

CAMPAIGN BRIEFING

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BACK TO CHARLES DICKENS WITH OSBORNE

MICHAEL MEACHER MP

For Osborne the budget deficit which he inherited of £115bn could not have been a better present. It has enabled him to shrink the state and strip out benefits and public expenditure



across the board on an unprecedented scale which he could never have attempted without the pretext of the deficit. It's a shame however that the deficit has hardly been cut at all – it still stands at £90bn – while the welfare state has been pillaged to the bones. But that suits Osborne all too well.

The Chancellor has a knack with Goebels-type lying propaganda which sounds plausible, but which is deadly in its effects. His claim after the budget that “lower welfare in return for a national living wage is widely recognised as a fair deal” is riddled with innuendo and falsehoods. A £9 hourly wage in 2020 will be nowhere near a living wage – it's already £9.35 in London today – and Osborne's wage nowhere near compensates for his swingeing cuts in tax credits. The wage is estimated to cost £4bn, but the cuts are £12bn.

Osborne, like IDS, also likes to boast that the benefit cap has sent thousands into work. But, says the IFS, the great majority suffered “very large reductions in income, and very few more went into work than the normal turnover”. Then Osborne continually bangs on about an “unaffordable welfare

state”. Anything the Tories don't like is of course unaffordable. In fact the UK benefit system is spectacularly ungenerous to the unemployed, especially single people without children.

Since 2010 average household incomes have plummeted. For those in work the average weekly pay was 11% lower in 2014 than in 2008. Osborne has achieved something that no other government has ever allowed to happen: more than half the households in poverty have a working family member. Yet the Tories still argue that poverty has not increased or has even fallen. But that's because poverty is measured relative to median incomes, and because wages have been falling, so has the poverty threshold. But even using this deceptive measure, there are still 13 million people recorded as living in poverty in the UK, more than a fifth of the entire population, with incomes less than 60% of the median. The true effects of Osbornomics is shown by comparisons based on the same measure. Thus if the 2007-8 poverty thresholds were used, there would be 3 million more living in poverty, a total amounting to a quarter of the nation.

This is compounded by a draconian sanctions regime which now consigns half a million people to months of food bank hardship, 10 times more than in 2010. Over 466,000 had their benefits suspended last year, including 2,000 who were barred from claiming for three years. Some of the arbitrary reasons for these punitive sanctions include: arriving minutes late to a meeting, not applying for jobs when waiting to start a new job, missing an appointment on the day of

(cont. overleaf)

ANNUAL CONFERENCE ALERT 2015

**BY PETER WILLSMAN,
SECRETARY CLPD,
MEMBER OF CONFERENCE
ARRANGEMENTS
COMMITTEE (CAC)
1981–1994 AND
CURRENTLY NEC MEMBER**

**BRIEFING ON KEY RULE
CHANGE PROPOSALS
FROM CLPS COMING UP
AT BRIGHTON**

**At Brighton, support CLP
delegates objecting to
the debarring of their rule
changes!**

Last year 12 different rule change proposals were submitted by CLPs, which under an obscure convention (first adopted in 1968), are delayed a year and brought forward to this year's Annual Conference for debate.

But the Party's standing orders committee (known as the Conference Arrangements Committee (CAC)) has wreaked havoc. The CAC has ruled out no less than nine of the rule changes (these came from the following CLPs: Bridgend, Islington North, Peterborough, Reigate, Solihull, South West Devon, Vale of Clwyd, Stoke-On-Trent South, Derby North, Mid Bedfordshire, Hyndburn, Croydon Central, Great Grimsby, Birmingham

(cont. on p8)

PLEASE PASS THIS NEWSLETTER ON TO ENSURE A WIDE CIRCULATION.

EXCITED AND PROUD TO CONNECT WITH CORBYN

LOGAN WILLIAMS, A YOUNG LABOUR MEMBER FROM EAST DEVON

My name is Logan Williams and I am member of Young Labour and Labour Students, alongside my general Party membership. I am also a member of the LRC and a supporter of CLPD. This year's leadership election is one of the proudest and most inspiring moments for me as a Labour Party member: We now have a candidate for leader who accurately represents the Party's core policies and values. His anti-austerity policies and basic political persuasions will once again strengthen our position as the voice of the oppressed and working class people. This set of policies, as we have seen in both Greece and Scotland, can be triumphant in winning support from the electorate.

We saw, inevitably, 7th May the SNP take 56 seats out of 59 on what was a broad anti austerity manifesto. If we the Labour left can succeed in getting Jeremy Corbyn elected we may, despite the message from the press that if Corbyn is elected, the Labour Party will be unelectable, once again be able to win a landslide majority, taking votes from the SNP (shown in the *Morning*

Star (15/07/15) to be a major worry of the SNP leadership).

“Corbyn is bringing a mass of new members into the Party”

Corbyn's policies are primarily focused on providing Labour a chance to vote for the anti-austerity measures we all long for, rather than the pandering to the right which has been systemic from the New Labour period. The campaign is also focused on returning our Party to the broad social movement which it was in the post war era involving the unions and actually supporting them when they are forced into strike action by the government's policies. The Corbyn campaign will show that this movement is not one presided over by career politicians; instead it is for the mass membership of the Party to vote collectively which is a core value for our campaign.

Unfortunately, it is possible that we do not succeed this time and this is why it is necessary to support our candidates across the board for the upcoming NPF and Young Labour elections to the next executive councils. We cannot let the movement currently



Photo: Garry Knight

Congratulations Jeremy on standing, getting on the ballot and doing so well. CLPD fully backs you. You have changed British politics for the better.

behind Corbyn, which is bringing a mass of new members into the Party, die. We must carry on this struggle to bring the Labour Party back to where it belongs as the voice of the people.

(cont. from front page)

the funeral of a close family member, falling seriously ill and not attending a meeting, applying for too many jobs, and missing a job centre appointment in order to attend a job interview. Those required to undertake the Mandatory Work Activity Scheme or 'workfare' – a 'work for your benefit' scheme are often sanctioned and their benefits stopped.

Disabled people and those with mental health problems have been hit particularly hard by up to six cuts, with some facing the loss of up to £23,000 each over the 5 years to 2017. The Disability Living Allowance, the non-means-tested benefit designed to help with the additional costs of physical disability and mental health problems, has been ended. The newly-imposed time-limits on claims for ESA (Employment and Support Allowance) restrict many who have been found too ill to find work to getting the benefit for just a year. Ill or disabled claimants have been put through Work Capability Assessments run by private contractors, and 1,300 have died after being told they should start preparing to go back to work,

with another 2,200 dying before their assessment was complete. The Independent Living Fund which enabled 18,000 disabled people with high-support needs to live their lives with choice and control, rather than going into residential care or being trapped at home, has also been abolished.

But despite Osborne's zeal for insurrectionist toxic propaganda, he has by no means won over public opinion, despite the Labour Party's feeble presumption that there was no alternative but to succumb to the Pied Piper's blandishments. A YouGov poll at the budget found that fewer than half of the public agree with freezing benefits, only 30% want the public sector pegged to a 1% rise, and only 24% want poorer students denied grants. It also found that no less than 82% want child poverty to be a government priority.

If the Labour Party doesn't take head on Osborne's crescendo of injustice in returning Britain not just to the 1930s but to the depravity of Dickensian London, what is it for?



BITEBACKS

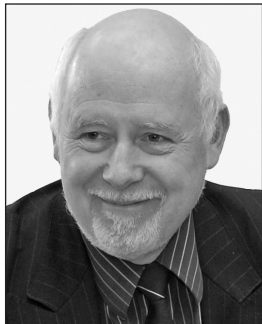
'I don't fully understand the apparent moral collapse of New Labour after an election that was not, if you look at the numbers, actually an overwhelming public endorsement of the Tories. But should we really be surprised if many Labour supporters still believe in what their Party used to stand for, and are unwilling to support the Cringe Caucus in its flight to the right?' (Paul Krugman, 'Corbyn and the Cringe Caucus', 2015)

'A lot of journalists (and others) have been calling Jeremy Corbyn a dinosaur. They should beware of the label. Within five years of E.T. Reed's depiction in *Punch* in 1900 of the remaining Liberal anti-imperialists of his time, imperialism had lost its attraction to voters, the 'imperialist' Party was hammered in an election, and a new, quite old-fashioned looking Liberal government came to power.' (Bernard Porter, *LRB*, August 2015)

AFTER AUSTERITY – THE ALTERNATIVE STRATEGY

KELVIN HOPKINS MP

Whatever the outcome of the leadership election, there must be no going back to “austerity-lite” nor any feeble acquiescence to Osborne’s attack on public services and the poor. Labour



Party members, supporters and trade unionists have been giving great support to Jeremy Corbyn, demonstrating a passionate desire to reaffirm Labour’s historic commitment to democratic socialism. Jeremy’s rejection of austerity and the cuts, and his opposition to neo-liberal economics have inspired thousands across the country. He has shifted the political debate to the left and (as Seumas Milne says) changed the rules of the game.

Our new leader must move strongly to oppose the Tories, but to do that convincingly the Party must have a practical and believable alternative strategy.

Millions of voters have been persuaded that Labour caused Britain’s economic problems – lie number one, and that there is no alternative to austerity – lie number two. We have to explain boldly and repeatedly that the 2008 crisis began in America and spread across the world. It was made possible by the freedom given to international finance to move its billions easily and wherever it chooses, following the 1970s breakdown of the previously successful 1944 Bretton Woods agreement which had sustained strong economic growth, full employment and rising living standards for millions of working class people. Thatcher’s abolition of exchange controls immediately after the 1979 Tory election victory was the ultimate madness in the collapse of the post war arrangements, designed by Keynes and which had worked so well. Repeated economic crises, high unemployment, manufacturing decline and growing inequality with associated social ills followed.

