes in internal elections but nonetheless won 3 of the 4 constituency Welsh CLP seats on the National Policy Forum (NPF) plus the youth seat. On the Welsh Executive it won five of the ten CLP seats, down from nine.

A great turnout at the Welsh Labour Grassroots (WLG) fringe at Welsh Conference heard speakers including First Minister Mark Drakeford and Jenny Rathbone MS, Unite Regional Secretary Peter Edwards, and Beth Winter MP. A WLG-backed motion carried to commence discussions for devolution of the Rule Book to Wales Labour, though a motion on housing fell along with proposals for rent controls. Resistance to anti-worker laws and to minimize the impact of the Minimum Services Bill in Wales and to seek its repeal by a Labour Government was supported and it was agreed to campaign for the devolution of Justice and Policing to Wales.

## Beth Winter and democracy

It's devastating that Beth narrowly lost the candidate selection for a new constituency created by boundary change by just 15 votes. She is only the third ever Socialist Campaign Group MP to be elected from Wales, a breath of fresh air, and outstanding in representing her constituents at Westminster. But the Welsh Executive Committee (WEC) agreed a selection timetable of just 16 days with no nominations and no in-person meetings. This disadvantaged Beth as only 40% of her constituency was part of the new one. Undoubtedly she will continue her excellent work for the remainder of her term and play a key role in Welsh politics in years ahead.

*Maggie Simpson is a member of Cardiff Central CLP and the CLPD Executive.*



WLG fringe meeting at Welsh Conference

1. Electoral lists must alternate between men and women.

2. The left and centre-left in the Welsh Labour Party, campaigning for socialist policies and greater party democracy: [welshlabourgrassroots.org.uk](http://welshlabourgrassroots.org.uk)



# Stay on the Pitch!

*Mike Phipps reviews the state of the Party a year after the publication of his book 'Don't Stop Thinking About Tomorrow'.*

## One year on

Last year I wrote a book<sup>1</sup> analysing the 2019 general election defeat and the subsequent election of Keir Starmer to the Labour Leadership. I suggested in the Preface that:

"The Party is in an unhealthy state, haemorrhaging members, expelling long-term activists, ignoring constitutional procedures and democratically-determined policy, and headed by a Leader with so little personal following in the broader Party that he is to a large extent the prisoner of its most factional right-wing elements. All this will have to change if Labour is to succeed in the next months and years."

At that time, the Johnson government was in terminal crisis, soon to be replaced by the catastrophic Truss administration. It was easy then to talk of massive Labour majorities at the next General Election (GE). However, depending on the stability of the Sunak government, extrapolations from May's local election results indicate a hung Parliament may be a more likely scenario.

Meanwhile, the appearance of a Labour Party at war with itself remains. Many activists are deeply demoralised at the lack of action over the Forde Report, continued suspensions, selection stitch-ups, and the ban on Jeremy Corbyn running as the candidate in Islington North, where he has overwhelming support.

## Warnings from the local elections

Amid May's positive local election re-

sults, there was a stark warning from Leicester where the NEC blocked 19 sitting Labour councillors, mainly BAME, from re-standing. Labour lost 22 councillors, with the Tories gaining 17. The Party leadership will have to choose whether a factional war on the grassroots is worth jeopardising seats at the next GE.

## Radical policies are widely accepted

Party activists may feel that what they can achieve is now more restricted than at any time in living memory. But they should remember: the conditions that propelled Jeremy Corbyn to the Party Leadership eight years ago have only intensified. Public ownership, a radical housing policy, and solutions to the cost-of-living crisis that do not burden ordinary people are increasingly popular.

This is why the battle to get popular radical policies into the next Labour Manifesto remains central. In the past, socialists were in a minority on many key economic issues: now our ideas are widely accepted. At local and regional level, socialists are already showing what can be done – look at Preston's Community Wealth Building model, for example. At the same time, Party activists can play a vital role educating members and linking the grassroots organisation to those sections of the movement involved in industrial struggle. More on the potential for this is provided in CLPD's briefing for Party activists.<sup>2</sup>

