

YELLOW PAGES

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£3

Labour must listen to our members and affiliates

The voices of elected delegates are being marginalised at this Conference. Proceedings have been dominated by platform speakers and panel discussions. A small number of composites have barely been discussed. And when Conference agreed a policy on ticket offices and rail and energy infrastructure that is better than the leadership's policy, we were simply told it won't be implemented.

Tory support has collapsed, so a Labour government is within our grasp. Unfortunately, Labour's leadership is

not advocating policies capable of tackling the scale of problems – relating to the economy, cost of living, climate change and rebuilding public services. The agenda of big business, which the Tories are implementing is, of course, worsening the situation. Tinkering with that agenda and rebranding it “Labour” won't lead to success.

Party members and trade unions have real experience of the problems the Tories have created and know what a government needs to deliver.

No doubt, it may be difficult to secure

better policies, but we can't afford to give up. The stakes are high. The Party needs to listen to members and affiliates, as we can point the way to success – not first term failure.

“Party members are ignored when it comes to policy formulation. This is not coincidental to the drastic political shift away from our transformative programme.”

“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 MP, 2023

Education and health need serious investment and an end to marketisation

Today Conference will have the opportunity to discuss the crises facing our schools, colleges, universities and National Health Service. Unfortunately, because of the ludicrous (and factional) Subject groupings imposed on the elected Conference Arrangements Committee by the National Executive Committee (not their job!), the composites come nowhere near addressing the scale of the challenge in rebuilding our NHS and education system.

The NHS needs serious investment, and decent pay rises for all health staff, if it is to meet current challenges, overcome a recruitment and retention crisis and meet even the weak demands set out in the “NHS fit for the future” motion.

Women's Conference called on Labour to “unambiguously reject NHS privatisation”: delegates speaking in

today's debate should do the same.

Similarly in education, buildings are – literally – crumbling, staff are ground down by their workload, by pay failing to keep pace with inflation and systematic government under-funding. Ending academisation of schools and the marketisation of higher education, and getting rid of student tuition fees, are the only serious way to address lack of accountability and gross inequalities in the education system.

Labour's Westminster leadership has failed to even promise the bare minimum required in following the lead of Labour in Wales and London and committing to free school meals.

On Monday, Conference agreed to stand in solidarity with workers currently taking industrial action. Strikes work. We must all send our solidarity to striking health and education workers.

Restore the whip to Diane Abbott!

Diane, the first Black woman elected to Parliament and a lifelong anti-racism campaigner, has been under investigation by the Party for more than five months over a letter that she promptly repudiated and apologised for.

A fair investigation does not appear possible. Although there is reportedly an ongoing investigation, the Party leadership and some frontbenchers have jumped in

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Daily briefing for Conference delegates published by:



**CAMPAIGN for
LABOUR PARTY
DEMOCRACY**

Restore the whip to Diane Abbott!

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and made very negative pronouncements.

As retired Judge Peter Herbert OBE (Chair of the Society of Black Lawyers) said in May:

"It is highly regrettable that the party's Leader has stated his view publicly when the matter is subject to internal party investigation."

"The process risks contravening the recommendations of the Equalities and Human Rights Commission, which ... recommended that '...the Labour Party should ... implement clear rules and guidance that prohibit and sanction political interference in the complaints process.'

"The investigation could give rise to suspicion of being specious or even disproportionate, especially in light of the Leader's interventions."

Has the party machine already made a decision? In 2022, Diane was re-selected as the Hackney North and Stoke Newington parliamentary candidate, with the support of all party units participating in the trigger ballot.

Prior to this Annual Conference, the London Party apparatus intervened in Diane's CLP, removed its officers and Executive Committee and cut off access to "Organise" for all elected Branch and CLP officers. No meetings can be organised by elected officers. The CLP's Chair, Secretary and Treasurer have been replaced by appointees of the apparatus.

The party machine appears to be intervening to overturn both the CLP's elected officers and its chosen parliamentary candidate. Of course, procedures to organise what looks like a coup are not covered in the party Rule Book!

To NPF or not to NPF?

We have not been allowed to submit proposals to refer back sections of the National Policy Forum (NPF) document, because apparently the process is concluded. But then CAC/WCAC advise that numerous policy motions ruled out or not prioritised have been referred there. The NPF will consider the RAAC crisis in 2025 perhaps? A delegate asking for clarification at Women's Conference was advised there would be a post-conference pre-manifesto NPF process. There needs to be. It's a shame this Conference was not given its rights to refer sections back.

Stop turning the clock back on equalities

During the 1980s, members fought through Labour's women's and black sections for serious action to address under-representation, including through all-women shortlists, and for a more progressive policy agenda to address racism and inequality. Under Tony Blair's leadership and "Partnership in Power", active democratic equality structures were abolished or run down.

Under Jeremy Corbyn, and the Democracy Review, more women, Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic and Disabled members were inspired and empowered to get involved. New structures for Disabled and BAME members were created (but, shamefully, never enacted by the current Leadership despite being enshrined in the rule book). The Labour's Women's Organisation gained a proper structure which should be empowering and inspiring a new generation of women members and candidates and putting women's priorities at the heart of Labour's policy agenda.

Instead equalities have been under-resourced; the Women's Committee and Young Labour have no support, with organisation of Saturday's Women's Conference treated as an afterthought and inconvenience. Issues of institutional racism, sexism and ableism, underlined in many cases by the Forde report, remain denied and unaddressed.

The removal of equality officers as voting members of Executive Committees is just the latest in a long line of examples of how the current Labour Leadership has no interest in engaging members and trade unionists who are women, young, BAME, disabled or LGBT or promoting dynamic, inclusive, self-organised democratic structures that can engage with diverse communities and voters. As Susan Matthews of Unite so eloquently put it on Monday, Labour's leadership is turning back the clock on equalities.

But women, BAME, disabled, LGBT and young members must be listened to for a Labour government to be successful. The NEC should reverse these changes as soon as possible and implement the rulebook to engage our diverse membership.

●**Listen to women** Hearing the powerful resolutions from Labour's Women's Conference yesterday (violence against women and girls; equal pay) and powerful contributions from members of Labour's Women's Committee like Unite's Ruth Hayes and GMB's Sonya Davis underlines how important the Women's Conference and Committee is as part of Labour's structures. This year's Women's Conference has been last-minute, poorly communicated and under-resourced. Labour must do better if it is to truly deliver for women.

Party democracy – on the fringe

It was standing room only at CLPD's fringe yesterday evening in which speakers and attendees reviewed the events of conference and discussed steps forward for Labour.

Jess Barnard gave a perspective from the NEC, reporting the delight of the party's top brass that Labour's coffers have been boosted by corporate donor cash, including regional events being sponsored by pay later loan companies and Deliveroo. Jess updated the meeting on the increase of membership fees for young and student members from £3 to £12 (during a cost of living crisis!) and the effective removal of all member meeting structures for CLP meetings.

Outgoing Conference Arrangements Committee member Billy Hayes spoke of his last few days on the committee, including how the NEC had this year overridden the CAC for the first time.

Ruth Hayes of the National Women's Committee and Unite Executive Committee spoke about the importance of Unite General Secretary Sharon Graham's intervention on the conference floor in favour of public ownership, and of the trade union link in mobilising support for a Labour

Government.

Rathi Guhadasan of the Socialist Health Association gave her perspective on the challenges facing the NHS and the deficiencies of motion that will be debated today in addressing them.



CLPD... is not just for Conference!

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