So what must Labour now propose? What should its alternative economic strategy comprise? First, reversing public spending cuts to restore the public services is vital. The NHS is underfunded, local government funding has been slashed and there is a monumental housing crisis which only a massive state driven council house building programme can overcome.

Tax expert Richard Murphy has calculated that there is an annual tax gap of £120 billion, caused by tax avoidance and tax evasion on an enormous scale. Labour must commit to closing the tax gap providing resources to kick start its growth strategy.

Spending on the public services and restoring public sector pay levels will of itself generate considerable economic demand – spending power in the economy – and will in turn generate more jobs. Cutting unemployment and raising pay will also generate substantial tax revenues while at the same time reducing spending on unemployment benefits as people get new jobs.

Higher revenue spending must be complemented by new capital investment. Low investments, low wages and low productivity are all linked in a deadly embrace and Britain’s investment levels have been chronically low for decades. Britain’s productivity languishes below all the G7 countries except Japan and two things need to happen before that can change.

First, Sterling is substantially overvalued, especially against the Euro. UK manufacturing is suffering as a result and Britain has a gigantic trade deficit with the EU, equivalent to at least a million exported jobs. Sterling must be brought to an appropriate exchange rate as a necessary first step to stimulating manufacturing investment.

Another component of a new alternative economic strategy must be to rein in the City. The imposition of a foreign exchange transaction tax – a Tobin or “Robin Hood” tax is needed. Such a tax would be very small for each individual transaction, so that single one-way investment transactions and tourist exchanges would be unaffected. But the tax on rapid multiple foreign exchange transactions, typical of casino banking, would generate significant revenues for the Treasury and wider beneficial societal purposes.

A new economic strategy for Labour will require more than what is outlined here, including appropriate measures of public ownership, but it will have to be bold and challenge the shibboleths of neo-liberalism, globalisation, privatisation, the raising up of the market and diminution of the state. These do not promote human or environmental wellbeing and threaten more crises in the future. Labour can and should begin the process of restoring what has been lost and allow John Maynard Keynes once again to sleep peacefully in his grave.

WE NEED A STRONG NPF

GEORGE DOWNS, CLPD MEMBER AND UNDER-23 CLGA CANDIDATE FOR NPF IN THE SOUTH WEST

It is a vital time for the Labour Grassroots in our work to democratise our Party and promote socialist values. Along with having succeeded in four out of the six CLP seats during the National Executive Committee elections last year, the anti-austerity argument is now at the heart of the leadership debate. Therefore the Centre-Left Grassroots Alliance is in a strong position for a good showing in this Summer’s National Policy Forum (NPF) elections for which I am a Youth candidate in the South West.

“The anti-austerity argument is now at the heart of the leadership debate.”

Labour must once again become an anti-establishment movement organising against austerity in workplaces, communities and in Parliament, working closely with Trades Councils and local People’s Assembly groups. In order to end Tory capitalism we must link up with liberation movements, such as for women, BAME, LGBT and disabled people, and make a strong case for a green sustainable future on our planet.

It is obvious that the outcome of the leadership election will be fundamental; however there is no total free hand when it comes to a leader formulating policy. The composition of the NPF will play a key role in the direction of the Party and will either help or hinder the vision of an elected leader. In order for the Labour Party to adopt anti-austerity and socialist policies, it is not only vital for the next leader to have Grassroots values but so too must NPF representatives.

Thanks to the dedication of activists from the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy and other Grassroots circles, the CLP nomination process was largely a success. This Summer has been described by some as one of the greatest challenges in our Party’s history. Therefore, whether it be for the leadership or for the NPF, every member should take some time to read about all the candidates and use their votes wisely. I am sure that by involving the rank & file in these elections this year, we will be able to have the rank & file lead on policy in years to come.

WHO WILL BE THE NEXT LABOUR CANDIDATE FOR MAYOR OF LONDON?

BARRY GRAY, CLPD EXECUTIVE MEMBER AND EDITOR OF GRASSROOTS LABOUR, EXPLAINS WHY CLPD RECOMMENDS FIRST PREFERENCE FOR DIANE ABBOTT, SECOND FOR SADIQ KHAN

The London Labour Party is selecting its candidate to fight next May's London Mayoral election. The ballot will take place alongside the leadership contest, from 14 August to 10 September. The position of London Mayor has important powers in the areas of transport, fire services, planning, policing and the environment. The Mayor also champions the interests of London with a significant campaigning platform. So London Labour is selecting someone to run and improve the capital's services, who will speak up for London and challenge Tory policies.

The Campaign for Labour Party Democracy (CLPD) is wholeheartedly backing Diane Abbott as the main centre-left candidate in this contest. She opposes the government's austerity proposals and is one of the few Labour MPs who voted against the Tories' Budget Responsibility Charter, which requires a further £30bn cut to public services.

Diane is a long-standing campaigner for greater democracy within the Labour Party. In 1987 she became the first black woman to be elected to Parliament. She opposes attempts to scapegoat migrants and voted against Tony Blair taking Britain to war in



Photo: National Archives

Iraq. If elected Mayor, Diane intends to offer real solutions to Londoners' cost of living crisis; genuinely affordable housing, rent controls, a fares freeze, extension of the living wage and will take action on climate change.

Sadiq Khan is a former Minister and Shadow Minister. He is a Fabian and human rights lawyer. In 2005 he became the first Muslim MP elected in London. Like Diane, he proposes to freeze fares, to extend the living wage, promote affordable housing, a London living rent and fight for powers to limit rent increases.

Both Diane and Sadiq opposed Blair's proposal to introduce 90 day detention without trial.

The principal right-wing candidate in the contest is Tessa Jowell. Offering London a similar political approach as Liz Kendall's platform in the leadership election, Tessa is promoted by the Tory-supporting *Evening Standard*. Tessa is famous for saying she would jump in front of a bus for Tony Blair. So not surprisingly, Tessa supported the war in Iraq, privatisation and the ending of free higher education. She deregulated the media and tried to introduce super-casinos. Since the 2005 Gambling Act, that Tessa fought to get through parliament, addictive gambling has hugely increased, sucking cash out of poor communities.

Tessa Jowell has a well-resourced campaign, but grand sounding slogans masking meagre content will be insufficient for Labour to win next year. Tessa's pledge to establish an agency 'Homes for London-

ers' appears to be the re-badging of Boris Johnson's 'Homes for London'. Property developers would benefit from Transport for London's stock of public land but London's shortage of affordable homes will not be seriously addressed. Tessa's criticism of Labour's rent control policy immediately prior to the general election was welcomed by the property industry.

A Blairite is not best placed to help Labour in London. While Tony Blair was Prime Minister Labour lost more than half a million votes in London at general elections. Since his departure Labour has won an extra 400,000 votes. The Tories will likely select Zac Goldsmith, who has Lynton Crosby advising him. If Labour puts forward weak Tory-lite proposals its campaign risks being torn to pieces.

To win Labour should offer a robust attractive alternative that challenges the Tories. Next May's election is by 'supplementary vote', so Labour should choose an independent minded candidate who can attract the second preference votes from supporters of the Greens and other parties. Diane Abbott is the candidate most able to do that.

The London Labour selection this summer, as with the leadership contest, is decided by an 'preferential vote' ballot, where you rank candidates in order of preference. The Campaign for Labour Party Democracy is recommending that London members and supporters give their first preference vote to Diane Abbott and their second to Sadiq Khan.



BITEBACKS

'28% of people in London are in poverty, a figure 7% higher than the rest of England, and the majority of working-age adults and children in poverty – 57% – in the capital are in families that work' (London Poverty Profile report, *Guardian* 14/10/13.)

A definition of housing benefit? – 'When the government subsidises landlords and accuses their tenants of sponging off the state.' (Rafael Behr.)

WHY WE STILL NEED MORE EUROPE!

PAUL FLATHER RUNS THE EUROPAEUM CLUB OF LEADING EUROPEAN UNIVERSITIES. WE ASKED HIM TO PUT THE CAMERON REFERENDUM IN CONTEXT.

The Europe Question looms large. In 1975 in the last referendum Labour found itself divided – while Jenkins led the Yes campaign, Tony Benn and others led the No campaign,



and Harold Wilson as Prime Minister began with the Noes, and finished in the Yes camp.

This time, Labour's leadership looks to be, almost entirely, in the Yes campaign. But not surprising the movement's supporters are somewhat more confused. After years on a diet of bent bananas and interfering Brussels bureaucrats, we have stronger images seared in our minds – and they hurt. Migrants perishing in the Mediterranean, Kalashnikovs sounding in western Ukraine, Greeks ever on the streets, and lorry stacking on our motorways.

No wonder anti-Europeanism and Euroscepticism are on the rise – swelled by a sea of populist and nationalist sentiment, so much so that in the 2014 European elections – which do favour protest voting by the way – Eurosceptic parties took one in four

seats in the European Parliament. UKIP of course won that 2014 election – and sent 24 MEPs to Brussels.

So, a mass of strands – anti-elitism, anti-Brussels, anti-migrant, anti-establishment, anti-market, and of course anti-austerity – from the likes of Podemos in Spain, and Syriza in Greece, right to the Corbyn campaign here – mean the European Project looks to be in big trouble.

Even the competence of the old elite is now a worry – how poorly the debt crisis in Southern Europe has been managed. No wonder they are turning against Berlin while North Europeans resent paying the bill, and are turning to right-wing parties. No wonder Brussels is busy seeking a 'new narrative' for Europe – one that goes beyond building peace, and even beyond delivering prosperity.

So as battle lines are drawn for the coming Cameron referendum – here are five reasons we should vote to remain in. First is values. Remember what Europe – the European Union – stands for: liberty, democracy, respect for human rights and basic civil liberties, rule by law, dignity of the human being, equality and solidarity, rule of law, peace at home, across Europe, and beyond. No one on the left can diss such aims. Indeed we embrace them. These are our aims.