## The left remains strong

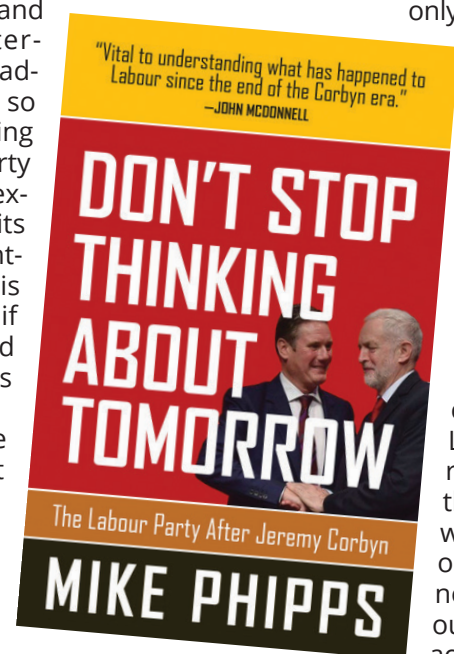
Remember too: the reason the left is under attack is that it is strong, both inside the Party and out, and its ideas are a threat to the elite. The battle to exert influence inside the Labour Par-

ty cannot be abandoned, because ultimately it is the same battle to shape a better society. As John McDonnell says:

***"In the wider context of securing a socialist Labour government, I believe it's important for socialists to stay on the pitch for as long as it takes"***

The current impasse will be resolved within the next eighteen months. If Labour loses the next election, it will be because Keir Starmer prioritised internal factional conflict over uniting the Party and he will have to go. If Labour wins – a far better outcome – then the struggle to get socialist policies enacted enters a new level.

*Mike Phipps is a member of Brent Central CLP and the CLPD Executive.*



1. *Don't Stop Thinking About Tomorrow: the Labour Party after Jeremy Corbyn*, published by OR Books (2022); [orbooks.com/catalog/dont-stop-thinking-about-tomorrow](https://orbooks.com/catalog/dont-stop-thinking-about-tomorrow)

2. 'Labour activists – for the many, not the few' (see below).

### CLPD Resources:

### Organising for a Radical Agenda in Your CLP

'Labour activists – for the many, not the few' is a new resource for activists produced by CLPD<sup>1</sup>. It contains a range of contributions from CLP activists and officers at local level, which underline what can still be achieved in today's Labour Party, including by a Trades Union Liaison Officer, a Women's Officer, a Political Education Officer and more.

There's still lots to do: don't mourn – organise!

1. [clpd.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Labour\\_activists\\_for\\_the\\_many\\_not\\_the\\_few.pdf](https://clpd.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Labour_activists_for_the_many_not_the_few.pdf)



## Celebrating 50 Years of CLPD

# About CLPD and Our Fight for Party Democracy

### Defending the sovereignty of Conference

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 (see p7).

### Holding the PLP and the Leadership to account

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

### Promoting Party democracy

CLPD additionally promoted a range of reforms to give Labour women (see p19) 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, and defending the welfare state. 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 p4 and p16).

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

## Tel's Tales

### Iraq Prepared the Ground for Putin

"The invasion of Iraq unquestionably created a space for a bad actor such as Putin to challenge one of the most essential elements of modern international law: that countries should not acquire territory by conquest. However you judge the motives of Bush and Blair – foolish, venal, messianic, or self-serving – their tearing-up of the rules-based international order to launch an intervention based on misinformation, established a precedent that would be exploited by Moscow and others... The Iraq war fabrication can be seen as a start point in a new period of widespread state-sanctioned misinformation in which China

and Russia have become the two most prominent actors. Two decades later, we are still counting the cost."

*Peter Beaumont, Orwell prize and Amnesty award winner.*

### Renationalise the Utilities

"There is growing evidence that privatisation of utilities is failing, or has already failed. Over the past two decades, 311 cities in 36 countries have 'remunicipalised' their water services because privatisation – no matter how tightly regulated it is – simply didn't work... Our water services were privatised for ideological reasons, and I suggest we take them back into public ownership for practical reasons... It is one of the... bits of the 2019 Labour Manifesto that both made sense and was popular with the public. Hardly a surprise then, that Sir Keir has dropped it."

*Rod Liddle*

### The Post Office Scandal

■ "Former Post Office Chief Executive Paula Vennells might have been more publicly vilified if she had done a bad tweet rather than presided over a firm during the most widespread miscarriage of justice in British history."

■ "One of the most disturbing aspects is that Post Office Ltd was allowed to bring private prosecutions, thereby acting as victim, investigator, and prosecutor at one and the same time."

■ "There is another group of professionals who should be castigated and ashamed of their role: the lawyers and judges, who apparently accepted that a computer system could provide 'evidence' of fraud."

*The Guardian*

*Published since 1982, more Tel's Tales appear each month at [www.clp.org](http://www.clp.org)*