



Johanna Baxter

National Executive Committee

Putting Members First

Report of National Executive Committee meeting held on 16th July 2013

Jonathan Ashworth was welcomed to his first meeting of the NEC. Jonathan replaces Tom Watson who was thanked for his contribution to the committee. Congratulations were passed on to Ann Black who picked up an OBE in the recent Honours and also former NEC member Tony Robinson, who picked up a knighthood, and staff members Carol Linforth and Ian Reilly who both picked up MBEs.

Matthew McGregor's Digital Report

- You will know from my previous report that [Blue State Digital](#) have been brought in to revolutionise the party's use of new technology and social media. At this meeting [Matthew McGregor](#), Head of Blue State Digital's London Office and former Obama advisor, presented his report on the party's current capabilities and proposals for developing those further.
- Many of the findings in relation to current capabilities reflect many of the frustrations that you have expressed to me previously – an under-developed strategy, too narrow an audience and need for additional tools. Matthew has been heartened by the huge enthusiasm for change at all levels of our organisation though which should make some of his recommendations easier to deliver.
- 5 goals for digital success were put forward - to ensure we grow our movement; to motivate our supporters; share our message; mobilise people to take their efforts off-line and raise more money through small donations.
- As an immediate priority we will need a new website to house our expanded efforts (see [my previous report on the introduction of Nationbuilder technology](#)), grow our digital team, bring in new tools to make campaigning more effective and efficient, make planning and reporting more transparent and establish new campaign tactics to generate more involvement.
- Matthew is keen to get feedback on 5 key questions to ensure development is targeted to your needs so please do let me know if you have views on any of these and I'll feed them back;
 1. How can we encourage local parties to share data?
 2. Do you have local activists with a great story? If so can you send them to stories@labour.org.uk with your name, contact number/e-mail and a couple of lines to explain what it's about?
 3. Are there examples of local council wins we can promote? If so can you send them in?
 4. What expertise do local parties have? And what skills or training do you think you need in relation to technology?
 5. What do people want to give to? What do you want to see your donations spent on?

Leaders Report

Ed Miliband referred to [the speech](#) he had given the previous week on Party reform. If you didn't see it or haven't read it yet I'd recommend doing so. Ed made clear that his starting point was to mend, not end the link with our trade union affiliates – so that it works both for union members and the party - and he wants to see more trade union members make an active choice to be involved in our party and the work of our local CLPs. On selections he wants to ensure there is a proper code of conduct and a cap on the amount of money candidates can spend getting selected. Ed has proposed a primary for selecting our next London Mayoral candidate and is open to looking at the use of primaries in other exceptional circumstances. And once individuals are selected and elected as Labour Parliamentarians he would want to put a limit on outside earnings, like they have in other countries.

The party's former General Secretary [Lord Ray Collins](#) has been tasked with looking at how these reforms could be introduced. This is no mean feat – there are huge challenges in the implementation of these reforms – but as a former Assistant General Secretary of Unite Ray knows the union link better than anyone. The discussion that followed was a privilege to be part of – it was a detailed debate with unity in approaching change constructively. As one of my colleagues said "this is bigger than Clause 4 and One Member One Vote put together". These reforms fundamentally change our party.

I have written more about my view of where we've got to on party reform [here](#). I welcome the cap on the amount of money that can be spent by candidates getting selected – we need to understand what that cap will cover and how it will be monitored but it has the potential to level the playing field for candidates from different backgrounds seeking selection and therefore for us to select more representative candidates.

I welcome the limit on outside earnings too. Again we need to see what this would cover and how it could be implemented but it has the capacity to address voters' concern that MPs should be wholly focused on the issues that matter to them.

I have a concern about primaries. The sort of primary that has been proposed is neither the American nor the French model. What is proposed is a 'closed' primary in which members and 'registered supporters' can vote. My concern, which I have shared with Ed, is about non-members having a say in selecting our candidates and the impact this could have on our membership. We need to ensure members still see a value in their membership and we could do this by giving members a bigger voice in our elected structures. I have asked Ed to ensure this is addressed in the work that Ray Collins is undertaking and it was agreed that arrangements would be made for Ray to meet with CLP representatives on the committee to discuss the issues we feel need to be addressed.