They are not the values of far right parties – from the Front National in France to the True Finns in Finland, from Golden Dawn in Greece to the Lega Norda in Italy, and we have to combat them. This cannot be done in isolation, pulling up the drawbridge. Besides this gives succour to the Faragists.

Second, 2 million jobs could be at stake. Estimates range wildly, from a sober 2% (NIESR)

per annum decline in UK GDP from EU withdrawal, to an alarmist 6-9 % a year (LSE). But departure means tariffs must be imposed, overseas investors tempted to move their HQs to an EU base. Living on the outside, with the EU making all the rules, like Norway or Switzerland, is worse. The Scots realise this.

Third, Europe needs balanced leadership. All roads currently lead to Berlin, but the Germans play the role of the reluctant hegemon. They – and Brussels – know they need Anglo-Saxon thinking on the inside. Every Eurocrat will confirm that. Even in the Thatcher years, UK Eurocrats were playing significant roles in policy-making – and continue to do so.

Fourth, only from inside can we benefit from the EU social advances on human and trade union rights, – which the Tories so hate. Inside Labour can play a serious role in turning Europe from a market-driven community, back towards the kind of people-orientated Europe so many of us signed up to. How are we going to fight the threatening TTIP trade deal with the US?

Finally, most problems today cannot be solved by nations – whose influence diminishes daily. We have to stand together in a globalising world to face down global warming and jihadism, migration and the Mafiosi, productivity and Mr Putin.

These can *only* be solved together. That is the new narrative for Europe, that beyond Chinese centralization and American profiteering, lies our common diversity. Not easy. Long haul. But Britain must remain a player.



BITEBACKS

'Monetary union is a textbook case of the dangers of allowing politics to trump economics. Germany is a completely different economy to Greece. Portugal's economy is not a bit like that of the Netherlands. Italy was able to remain competitive in the pre-euro days only by regular devaluations of the lira. To yoke all these countries in a single currency was an act of supreme folly. The only conceivable way to solve design flaws in the euro is for a strategy that involves debt forgiveness, expansionary policies in the countries – such as Germany – that can afford it, a large-scale quantitative easing programme from the European Central Bank and much more aggressive attempts to rid the banks of their toxic assets.'

(Larry Elliot, *Guardian* 15/12/14.)

SURVEY OF LOCAL CAMPAIGN FORUMS

JOHN WHITWORTH AND JOHN SAUNDERS OF CLPD'S LOCAL GOVERNMENT GROUP

The Local Government Group has carried out a survey of councillors to try to obtain evidence of the UK-wide functioning of the Local Campaign Forums. These, you will recall, were introduced to replace the Local Government Committees from 2012 as part of the process of Refounding Labour. The stated aim was to increase the influence of Party members in the recruitment and selection of councillor candidates, the design and implementation of campaign strategy, and the formulation of the local manifesto in conjunction with the Labour Group and with input from local residents. It was hoped

that this survey would help to indicate the extent to which this aim has been achieved. Questionnaires were sent to all members of county, metropolitan, unitary and London borough councils – a total of approximately 5,000 individuals. Councillors were consulted for this study because of the accessibility of their email addresses.

The volume and quality of the responses were modest. Analysis remains to be completed, but the general impression given by the survey results is negative. It could be suggested that unhappiness is more likely to prompt a reply to a questionnaire of this sort than satisfaction, but the small number of responses received give an indication that the replacement of LGCs by LCFs has not produced the improvements predicted by Refounding Labour.

TWELVE THINGS LABOUR MEMBERS THOUGHT ABOUT THE GENERAL ELECTION CAMPAIGN

ANN BLACK, NEC MEMBER, ON HER FEEDBACK ABOUT OUR CAMPAIGN AND THE WAY FORWARD

On 8 May I mailed Party members asking for feedback on the campaign and thoughts on the way forward. I received hundreds of messages from all parts of the UK. Below are 12 key points:

ONE: There is overwhelming agreement that Labour lost the 2015 election because it failed to counter Tory lies about Labour's role in the economic crash from 2010 onwards. Members have made this point repeatedly since May 2010.

TWO: More generally, we should stop apologising for everything, and highlight Labour's achievements in government and in opposition. It appears that we have nothing positive to say about 1997-2010, nor about 2010-2015 either. Ex-ministers and senior party figures should stop trashing Labour's record.

THREE: On overall positioning, the largest group believe that the manifesto platform was broadly OK but not put across adequately, with a lack of clear messages and an overarching vision. Substantial numbers think that we did not appeal sufficiently to the centre, whilst almost equal numbers argue that we should have challenged austerity directly. There is a preference for principles and convictions rather than deciding policies only on the basis of focus groups.

FOUR: Members write warmly of Ed Miliband, and some believe that he should have stayed on as leader. Around twice this

number say, often with regret, that he was a negative factor on the doorstep.

FIVE: The SNP damaged Labour not only directly in Scotland but also in England, where Tory attacks did influence voters late in the campaign, though this was not enough to explain all the differences between opinion polls and results. There is pessimism about the future of Scottish Labour and the impact on the rest of the UK.

SIX: The Edstone was symbolic of the campaign, and not in a good way.

SEVEN: Many members praised their local parliamentary candidates. The NEC only becomes aware of the few candidates where there are problems, but should collect positive comments as well.

EIGHT: Many people also wrote about local election successes and, sadly, losses. Council elections were disregarded in the national campaign, and this was a mistake.

NINE: This linked to perceived over-aggressive targeting, with members discouraged from any local activity in non-key seats. Some assignments involved hours of travel on public transport and were sent to members in their 70s and 80s, who felt devalued and might have done useful work closer to home. Much would have been forgiven if more target seats had been gained, but telling members that Labour is within 200 votes of winning, when the Tory majority ends up at 8,600, means that they will not believe central messages next time.

TEN: Some members doubt the value of millions of "conversations" which repeat an unconvincing message; the accuracy of voter ID given that chunks of the Labour promise

did not vote Labour. Veterans with decades of campaigning experience are beginning to question sacred cows. Is superb organisation sufficient if the problems are primarily political?

ELEVEN: There is significant sympathy for electoral reform.

TWELVE: Finally I liked this quote: "Laughter and joy in being a member of the Party needs to return so that this is reflected in talking to the public. I know it is a serious world with loads of awful things going on but let's have some lightness sometimes."

Unless members are offered something beyond blood, toil, sweat, tears and arguments, how can we attract people who have more enjoyable ways to spend their time?



BITEBACKS

'CLPD has registered a number of important successes in its existence. Yet surely its importance really lies in its future. For CLPD continues to offer socialists in the Party a route to effective politics. CLPD understands that socialist policies are tied to the promotion of Party democracy. Membership activity and involvement in all areas of the Party produces better and more effective policies. That is a strategy and appreciation which has worked for these past decades, and will work for many years ahead.' (Billy Hayes, 'Forty Years of CLPD, A Cause for Celebration', *Campaign Briefing* no 76, Special 40th Year Anniversary Edition 2013.)

DON'T BE BAMBOOZLED

Important and urgent advice for all delegates to Labour Conference 2015 and for Labour Party members able to brief their CLP delegate(s) in advance.

To ensure that Conference is allowed to debate the full 8 contemporary motions that Party rules permit, it is vital that CLP delegates vote for four different resolutions in addition to the four being supported by the trade unions. Union-supported resolutions will obtain enough votes to be debated anyway. If CLP delegates support them that will pile up useless votes. The result will be that fewer than four resolutions from CLPs will be debated as they won't get sufficient support (this has already happened at all recent Annual Conferences).

Resolutions being supported by the unions will be notified in the *Campaign*

Briefing newsletter, distributed outside Conference before the first session, and at the CLPD fringe meeting at Friends Meeting House, Ship St, at 6.30pm on 26 September.

BEWARE: Party staff have regularly aggravated this problem by informing regional pre-Conference delegates' meetings that they should support resolutions supported by the unions and denied that this will reduce the number of CLP Contemporary Resolutions allowed for debate.

REMEMBER THE PARTY'S CODE OF CONDUCT

The NEC Code of Conduct for internal elections includes the following:

- Candidates are allowed to canvass delegates but must not distribute literature inside the conference hall. Contact with delegates must not be carried out in a manner likely

to cause offence or be seen to be applying pressure to delegates.

- If one candidate is allowed to distribute literature at an official Labour Party event then that facility must be available to all candidates.
- Labour Party staff employed by the NEC shall not canvass or distribute literature on behalf of any candidate. (Please immediately inform NEC members and the general secretary of any infringements or possible infringements of the Code).

THE GMB SPELLS IT OUT

A recent GMB Annual Congress agreed a motion, supported by GMB Executive, that the Labour Party must always uphold its Code of Conduct and that Labour Party full-time staff must always be impartial and not interfere by telling delegates how they should vote.

BRANCH OFFICE NO MORE

JIM MACKECHNIE, CLPD REGIONAL ORGANISER IN SCOTLAND, SAYS IT'S TIME FOR A DISCRETE SCOTTISH LABOUR PARTY

As Scottish Labour struggles with the challenge of loosening the SNP's new hold over the collectivist sentiments of Scottish voters, a recent survey showed that even a much needed turn to the left might not be enough to do the job. An analysis of the British Election Study concluded that there was a clear correlation between favouring leftist politics, such as a redistribution of wealth, and dissatisfaction with the referendum result. Scottish Labour therefore needs to both adopt a progressive political programme and adapt to the rise of civic nationalism. Nowhere is the latter half of this equation more important than in the status of the Scottish Labour Party (SLP) itself. There is no doubt that the taunt that the Party in Scotland is 'a branch office of London Labour' – repeated again and again – does immense damage to our credibility. As evidence of the SLP's subsidiary rank, our critics rightly point to Westminster selections in Scotland being run from London; the sacking of the previous Scottish General Secretary having been initiated from Ed Miliband's office; the Scottish Party being categorised as merely an 'accounting unit' of the UK Party; and the 2011 cull of Glasgow Labour councillors orchestrated by a London based Party official.

