



Johanna Baxter

National Executive Committee

A track record of Putting Members First

Report of National Executive Committee meeting held on 25th March 2014

NEC meetings always start with remembering friends and colleagues who have passed away since our last meeting. The minutes silence held this month was particularly poignant since amongst those we were remembered were two towering figures of our movement – Tony Benn and Bob Crow. We remembered their commitment and their conviction.

Association of Labour Councillors (ALC) report

We reviewed the recently held ALC conference and discussed [the interim report from the Local Government Innovation Taskforce](#), commissioned for the party policy review, which was launched there. We discussed the progress of selections for council seats and preparation for the local elections. In May, 161 English local authorities will be conducting elections including all the 36 Metropolitan Districts, all the 32 London Boroughs, 74 Shire Districts and 19 Unitary Authorities. We also discussed the Government's announcement that councillors will, following the conclusion of their current term, be barred from being members of the Local Government Pensions Scheme. This will have a devastating effect of many local councillors, particularly those who have given up other forms of employment to serve their local community.

EPLP report

Glenis Willmott MEP gave a report on the work of our MEPs in Europe and welcomed Ed Miliband's recent announcement that the next Labour government will legislate for a 'lock' that guarantees there cannot be any transfer of powers from Britain to the European Union without an in/out referendum. We noted the very welcome news that blacklisting workers, and discrimination on the grounds of trade union membership or activities, will be illegal after our Labour MEPs voted for key data protection legislation earlier this month. Our own Claude Moraes MEP was the Rapporteur for the Electronic Mass Surveillance of EU Citizens Report which was recently backed by the European Parliament. The report calls for the EU to adopt new rules on data protection and to negotiate with the US to ensure stronger safeguards for our citizens in the wake of the NSA surveillance scandal. We noted that Tory MEPs sought to block, and then recently voted against, measures to alleviate deprivation through the use of EU aid. Even though agreement was reached in the European Parliament, lobbying by David Cameron's Government is, scandalously, preventing UK food banks from accessing any of the £3million pounds the fund contains.

Leaders Report

Ed Miliband reported on the budget and the continued pressure on people's cost of living. He stressed the importance of getting our messages out to people on the doorstep. We discussed the decision to support the welfare cap, a cap that he had called for some time previously, and how a Labour government would spend money in different ways. We discussed the importance of the European Parliament in protecting workers rights and the commitment to hold a referendum if there are any future proposed transfer of powers.

I thanked Ed for laying down [EDM1130](#) – this is an important Early Day Motion calling on the annulment of the recently introduced changes to the Transfer of Undertakings Protection of Employment legislation. Regular readers will know that I have raised this issue with Ed previously – the recent changes to this legislation make it much easier for employers to renegotiate changes to employment terms and conditions and to derecognise trade unions in the workplace.

Shadow Chancellor's Report

Ed Balls gave a thorough report on the budget and our response to it. We noted the fact that families are still worse off under the coalition. We discussed the questions Ed had already asked on pensions reform and how a Labour government would balance the recovery in a fairer way.

Agenda 2015

The final year policy consultation documents are now out and all members and CLP Secretaries should have had information on how to access them and submit amendments to them. The deadline for submission of amendments is 13th June. It's encouraging that 13,700 people have visited the [Your Britain](#) site since the publication of the documents and we've already seen a number of amendments coming through.

Parliamentary selections

At our recent meeting of the NEC's Organisation Sub-committee we reviewed progress of parliamentary selections including those that had become available for selection. We agreed that Ellesmere Port should have an open selection and that Stirling, Batley & Spen and Sheffield Heeley constituencies should have All Women Shortlists. I again raised the issue of the number of women putting themselves forward for Open selections, again asked for the equality stats for CLP Officer positions and also asked that we look at what we can do to encourage more applications from the BME community.