I also made the point to Ed that whilst the media have spent the past week writing about trade union affiliation they seem to have forgotten the devastating changes that are due to be made to people's rights at work on the 29th of this month. Workers who have been unfairly dismissed or discriminated against by their employer, and who seek redress at tribunal, will now be charged for taking that claim to hearing and have no assurance that if their claim is settled they will have their money repaid to them. Employers will also be able to make 'offers' to employees to leave their organisations - without the need for that employer to go through normal dismissal, grievance or performance procedures - through conversations that will later be inadmissible in any future tribunal proceedings. That is tantamount to giving employers carte blanche to hold 'car-park conversations' with anyone they don't like, pressing them to give up their jobs before they are pushed or dismissed, with the employee having no means of referring to that conversation, or how threatened they felt by it, in any future case. While 'bad practice' in the operation of these conversations is supposed to be prohibited, it will, in many instances, be almost impossible for employees to prove that it has taken place. All of those changes are being introduced after the government has already made it harder for workers to seek redress by increasing the qualification period before they can submit an employment tribunal claim and has cut legal aid for employment issues. So whilst others review our structures I asked that Ed ensure he talks about the issues facing those working people trade unions represent right now.

NPF Chair's report

- Angela Eagle presented a report of the National Policy Forum which recently met in Birmingham. The policy papers discussed at each of the seminars that weekend are all up [here](#) if you want to look at them. Feedback from the weekend had been good and the revised format had generated greater engagement than previous years.
- John Cruddas indicated that the policy papers from the shadow Cabinet Policy Review would be finalised and circulated shortly. He would spend time over the summer looking at how the Shadow Cabinet Review can link in to the work of the National Policy Forum.

Other issues;

- The General Secretary reported that 91 of the 106 target constituencies had selected candidates so far and we were on track to have them all, or certainly nearly all, completed by conference. He also noted that by the end of October we will have 110 organising staff (not including the Regional Directors) covering target constituencies across the country -that's a phenomenal increase and fantastic resource. He informed us that Tom Geldard had taken on the new role of Director of Campaign Organisation and I was pleased to hear that Vernon Coaker will be heading up work on some of our marginal incumbent seats.
- We agreed the recommendations from our Refounding Labour Fund panel meeting. The total amount bid for vastly outweighed the amount we had to distribute. We could not therefore approve every bid. 27 bids were approved in areas of electoral priority across the country and which used up the whole of the fund. I argued that if any of those bids failed and money became surplus that money should be directed to Scotland to assist the party in the run up to the independence referendum. This was agreed.
- Conference - We received the draft timetable for Party conference in September. There are to be fewer 'sofa-style chats' and more debate from the floor. I asked that we check to ensure the new Sunday morning start time takes account of the Christian Socialist Movement's Church Service which many delegates attend. This was agreed.

This is my personal account of this meeting & should not be taken as the official record but please do pass on to other Labour members who may be interested.

Keeping in touch...

Since my last report I have been delighted to see and talk with members in Valencia at **Labour International** - the furthest I've travelled to meet members of our party, at the **London launch of the Better Together**, at **Ealing North CLP's Gala Dinner**, at the **National Policy Forum in Birmingham**, at **Wantage CLP**, at **Cheltenham CLP**, our **Camberwell & Peckham CLP summer social**, the **Fabian Society Summer Conference** and at **Tiverton & Honiton CLP**. Every other minute, outside my day job, has been consumed with coordinating the local government selection procedure for candidates looking to stand in the 2014 local elections in Southwark. Fellow LCF Procedural secretaries have my sincere sympathies...I feel your pain! If you'd like me to visit your constituency to provide an NEC report or facilitate a policy discussion please don't hesitate to get in touch.

It's been a busy year so far, and I know the efforts you have made, so I hope you manage to get a good break over the summer holidays!