But most of all the perception is that Labour policies in non-devolved matters, will for the foreseeable future, be tailored to suit Middle England rather than Scottish working class supporters among whom the Party's writ used to run large. The conclusion is that Scottish Labour must go along with this and cannot therefore promote different policies that are framed to address Scotland's specific needs and circumstances.

We should not run away from the fact that there is a considerable measure of truth in such an assessment.

Realisation of the toxicity that all of this has created for Scottish Labour has sparked the call for the reconstruction of the SLP as a body whose relationship with the UK Party is clearly 'independent' 'autonomous' or 'federal'. The terms are sometimes used interchangeably, which, of course they shouldn't be, but the direction of travel is abundantly clear. Such a change has become a pre-condition for the revival of Scottish Labour's fortunes.



In recent weeks, one form or another of a separate, discrete, or fully devolved SLP has been advocated by such senior Party figures as Former Chief Minister Henry McLeish, UK leadership contender Andy Burnham MP, Scottish Labour Deputy Leader challenger Alex Rowley MSP (previously General Secretary of the Scottish Labour Party), and onetime MSP and Finance Minister Andy Kerr. Perhaps surprisingly, former Home Secretary Jack Straw has added his voice to those favouring such a change. He said: 'I think you have to have a distinctive Party. It is fair enough. This 'run from London' argument has become increasingly potent'. Additionally, the left-wing challenger for the Scottish Party leadership last time round, Neil Findlay, has explicitly stated: 'If it needs a separate Labour Party in Scotland, then so be it. It's what we should do anyway and it makes sense about where we should be going'. There is also much grassroots support for such a change.

Some ideas have been advanced as to how a discrete SLP would interact with Labour in the rest of the UK. One of the models being examined is the arrangement between the CSU and CDU in Germany. The CSU fields candidates in Bavaria and the CDU in the rest of Germany. Their MPs come together as a joint parliamentary group in the Bundestag. Another possible option would be a modified confidence and supply arrangement. This might allow Scottish Labour MPs to be counted towards a parliamentary majority when a General election had taken place but enable them to oppose the Government on any issues other than confidence and sup-

ply. Another alternative could be a simple formal coalition, on an negotiated and agreed programme, after a General election. What is abundantly clear though is that any arrangement would have to make provision for Scottish Labour MPs to have the freedom to vote against a Labour Government on issues where SLP policy could differ from that of the Party in the rest of the UK. Issues such as Trident, welfare benefits and immigration come immediately to mind. Otherwise no new arrangement would have any credibility.

Welsh comrades might well like to consider whether whatever scheme was devised should be replicated for their Party.

As the 2016 Scottish Parliament election looms, the latest TNS poll predicts Labour winning only 25 seats, all on the regional list vote, in the 129 member chamber. The SNP are on course for 73 seats – an absolute majority once again. If we are to turn our fortunes around, we must understand the new political landscape. While we should constantly emphasise the Labour values, principles and vision that we share with our comrades elsewhere in the UK and our will to work with them towards those ends, we also have to assure the Scottish electorate that we are masters in our own house – and no one's 'branch office'.



BITEBACKS

'Maria's book... saves special ire for the Nationalists in a chapter recounting the steps to devolution after the 92 general election defeat. In Maria's experience, the SNP was absent when it came to the constitutional convention, had expressed no interest in women's representation in the Scottish parliament and its top political priority was the destruction of the Labour Party. Later, writing just prior to the recent Scottish referendum, Maria muses on why women appeared less keen on a breakaway than men, and then she reminds us that there was: "...not a single improvement in women's lives, voted for in either Holyrood or Westminster, in which the SNP led the way. National Minimum Wage – voted in by Labour MPs through the night while the Nationalists were tucked up in bed..." (Prompting one wag to say 'Stand up for Scotland? They couldnae stay awake for Scotland.')

(Laura Davison, *Campaign Briefing* 79)

ANNUAL CONFERENCE ALERT 2015

(cont. from front page)

Ladywood, Swansea East, Croydon South and Greenwich and Woolwich).

The reasons given by the CAC, in many cases, is that the issue raised in those rule changes were somehow covered by either the *Refounding Labour* review or the Collins Report. And, since the latter two documents were considered by Conference within the last 3 years, the rule changes fall foul of the “three year rule”. But the “three year rule” does not say that a rule change is out of order if its subject matter is vaguely referred to in a Conference document. No, the “three year rule” is very precise and specific; it says “When Party Conference has made a decision on a constitutional amendment, no resolution to amend the constitution or rules of the Party, having the same or a similar primary objective, shall appear on the agenda of the three following Annual Party Conferences” (for information, a “constitutional amendment” is a more formal way of describing a rule change). Now, not only did both *Refounding Labour* and Collins fail to cover the matters raised in several of the debarred rule changes, but certainly in relation to many of the debarred rule changes, no decision by Conference has been made within the last three years (or indeed for many years) on the same or similar primary objectives.

The CAC is pushing its luck on this! Delegates from several of the aggrieved CLPs are likely to voice their objections from the rostrum (probably on Sunday morning). They should be given full support.

The correct procedure would have been to have accepted at least some of the nine as in order and to have timetabled them for debate on Tuesday morning. Then the NEC could have asked Conference to “remit/oppose” any of the full changes that contained proposals that the NEC considered fell within the ambit of *Refounding Labour* / Collins. Indeed, this is precisely what is happening to the three proposal rule changes that slipped through the CAC’s net (from Liverpool West Derby, Wyre Forest,

(cont. on next page)



KEY VOTES IN PARTY ELECTIONS AT CONFERENCE

National Constitutional Committee (Constituency Section) elected at conference by delegates

Vote:

Gary Heather

Make sure your delegates are mandated.

Pre-conference OMOV ballots: last day for joining or registering August 12th; ballots close 12noon September 10th.

Leadership/deputy leadership

The Campaign for Labour Party Democracy (CLPD) recommends a first preference vote for Jeremy Corbyn for Leader and Angela Eagle for Deputy with Tom Watson as second preference for deputy.

Check our website for further details:

www.clpd.org.uk

CAC Constituency section

Vote:

Jon Lansman, Katy Clark

National Policy Forum elections

Check the names of our grassroots candidates in your region by contacting CLPD Secretary Peter Willsman on 01865 244459. You will need to leave a message.

MANDATING OF DELEGATES IS IN ORDER

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

HOW DO YOU SOLVE A PROBLEM LIKE MARIA...?

LAURA DAVISON, MEMBER OF FOLKESTONE AND HYTHE CLP, REVIEWS MARIA FYFE'S A PROBLEM LIKE MARIA, A WOMAN'S EYE VIEW OF LIFE AS AN MP. LUATH PRESS 2014

So the whips would trill when referring to the only female Labour MP in Scotland – Maria Fyfe – when she was first elected in 1987. Considered rebellious, in this memoir she comes across as considered, intelligent and unafraid.

“Considered, intelligent and unafraid”

Maria's book is subtitled 'A woman's eye view of life as an MP.' It is an account of the political period to 2001 when she stepped down, and beyond. But it isn't narrowly focused on Westminster. Maria was a prime mover in a really impressive array of important campaigns at grassroots level and used the parliamentary process effectively and thoughtfully to advance these causes: the book describes her campaign work to oppose the poll tax, the scandal of blacklisting, water privatisation, fighting to improve poor housing, getting rid of top rate VAT on sanitary towels and tampons, highlighting toxic shock syndrome, and important constituency work exposing a dodgy dentist later convicted of fraud and winning a new independent investigation into the case of a constituent found guilty of murder. It also recounts the incredible staying power needed in the battle for equal representation for women in the new Scottish parliament. Only Labour achieved this gender balance when the first MSPs were ultimately elected following many years of discussion underpinned by the valuable work of a Scottish constitutional convention in which Maria played a significant role.

Maria's book is funny, witty and pulls no punches. It saves special ire for the Nationalists in a chapter recounting the steps to devolution after the 1992 general election defeat. In Maria's experience, the SNP was absent when it came to the constitutional convention, had expressed no interest in women's representation in the Scottish parliament and its top political priority was the destruction of the Labour Party. Later, writing just prior to the recent Scottish referendum, Maria

muses on why women appeared less keen on a breakaway than men, and then she reminds us that there was:

“...Not a single improvement in women's lives, voted for in either Holyrood or Westminster, in which the SNP led the way. National Minimum Wage – voted in by Labour MPs through the night while the Nationalists were tucked up in bed” (prompting one wag to say ‘Stand up for Scotland? They couldnae stay awake for Scotland.’) “(The) Living Wage – put in place by Labour councils from Glasgow to London before the SNP made a move. And a number of people on the Yes campaign board come from sectors where the pay levels are notoriously low. Equal Pay – only warm words for years...”

Maria's position is that England is not the problem, the Tories are.

Maria wanted to be free to speak her mind and the book explains her decision to resign twice from the front bench in order to be able to do so – firstly over the first Gulf war and secondly to avoid being part of the New Labour machine. But during her time as part of the front bench she seems particularly to have felt affection for Shadow Minister for Women Jo Richardson, and continued to work with her informally after resigning.

Maria's brief analysis of the Blair years in government and the Party's record towards the end of the book, is simple. She does recognise the good things achieved – the Good Friday Agreement, the investment in schools and hospitals, Sure Start, debt relief and the minimum wage but she is critical that more credit wasn't claimed for these reforms. However she emphasises that there was no tackling of the fundamentals of wealth and power or the restrictive trade union laws, and cites the loss of four million Labour votes by 2005.