Implementing Collins Report

Following the decision of Special Conference to agree the reforms outlined in the Collins Report we agreed the make-up of the Collins Review Implementation Committee and its terms of reference. I was pleased to be asked to join that committee to represent your views. I will, as usual, report back to you on our progress. The full committee is comprised of representatives from the different sections of the NEC: Keith Birch, John Hannett, Billy Hayes, Jim Kennedy, Martin Mayer and Cath Speight from the trade unions; Jonathan Ashworth, Angela Eagle, Glenis Willmott and Steve Rotherham from the MPs/MEPs; Conor McGinn from the Socialist Societies; Dave Sparks from the Association of Labour Councillors; Keith Vaz from BME Labour, Diana Holland as Party Treasurer and Ann Black, Ellie Reeves and myself from the CLP Section. The committee has a particular remit to: devise procedures for the recruitment and retention of affiliated supporters and registered supporters, which should be in place by the end of 2014; oversee and monitor the promotion of activities to grow the supporter and membership base and oversee the implementation of the new procedures for the collection of affiliation fees, to be completed by 2020. We will make recommendations to the NEC on the procedures for the selection of the 2016 London Mayoral candidate in London by means of a closed primary, spending limits and codes of conduct in Labour candidate selections and the operation of Constituency Development Plans.

Scottish Party conference

I was pleased to attend Scottish Party conference last weekend. This is one of the biggest years in Scotland's history and I'll be doing everything I can to support the campaign to keep Scotland in the UK. The [Devolution Commission report](#), setting out our alternative to independence and the powers we need in Scotland, was published in advance of Scottish Conference and delegates overwhelmingly backed the proposals it contains. Deputy Leader of the Party in Scotland, Anas Sarwar, launched his paper '[Together We Can](#)', which sets out how a Labour administration in Holyrood would use those new powers.

Johann Lamont gave a sterling [speech to conference](#) though it's a shame that most of the press seem to have missed one of the biggest announcements of the weekend – that a Labour administration in Scotland would devolve responsibility for employment tribunals and abolish the unjust, iniquitous practice of tribunal charging which denies so many justice. This is a major announcement. Whilst much more needs to be done to create jobs, we also need to ensure that those in work see an improvement to their working lives. Under this government people in work have faced unprecedented attacks on their rights. Employment tribunal fees are a tax on justice, they undermine the entire concept of a tribunal system originally designed by the Donovan Commission to be an "easily accessible, speedy, informal and inexpensive" place where workers could get access to justice. I asked Ed Miliband to consider making a similar commitment at UK level in advance of the 2015 general election.

A new Referendum membership rate was launched at Scottish Conference. The rate will apply up until the 19th September and will allow those people in Scotland, who are being politicised through the debate about Scotland's future, to join the party for £5 and become active in the party and the United with Labour campaign. So if you have colleagues in Scotland who have always voted with us but never joined this is the time to ask them to do so – here's the joining page link; <https://secure.scottishlabour.org.uk/page/content/membership/>.

Other issues;

- The General Secretary gave a report on party finances, the recent national campaign day and the work of the Nations and Regions. We asked again for the excellent training being provided to CLP Officers by the East Midlands region to be rolled out to the rest of the country.
- We noted the Wythenshawe & Sale East by-election result and thanked the staff and activists for all their hard work in achieving this successful result.

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've been delighted to visit and talk with members in Bolton North East CLP, North East Somerset CLP, Coventry North West CLP, Liverpool West Derby CLP and at the London Young Labour Women's day celebration. I've also been out campaigning with CLPs in Redbridge, Milton Keynes, Bermondsey & Old Southwark and Carshalton & Wallington. I attended the Chinese for Labour fundraising dinner, Special conference, Bethnal Green & Bow's fundraising dinner, Scottish Labour Conference, the launch of the [Southwark Labour manifesto](#) and I chaired the Dulwich & West Norwood parliamentary selection. If you'd like me to visit your CLP to give an NEC report or facilitate a policy discussion please don't hesitate to get in touch.