On the global economic crisis of 2008 she is very clear. Citing right wing propaganda she says:

“None of this is the fault of free market enthusiasts governing over us. Oh dear me, no. It was the New Labour Government, falling into old left wing bad habits, squandering money on stopping the rain running down classroom walls, and cutting hospital waiting lists. This is just a lie... Bear in mind too, that at the time of the crash, our national debt was less than New Labour inherited from John Major in 1997.”

A lot of what Maria says is just common sense. But then, common sense is not so common.

(Conference Alert, cont. from page 8)

Colne Valley and Huddersfield CLPs). In all three cases the NEC will be seeking “remit/oppose” of the rule change.

The following debarred rule changes are ones where the CAC really is pushing its luck!

- To give Conference delegates the right to refer back part of any policy document without having to reject the entire document (from no less than seven CLPs).

At present Conference has to vote on huge documents on a “take-it-or-leave-it” basis.

- To give each CLP (and Union) the right to submit, in any one year, a contemporary motion *and* a rule change proposal (from Derby North and Mid Bedfordshire CLPs).

At present a CLP/affiliated organisation can only submit either a contemporary motion or a rule change.

- To replace the “trigger ballot” process in relation to sitting MPs by more robust reselection procedures (from Birmingham Ladywood CLP).

At present the “trigger ballot” arrangements are often criticised for being insufficiently robust.

SUNDAY'S PRIORITY BALLOT

USE YOUR VOTE, DON'T WASTE IT

CLPs must give guidance to their delegates about how to vote in this ballot. Above all they must be made aware that there is no point whatsoever in wasting a vote by supporting any of the same four resolutions supported by the unions in the ballot even if, as is likely, you support any or all of them. The union four are rightly guaranteed automatic inclusion for debate. To maximise range of debate and to make sure issues important to CLPs get a hearing, CLP delegates must make their choices on different subjects from the union four, thus giving Conference the opportunity to debate four subjects from the CLP section of the ballot and thus eight subjects in all. Delegates are likely to come under illegitimate and even browbeating pressure from Party officials, including parliamentarians, to replicate the union four, thus restricting the number of issues. Don't be fooled by this undemocratic malpractice. CLPD will be advising delegates of the four union choices in the Sunday edition of its Yellow Pages.

THE ESTABLISHMENT

**JOE GOY, RETIRED TEACHER,
LABOUR ACTIVIST AND
CLPD SUPPORTER IN DEVON
REVIEWS OWEN JONES,
THE ESTABLISHMENT AND
HOW THEY GET AWAY WITH IT,
PENGUIN 2014**

Suppose you decide to go beyond arguing about wielders of political power whom you happen to dislike, with a view to taking some action against them. It would be obviously useful to have a detailed account of what is inevitable, what defensible and what totally unacceptable. The difficulty of separating these provides an additional challenge in analysing this densely detailed and well-informed survey of our present plutocracy.

The term ‘establishment’ in this context arose in the mid-50’s to refer to informal patterns of power based on a broader context than ‘social class’. Jones occasionally preserves a neutral connotation, denying either a national conspiracy or malevolent individuals. At times he seems to imply that its ‘mental set’ has a fundamentally economic basis in terms of the contrast between post-war

statism and the Thatcherite (and, he would say, Blairite) rhetoric of ‘free market forces’.

This policy is described as defending a reduction of state redistribution of wealth, diminution of trades union influence and the beginnings of privatisation of health, energy and railway services – all in the interests of ‘choice’ and efficiency. In a nation based on an unwritten constitution and a tradition of compliance, it is difficult to determine how much would be democratically acceptable. The main solution, as Jones agrees, is to blame a biased media distorting or shaping public opinion. In an account of several key interviews he describes how journalists, especially editors, are in close touch with pro-Establishment politicians and businessmen, with whom they share a common background.

More broadly Jones traces the intimate interconnection between businessmen and politicians, both in informal socialising and membership of think-tanks, lobbies and quangoes. Politicians may be assured of influential employment both during and after their public service. Specifically he shows how successive governments have favoured City interests, abolishing controls, encouraging speculation at the expense of taxpayers,

and condoning tax avoidance. The defence that 1% of us pay 30% tax is seen as misleading, in view of indirect taxation and the predicament of smaller taxpayers. The danger of driving the rich abroad is mostly discounted.

Freedom from state interference has very clear limits concerning the police. A substantial pay rise earned their compliance in confrontation with the miners as well as illiberal treatment of minorities. In general, political rhetoric about freedom is contradicted by legislation favouring the rich. The state is then seen as protective of an oligarchy – denial of the value of government controls conceals an opposing philosophy, just as condemnation of the BBC as ‘left-wing’ seeks to conceal a pervasive right-wing climate. Deciding what is or ought to be illegal is dramatically influenced by accounts of astronomical salaries, bonuses and bail-outs.

In general a false consensus producing freedom from state interference conceals the systematic use of state power to enrich a selfish few. Jones’s solutions are regarded by some as ‘disappointing’ (see Google) but this is perhaps an unfair comment on a passionate spokesman for a new, fairer and altogether more hopeful social order.

WE CANNOT CARRY ON LIVING WITH CAPITALISM

**STEPHEN MARKS REVIEWS
NAOMI KLEIN’S THIS
CHANGES EVERYTHING,
ALLEN LANE 2014**

We cannot carry on living with capitalism. That is the simple uncompromising message of Naomi Klein’s passionately forensic call to action against climate change denial – which most of us, if we are honest, buy into most of the time!

Most left activists would deny they are in denial – hasn’t the green agenda been incorporated into most left platforms? Wasn’t Ed Miliband’s Climate Change Act the greenest legislation adopted in any G20 country? Is not even the lip service paid to the environment at successive international climate change conferences a sign of some progress?

Klein argues and demonstrates that this is all too little too late. Back in the 90s, at the time of the Kyoto Protocol, an achievable 2% per annum reduction in CO₂ emissions could have been achieved in time to avoid the disastrous tipping point of a 2°C increase in global average temperature. But at the present rate of emissions we would get there around 2039. At that point, scientists fear, feedback mechanisms will come into

play which mean we will no longer be able to control the consequences, escalating to the catastrophic 4°C level which could make civilised life impossible!

To avoid this would require annual cuts of CO₂ emissions by the wealthy countries of between 8 and 10 per cent – almost impossible to achieve at any time, but least of all after nearly three decades of neoliberal globalisation privatising the public sphere deregulating the corporate sector and cutting taxes and public spending!

In principle it could still be managed by a policy of controlled reduction in high-carbon sectors of the economy and expanding low-carbon sectors, which would also create jobs. But this requires economic planning. It would require an end to further CO₂ extraction, and taxing the polluters to fund the cleanup and the transition!

While that might be popular, there would be less enthusiasm for the stabilising of rich country living standards at a 1970s level, which she argues would also be involved. This would clearly need some rigorous radical thinking about the real meaning of ‘living standards’ both quantitatively and qualitatively. The question is perhaps not so much whether this can be achieved as whether it can be avoided!

But Klein insists on seeing the threat as an opportunity! “It could be the best argument progressives have ever had to demand the revival and rebuilding of local economies; to reclaim our democracies from corrosive corporate influence; to block harmful new free trade deals and rewrite old ones; to invest in starving public infrastructures like mass transit and affordable housing; to take back ownership of essential services like energy and water; to remake our sick agricultural system into something much healthier; to open borders to migrants whose displacement is linked to climate impacts; to finally respect indigenous land rights – all of which would help to end grotesque levels of inequality within our nations and between them”!

There is much more – a demolition of technological fixes, and of faith in millionaire ‘Green Messiahs’ such as Richard Branson, as well as the scams of ‘emissions trading’. And an impressive roundup of grass-roots alternatives from the local energy networks which already provide 25% of Germany’s energy from renewables, to the powerful resistance of indigenous communities in the Americas. But the scale of the crisis challenges all accepted wisdoms – including those of the political Left!

THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF CLASS

COLIN BURGESS, THORNBURY AND YATE CLP, REVIEWS THOMAS PICKETTY, *CAPITAL IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY*, HARVARD UP AND AVAILABLE ONLINE 2014

Let us begin our review with a quote from the last paragraph in Piketty's book, While apologising for his use of statistics, he writes:

"Yet it seems to me that all social scientists, all journalists and commentators, all activists in the unions and in politics of whatever stripe, and especially all citizens should take a serious interest in money, its measurement, the facts surrounding it, and its history. Those who have it never fail to defend their interests. Refusing to deal with numbers rarely serves the interests of the least well off".

Describing his monumental work Piketty begins: "In my view, *Capital in the 21st Century* is primarily a book about the history of the distribution of income and wealth." That is to say, it is not about the production, the exchange or the consumption of wealth. The book clarifies the complexity of the subject by using, for his analysis of the numbers he finds, three focal points: wealth, the economic focus, taxation, the political focus, and class, the sociological focus. Bringing these points together, clarifying and examining them, we have:

1. The Economic focus: this can be expressed in the formula wealth inequality equals Return on capital (r) is greater than ($>$) the growth rate of the economy (g), the surplus of which in a capitalist society accumulates in the wealth-holdings of the capitalists and their families.

2. The Political focus: the preferred way of dealing with wealth inequality in democratic societies has been through taxation, although what is considered the optimum tax is always contested, especially, as Piketty writes, 'by those who have the wealth, who never fail to defend their own interests'.

3. The Sociological focus: the capital – income ratio, and capital shares – translate in social reality into the capital-owning class and their [by definition] large share holdings in an always uneasy relationship with those who don't receive income from share-holdings but have to earn their livelihood by working for those who do get their money from the labours of others.

So: essentially, 'class' equals $r > g$ divided by taxation, which in turn means capital shares plus income gradient and several other aspects of social reality necessary to supply taxation levels, for example ownership of physical means: land, factories and workshops, domestic dwellings and transport. Beneath the class of owners, we have the larger class of controllers ranging from owner-controllers at the top down to producer-controllers at the bottom. Beneath these jobs come the producers and the "industrial reserve army" in waiting, even beyond the Mediterranean, in North Africa. It also requires a political system with a democratic legislature, executive and judiciary to administer the taxation. We can elaborate on these essentials, but our main concern here is to review what Thomas Piketty makes of all this.

For me, one of the strong points of Piketty's book is his use of diagrams. To review Piketty's book, once I gained some orientation to his understanding through the first chapter, I have relied on analysing the words through the diagrams. It is worth spending a bit of time working through Piketty's first fundamental and universal law of capitalism, expressed in the formula α (income from capital in national income) β (the capital income ratio) equals β (the rate of return on capital) times r (the rate of return on capital) times β , just to get a feel for his method. (see pp52ff for amore detailed explanation of this law). Because the book is not an O-Level economics textbook, but an adult discussion of the advanced form of monopoly capitalism in

and through which we live in our liberal-democratic culture, shot through with the daylight of socialism, it is not an easy read. That our book is a macro-economics text is clear from

the first diagrams 1.1 to 1.3 on pages 60-61, and table 1.1 distribution of the world Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Another benefit is the economics focus on [social] reality as against illusion. Piketty does try to counter the abstraction of economic reality from its embedment in social reality, by bringing in historical and political aspects

as well. To give the sociological side of the discussion, the qualitative side of the picture, Piketty also uses English and French literature of Jane Austen and Honoré de Balzac to refer to wealth and the meaning of money in the early nineteenth century.

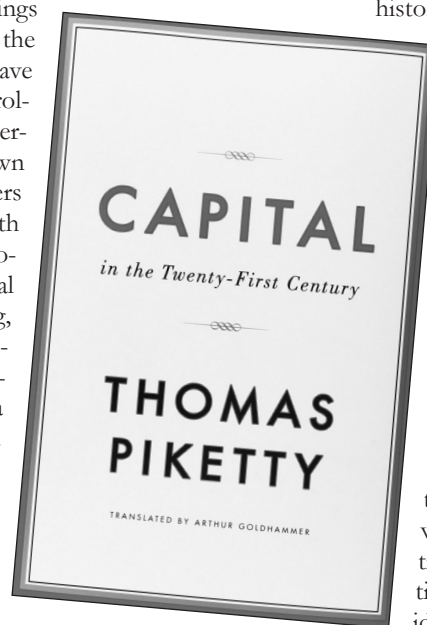
So, briefly we conclude, Piketty demonstrates the value of detailed empirical work on which to base generalisations that separate effectively social reality from ideological illusion. This does not relieve the social

scientist, or the political activist, from the responsibility of building a sound intellectual edifice in which to house the model of social reality used to negotiate our increasingly complex world.



Photo: Sue Gardner

Thomas Piketty



BITEBACKS

Q: How many Chicago School economists does it take to change a lightbulb?

A: None, if the lightbulb needed changing, the market would have already done it.

(Quoted by Raj Patel, *The Value of Nothing* 2011.)

'Bringing markets under control requires us to subdue governments and corporations and there are ways to make that happen – but all of them will require us to overcome our current economic blindness but our political blindness as well.'

(Raj Patel, *The Value of Nothing* 2011.)

Further reading

- Thomas Piketty: "About Capital in the 21st Century" piketty@psemail.eu
- The Economist Explains: Thomas Piketty's "Capital", summarised in four paragraphs. *The Economist* May 4th 2014
- Hans G. Despain: hans.despain@nichols.edu

THE BLAIR SUPREMACY UNDER SCRUTINY

FORMER NOTTINGHAM SOUTH MP ALAN SIMPSON REVIEWS LEWIS MINKIN'S NEW BOOK *THE BLAIR SUPREMACY*, MUP, 2014*

Lewis Minkin is nothing if not meticulous. Reading *The Blair Supremacy* is like sitting alongside skilled forensic scientists as they dissect the multi-layered elements that contributed to the death of the body in front of them. This isn't quite where Blair left the Labour Party, but it's not far short. For all its detail, Minkin still manages to make the book read like a thriller. What makes it captivating is Minkin's grasp of the scrupulous planning that went into Blair's managerialist coup that, for a time, took ownership of both the Labour Party and the country.



“The Blairite plan was never just to lead the Labour Party, but to emasculate it.”

I once described the Blairite revolution as a transformation that turned Labour from a political Party into a Tupperware Party, but I was wrong. The description is far too benign. No one falls out of love with Tupperware, at least not in the way the country fell out of love with Blair. Tupperware is also as useful to the poor as to the rich. And Tupperware never stripped meaning and values from everything it touched. Blairism did. In doing so, it also ruthlessly exploited (and then dumped) a lot of decent people whose lives had been devoted to the Labour Party.

Even today, many of these – MPs as well as Party loyalists – have difficulty acknowledging how extensively, and cynically, they were taken for such a ride. For them, the book should be made compulsory reading.

If it has a weakness, Minkin's analysis falls short only in the absence of a meta-nar-

rative; like explaining the Chilean coup without any reference to the USA. But I shall return to this later.

Reluctant admiration

At one level you have to admire the coup. The Blairite plan was never just to lead the Labour Party, but to emasculate it. To do so, every part of the Party's machinery of governance had to be subjugated to the Leader's whim.

“[Blair] drove Party officials to adopt a new managerial identity, followed by the creation of an extended managerial organisation which produced greater powers and protection for the Leader...” (p118)

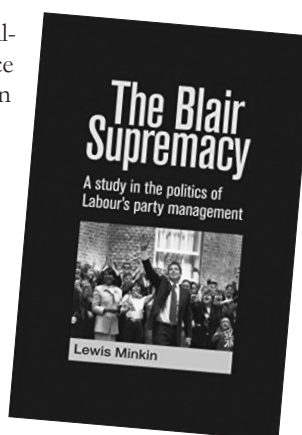
Minkin takes the reader on a step-by-step journey through this process... and the machinations that lay behind it.

“The new ascendancy of the Party Leader and his office over the Party organisation, and Blair's carelessness over protocol and territory, sometimes had the effect of adding to the internal administrative problems of the General Secretary. New figures could simply ‘emerge’ in various roles in Party headquarters sent by or in the name of the Leader”. (p151)

At times it is surreal to read through something you lived through, but Minkin's dissection covers the entirety of my parliamentary life (and more). It always puzzled me how, despite all the warnings and bollockings, I never got expelled from the Parliamentary Party. Now I know.

It wasn't that Blair's ‘Ultras’ lacked a desire for purges, it was just that they screwed up more often than they expected. Their ‘managerialist’ obsessions, which politically house-trained the Party, created a space in which MPs, Whips and others still backed away from pooing on their own carpet. The machine knew that Blair would get the blame – ultimate proof that his ‘control freakery’ had no limits. And since ‘protecting the Leader’ had already displaced ‘promoting the Party’ as the Supremacy's over-riding duty, the hounds always got called off.

To be fair, some of this was also down to the wiser counsel of Whips like Nick Brown and George Mudie. Both were better



people than the Supremacy deserved, and it was good to see how effectively Minkin recognised this in his description of events. I guess that many of the Labour rebels were also saved by divisions between the Blair and Brown camps, in what was to become the running distraction throughout the Labour years in government.

The Blair-Brown distraction

For me, the friction between these two characters – equally damaged, equally obsessive – was often a manipulated divide; spun out to lock the PLP into the smallness of playground politics rather than the bigger canvas of real politics.

As Minkin observed:

“Weak accountability, absence of review, and machine loyalty to the Leader, cemented by the Brown-Blair wars became, in effect, a managed insulation” (p689). Loyalty invariably displaced integrity (or clarity) in the debates of the day. Minkin captures this brilliantly in his description of the seminal moments surrounding New Labour's first internal rebellion – the vote on Lone Parent Benefits.

Notionally, they (Blair and Brown) shared a belief that “the left-wing Campaign Group appeared... to be the driving force of a limited opposition” [and therefore]... “They, the usual suspects, had to be faced down and publicly pulled into line some time or other, so why not over this early issue and now?” (p411)

There is some comfort in believing that both monumentally misjudged their moment.

Minkin describes much of this as a tactical misjudgment on Brown's part rather than a cynical move on Blair's. Standing in the middle of it felt slightly different. Many of us saw no real divide between Blair and Brown. Neither showed an ability to step back and accept they may have got something wrong. Both were obsessed with demonstrating their power as leaders. Loyalty and obedience became articles of faith, outside of which Labour's world would crumble.

In the same way the Mafia just asks you to destroy something precious to demonstrate loyalty to the cause, Labour MPs were asked to give a kicking to some of the most vulnerable in society. This was a difficult step for many to take.

*CLPD warmly congratulates Lewis Minkin on his brilliant book which examines so cogently Party management and democracy under Blair. As a thank you to Lewis we publish in full this excellent review by Alan Simpson which does justice to the book and captures its forensic analysis.

Most of the women MPs had posed, proudly, around posters proclaiming 'Labour Women Make the Difference'. I remember the looks of shock when they turned up to lobbies organised by the Labour Women's Action Committee (LWAC), only to see the final word had been changed to 'Indifference'. This was not the politics they thought they had stood for.

For 'the machine', however, it was the first big test of their ability to 'squeeze'; and there were members of both the Blair and Brown camps who loved it. MPs could be leaned on, cajoled, abused or bullied, all in the name of loyalty. Many had their Constituency officials phoned and told to kick their MP into line. Some had their families phoned and told not to get too comfortable with an MP's life because they would be thrown out before the next election. All were told it was New Labour (i.e. Blair) that they owed allegiance to. Conscience was a liability not an asset.

Both Blair and Brown may have wished to run with their 'Ultras' demands for a purge of the 47 rebels who ignored these entreaties, but the impact on the PLP was different. Most were reluctant to expel those who went into a Division Lobby that their hearts told them they should have been in too. It established an Achilles heel that was (fortunately) to remain throughout the Supremacy.

Lies, damned lies and New Labour

One of the great strengths of Minkin's book is its description of how all the groundwork of this managerial coup had taken place long before the 1997 election. The Machine may have been surprised by the scale of the Labour victory but it already knew that it would rule by manipulation and disinformation, rather than through a new era of democratic engagement.

"It remained a crucial feature of the rolling coup that the reality was never subject to a formal Party authorisation. In great measure it was covered by secrecy and lack of accountability." (p156)

"The prized techniques of spinning became integral to a common view of managerial professionalism." (p168-9)

When Blair talked of "an unbroken line of accountability" (p688) he meant everyone, and everything, being accountable to him.

Blair's (initial) personal popularity was played out in talk of 'direct democracy' – a Leader connecting directly to the people. It was a great way of sidelining every structure of accountability that the Party had ever created. Minkin describes this with painful accuracy and unsparing honesty.

At the heart of what Minkin calls 'the rolling coup' (p118) was Blair himself – vul-

nerable, charismatic, insecure and obsessive – the centrepiece of a giant political Ponzi scheme. Truth was always a moveable feast. Statistics, or supportive polling data, would always be found to justify the latest move to 'marketise' and individualise everything advanced by New Labour. It wasn't just Clause 4 that Blair wanted shot of, it was the whole notion of collectivism. Business, particularly big business, wanted none of it.

So it was that, under the guise of new social partnerships, huge tranches of the social fabric of Britain were transferred into the hands (pockets) of the private sector. My only quibble is that this was as much Brown's agenda as Blair's. The debacle of PFI and PPP debts that remain tied round the neck of public services is their common legacy to the country, not just a Blairite one.

The shadow of Nuremberg

It is only fitting, however, that Blair's greatest lie should also be the source of his ultimate undoing.

Without doubt Blair was a consummate performer, with an unparalleled ability to lie for any cause. On most issues, he simply moved on and the machine behind him swept contradictory evidence under the nearest carpet. But war doesn't work like that... not, at least, when it is a war of choice.

As the Chair of Labour Against the War, I knew how far we had gone to bring real 'evidence' within the reach of Members of Parliament. Weapons Inspectors had come in, assuring us they had no evidence of any remaining 'weapons of mass destruction' (WMDs). International diplomats had arrived urging more time, and more diplomacy. We even circulated our own detailed pamphlet to all Labour MPs, on the eve of the Commons debate, dismantling the claims made in Blair's 'Dodgy Dossier'. But most of us knew that Blair had already promised Bush the war he was looking for. Nothing was going to deflect Blair from his own jihadist inclinations.

Minkin is right in depicting the debate as one of Blair's most outstanding parliamentary moments. "The impression was heavily conveyed that this was a man who understood, better than anyone in the House or the country, precisely and accurately what was being faced..." (p548)

"So magisterial and committed was this speech that it made personal the unstated choice being offered. It was Blair or Saddam." (p548)

This was where Blair pushed "Trust me" and "If you only knew what I know" to its limits. It was some achievement, to get decent people to vote in ways that Nuremberg would have judged an inadmissible defence.

But the war, its consequences and the absence of weapons of mass destruction turned out to be Blair's unforgivable sin, the lie that will dog him to the end of his days. Hubris had given the public, and the Party, something to hate him for.

The meta-narrative

The only thing that Lewis Minkin's fabulous book lacks is a wrap around. For all we come to understand about the 'how' of Blair's 'rolling coup', there is nothing that addresses the 'why'. It isn't enough to put it all down

CLPD'S CHARTER FOR A DEMOCRATIC CONFERENCE

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

NOT TO BE MISSED

2016 CLPD AGM

Saturday February 27th,
11.30am,
Conway Hall,
Red Lion Square.

*Report of 2015 AGM available
on CLPD website.*

to ‘control freakery’. To learn anything from this, we have to put it in a context.

Psychologically, Blair was always drawn towards wealth and celebrity, and has draped himself in more of it than can ever buy forgiveness. His favoured acolytes all went the same way; becoming payroll beneficiaries in everything Blair privatised. But the brains are to be found elsewhere.

“Blair had long been groomed by the neoliberalism that was running away with American politics.”

My take was that Blair had long been groomed by the neoliberalism that was running away with American politics. The agenda was not to make Labour ‘business friendly’ but Big Business compliant. The global agenda of the time was about turning public services into corporate profit streams.

Deregulation of financial markets, the WTO, TRIPS and a series of US adventurist wars were all part of a bigger project. Capitalism had tired of nation states, an obligation to pay taxes and to support social cohesion. It was the beginning of the era of corporate feudalism we are now knee-deep in. The creation of new global creatures – corporate citizens – required the creation of new cultural norms they could flourish within. ‘Rights’ were to be transferred from citizens to corporations. ‘Duties’ went the other way. Somewhere along this trajectory from citizens to serfs is where we are now. Blair was not the architect of this. His shallowness vanity and venal interests just made him a willing partner. The real ‘supremacy’ lay elsewhere.

Accolades to the invisible

Some, in parliament, understood this. And it is in a tribute to them that I want to end

this review. The Campaign Group of Labour MPs barely figure in Minkin’s book, but they were the only bolt-hole of real political thought that I found throughout my parliamentary years. Some of their leading voices get no mention at all. Yet they were the MPs you would always find on picket lines, at trade union and social movement rallies, on anti-war marches and at the forefront of campaigns to restore (rather than exploit) the planet.

In Chapter 12, Minkin details the systematic ways in which ‘the Blair coup’ set out to turn the parliamentary Left into ‘a sealed tomb’; one that would not be reopened by new, dissenting, Labour MPs entering parliament. Under the guise of ‘improving the quality of candidates’, Blair’s machine filleted the panel of candidates approved for selection by “eliminating candidates who ‘appeared not to have a pragmatic line on policy disagreements.’” (p378)

This left Campaign Group MPs amongst the few voices of ‘real’ Labour left in parliament. These were the MPs who ventured out into more radical political campaigning around the country. This was not just about ‘keeping the faith’ but about an engagement with the real world that exists beyond the limits of parliamentary intrigue. Sadly, life beyond the machine is an important part of the story that Minkin misses out.

Epitomised by Tony Benn, these were the Labour MPs – socialists – who set out to explain that we always had bigger/better choices open to us than the ones the Supremacy would have us to believe.

Of course it is sad that neither the trade union movement nor the Party had the courage to wrap itself around those holding out this bigger vision. But if Labour is to salvage anything from the superficiality of ‘the Blair experience’ it will be the knowledge that we cannot ‘manage’ our way out of the current crisis, any more than we can ‘shop’ our way out.

The world is locked into a series of crises that corporate feudalism has no answer

to; crises not susceptible to individualised solutions. Tomorrow’s ‘security’ will only be found if we grasp just how interdependent we really are. Solutions will have to be on the scale of a new post-1945 settlement; a settlement with the planet as much as ourselves.

Tony Blair never was never going to be relevant to this. But for those who feel there are still scores to settle, here is an intriguing possibility.

What if common interests and common ownership/stewardship turn out to be the only viable shape of tomorrow’s politics? Think about it; the return of Clause 4 – in local, national *and* global terms.

Now that would be something for Lewis Minkin to write about! And wherever he was holed up, it would be guaranteed to really cheese-off Blair. Love it.



BITEBACKS

Minkin, in his own words, to whet your appetites: ‘Managing the Party Conference. In future, management had, in the words of Peter Mandelson, to be conducted like “a military operation” to “defuse, discount and eventually dismiss any vote against the leadership”... From 1995 the central managerial aim was to project the Leader as the supreme and acclaimed force within the Party, ‘Presidential’ superiority was boosted, if necessary, by taking some of the best bits from proposed speeches of ministerial colleagues. It was reinforced also by preventing anything disturbing his superior status. For many years it had been the custom that two long-serving old Party members received merit awards and would make speeches just prior to that of the Leader.’

(Minkin, *The Blair Supremacy*, extracts, Chapter 11.)

TEL’S TALES

MPS EXPENSES SCANDAL: THE MATTER OF MRS DUNCAN SMITH

There is an unsavoury episode in the parliamentary history of Ian Duncan Smith that he will be hoping people will have forgotten. This concerns Dr Vanessa Gearson, who IDS appointed as his Chief of Staff for part of his time as Tory Leader (prior to this Dr Gearson worked as Private Secretary to the Chair of the Tory Party).

On 16th October 2003, Dr Gearson gave a long and very detailed written statement to the House of Commons Select Committee on Standards and Privileges. This concerned “the matter of the investigation into the employment of Betsy Duncan Smith”. Dr Gearson had been surprised to discover that Mrs Duncan Smith was employed for 25 hours a week at £18,000 per annum, paid for out of IDS’s Parliamentary Office Costs Allowance.

Dr Gearson was “unwilling to support Mr Duncan Smith’s contention that his wife had worked for him in a significant capacity during the time I spent as head of his office”. Dr Gearson saw “absolutely no evidence of the work carried out by Mrs Duncan Smith”.

In support of this contention Dr Gearson examined four key tasks: “The Diary”, “Correspondence”, “Financial Arrangements” and “Practical Considerations”. Dr Gearson “saw no evidence of involvement by Mrs Duncan Smith in any of these key tasks.”

Dr Gearson pointed out that the political and parliamentary offices of the IDS couple were entirely integrated and “I was in a unique and pivotal position in overseeing the work carried out in both offices”. Also from the evidence, “it is difficult to accept Mr Duncan Smith’s assertion that Mrs Duncan Smith was working for him in a parliamentary capacity from a fully functional office at their home”.

Dr Gearson raised her concerns with

people close to IDS and “not one person ever questioned or contradicted my assertion that Mrs Duncan Smith was being paid without appearing to do any work”.

Dr Gearson stated that she was briefed against and threatened, but she stood firm.

Dr Gearson summed up as follows: “It remains my conclusion that the press allegations made regarding the employment of Mrs Duncan Smith are significantly more likely to be true than not”.

CLASS WAR

Even the wishy-washies on *The Guardian* must wonder why the Tories are planning to attack the unions so viciously when days lost through industrial action are at an historical low and the share of national wealth going to wages is in secular decline. The answer is simple. The Tories are reinforcing the dominance of the bosses, their class. They try to dress it up by arguing that strong employment rights have an adverse impact on jobs. Yet countries with the strongest employment rights, like the Netherlands, Norway and Austria, invariably have lower unemployment rates than the UK.

Somehow the following statement found its way into the 1981 Green Paper issued by the Thatcher government: “The freedom of employees to combine and to withdraw their labour is their fundamental safeguard against the inherent imbalance of power between the employer and the individual employee. This freedom has to be accepted as the hallmark of a free society”. Don’t expect a similar statement this time.

THERE IS NO DEBATE

The media try to suggest that there is an intellectual debate about the impact of fiscal austerity. In fact this is hardly the case. A survey of academic economists by the Centre for Macroeconomics has found that a mere

15% agreed with the claim that the deficit reduction policy of the 2010-2015 government had a positive effect on GDP, whilst 66% disagreed.

There is also lots of research showing the importance of spending and thus fiscal multipliers – which boost the economy. This shows how very costly austerity has been.

An eminent economist, Paul Krugman, has commented, “claiming there is a debate about the effect of austerity is like saying there’s a debate about whether the world is flat or not!”

THE TRUTH ABOUT THE DEBT

The post-General Election responses by Party activists to NEC member, Ann Black, emphasise the seriousness of the mistake that Labour made in not systematically rebutting the Tory lie, that Labour was somehow responsible for the depth of the economic crises and the debt. A look at the facts soon exposes the lie. These were helpfully summarised in a recent letter to *The Guardian*. Debt-to-GDP ratio fell from 42.5% in 1996-7 to 35.9% in 2006-7. No government surplus could have funded the £300bn exposure the Labour government took on to keep the banks open. Then, consequent from the banking debacle, GDP fell 6% in 2009-10 (one of the largest and greatest ever falls) and the tax take fell 18%.

We also know that the market (Osborne’s lodestar) was perfectly happy with the way Gordon Brown was running the economy. At the first sign of trouble in any particular country (e.g. Greece, Portugal, Spain etc) the sovereign bond yields of that country shoot up. But under Gordon there was little fluctuation in the yields on gilts.

During the period of austerity after World War II, Britain’s ratio of debt to GDP was 238%. In 2010 it was 80%. Yet after the war, and despite the huge debt, Labour created the NHS and the Welfare State.

In 2015, however, there is one debt that looks serious. The UK has a balance of payments deficit of 5.9% of GDP – the largest such debt in peacetime since 1830! Osborne’s spiel about the “march of the makers”, that’s another lie.

Also, for years Osborne has tried to justify his austerity programme by saying it is unfair to saddle the younger generation with a load of hefty debt repayments. Yet in his latest Budget, Osborne has done precisely that!

WHAT ABOUT THE WORKERS?

During the General Election the Scottish Nationalists portrayed themselves as more anti-Tory than Labour. Many of our supporters found this rather galling. They have not forgotten that when the Callaghan government was brought down by one vote, all

11 SNP MPs voted with Thatcher.

Research carried out by GMB Scotland has revealed that more than 90% of SNP General Election candidates, MPs, MSPs and MEPs are from the top three occupational groupings (e.g. 27% had been directors, or senior executives and 45% were from the professions). Only a handful had a manual occupational background. The GMB highlighted the fact that in Paisley, Jim Sheridan, a former shop floor worker and union rep, was replaced by a senior executive from McDonalds. And in Rutherglen and Hamilton West, Tom Greatrex, a former regional officer for a manual union, was replaced by a senior manager with a blue chip firm.

CORRUPTION STARTS AT HOME

David Cameron made several “holier than thou” speeches on the subject of the Fifa scandal. But he forgets his manifesto offer of the “right to buy” to tenants of housing associations. What is that if not a bribe? Not to mention all the peers that are created after making generous donations to the Tory Party.

The OECD examined 400 suspect deals by multi-national companies over 15 years. It found that the average bribe was worth almost £8.9 million – typically 11% of the value of the transaction. Bribes were usually paid to win contracts from state owned or controlled companies in the West, rather than in the developing world, and most bribe payers and takers were from wealthy countries.

Of course, it was a former Prime Minister who ordered the Serious Fraud Office to cease its investigation into the Saudi arms deals made by BAE Systems – namely Tony Blair in 2006.

BEWARE OF THE BLAIRITE CUCKOOS!

During the recent leadership election more and more Party members came to the view that the Blairites are apart from Labour’s mainstream. And, of course, that is an absolutely correct view. Take the case of leading Blairite John McTernan, who worked for the Party during the Blair years and was part of the inner circle. Another Blairite, Jim Murphy, on becoming Labour’s leader in Scotland appointed McTernan as his Chief of Staff.

Last September McTernan was a speaker at a fringe meeting at the Tory Party Conference, organised by the right-of-centre Policy Exchange “think tank”. The *Morning Star*, making use of a YouTube video, gave a report of McTernan’s contribution. Apparently this showed McTernan explaining how the Tories could outflank Labour, making admiring comments about Thatcher’s policies and suggesting the London Underground should be privatised.



BITEBACKS

“MPs who “lent” their nominations to Mr Corbyn to “broaden the debate” were “morons”.

‘It doesn’t really matter what the grassroots say’.

(John McTernan, Ex-adviser to Tony Blair, speaking on BBC’s *Newsnight*.)

“If there is a left case for PR, it has got to demonstrate a cogent political argument that there is a link between ‘fair’ voting and political progress.”

(Ray Davison, *Campaign Briefing* no 72, 2009)

CLPD FRINGE MEETING AT TUC

Lunchtime, Monday 14 September

UMi Hotel, Brighton, on seafront, 100 yards east from TUC

Speakers: Anneliese Dodds MEP ● Grahame Morris MP ● James Elliott (CLPD) ● Kate Osamor MP ● Christine Shawcroft (NEC) ● Steve Turner (Unite)

RED ALERT:

Don't forget to read the Willsman Guide to Conference. 2015 edition now available and as ever up to the usual exceptional standard of insight and intrigue.

The indispensable handbook for all delegates and anyone else who wants to understand what is really going on at Conference.

The Guide can be downloaded from www.grassrootslabour.net

CLPD fringe meetings at Labour Party conference

Both meetings at Friends Meeting House, Ship St, Brighton. Both entry £3 (concessions £1).

CLPD RALLY

6.30pm, Saturday 26 September

Chair: Lizzy Ali. Speakers: Ann Black ● Jeremy Corbyn MP ● Diana Holland (Unite) ● Tosh McDonald (ASLEF) ● Kate Osamor MP ● Nancy Platts ● Rida Vaquas ● Plus Pete Willsman giving a briefing for delegates.

CLPD'S REVIEW OF THE WEEK

7.15pm, Tuesday 29 September

Speakers: Kelvin Hopkins MP ● Jim Kennedy (chair of the Party) ● Clive Lewis MP ● Becky Long-Bailey MP ● Martin Mayer (Unite) ● Max Shanly ● Christine Shawcroft (NEC)

ABOUT CLPD AND ITS GAINS FOR PARTY DEMOCRACY

CLPD was formed in 1973 by a group of rank-and-file activists with support from about ten Labour MPs. The first President was Frank Allaun. The main motivation for the Campaign was the record of the Labour governments in the sixties and the way that Annual Conference decisions were continually ignored on key domestic and international issues. The immediate cause was Harold Wilson's imperious and undemocratic rejection in 1973 of any decision by Annual Conference to adopt an alternative economic policy involving the possible public ownership of some 25 strategic companies.

CLPD's first demand was, therefore, for mandatory reselection of MPs so that they would be under pressure to carry out Conference policies and be accountable to Party members. This demand was achieved in 1979/80 through the overwhelming support of CLPs and several major unions, especially those unions where the demand for reselection was won at their own annual conferences (eg. TGWU, AUEW, NUPE).

CLPD also sought to make the leader accountable through election by an electoral college involving MPs, CLPs and TUs. Previously Labour leaders were elected by MPs alone. This demand was achieved in January 1981 and was an advance for Party democracy, although some MPs saw it as a reason to defect and form the SDP, eventually to get fewer votes than Lord Sutch's Party.

CLPD additionally promoted a range of reforms to give Labour women and black members greater representation within the

Party. The main demand for a woman on every parliamentary shortlist was achieved over the period 1986-88.

CLPD will sometimes promote seemingly broader, non-democracy issues such as the significant extension of public ownership, defending the welfare state and the first-past-the-post electoral system (PR would mean no majority Labour Governments). All such policies derive from our commitment to socialist values and socialist advance.

The major focus of CLPD's work in recent years has been to win back the power for ordinary rank-and-file Party members, which has been surreptitiously transferred to the centre under the pretext of 'modernisation' and, ironically, 'extending Party democracy'. For example, recently CLPD campaigned for, and achieved, OMOV for

the CLP section of the National Policy Forum. CLPD continues to campaign for a real policy-making conference and an effective and accountable NEC.

Last year, at the 2014 Conference, CLPD made history: we achieved OMOV for the CLP section of the CAC and reform of the '3 year rule' in relation to rule changes.

■ To find out more about CLPD, visit our website at www.clpd.org.uk. CLPD can usually provide speakers for meetings, especially if requests are made well in advance. To arrange this, ring Francis Prideaux on 020 8960 7460 and leave a message for him if you get the machine and not the man himself.

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