

Peter Willsman's



ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2008 GUIDE FOR CLP DELEGATES AND CLP SECRETARIES

*(Published by The Campaign for Labour Party Democracy email –
info@clpd.org.uk website - www.clpd.org.uk)*

The Conference Agenda

The following business will comprise the Conference timetable:

- The National Executive Committee (NEC) Report and possible late NEC statements that can be issued to delegates during conference.
- 6 Final stage Documents from the National Policy Forum. (Britain in the World; Education and Skills; health; Crime, Justice, Citizenship and Equalities; Creating Sustainable Communities; Prosperity and Work).

Alongside these will be taken the following two Minority Positions to the Crime, Justice, Citizenship and Equalities Document, agreed at the NPF (Warwick II) in late July.

- Independent review of civil legal aid system (mover J Beecham)
- Expand democratic representation on police authorities (mover J Beecham)
- **Reports from the six policy commissions**, together with separate annex reports, which will cover the progress (or otherwise) that has been made at the relevant Policy Commission in relation to each of the five Contemporary Motions remitted at the 2007 Annual Conference.
- Contemporary Issue subjects and Emergency Motions that cover matters that would not otherwise appear on the conference agenda.
- Elections for the Conference Arrangements Committee (CAC) and National Constitutional Committee (NCC).

- Proposed rule changes from the NEC and from CLPs. (The rule change proposals from CLPs were submitted last year, but by convention are not tabled until this year. This convention does not apply to rule change proposals from the NEC).

(Details of the last three items are set out in written reports from the CAC (ie the initial Delegates Report and daily CAC Reports). The CAC is in permanent session during Conference and acts as the Standing Orders Committee. Delegates have the right to present any queries directly to the CAC itself. Delegates who feel strongly about a point should insist on this right.)

Reports from the six Policy Commissions and Annex Reports.

There are now six policy commissions which draw up policy reports for discussion by the NPF. Each of these commissions reports to Conference.

The six policy commissions (made up of 16-20 members representing the Government, the NEC and the NPF) are: Britain in the World; Creating Sustainable Communities; Crime, Justice, Citizenship and Equalities; Education and Skills; Health; Prosperity and Work.

Further Information about the work of the policy commissions is available on the Party's website www.labour.org.uk

At last year's Annual Conference, Contemporary Motions on the following five issues were remitted to the NPF – Employment Rights, Manufacturing, Equalities and Equal Pay, Remploy and Housing. Subsequently each of these five specific issues has been discussed at the relevant Policy Commission, with reps from organisations that submitted the motions being invited to the discussions. Thus, in addition to its annual report to Conference, each relevant Commission will also have to report back to Annual Conference explaining how the specific issue has been, or is being, dealt with. This report will be in an annex to the Policy Commission report and will be voted on separately from the Policy Commission report.

In reporting back to the Conference, the relevant Commission co-convenor will move the annex on Conference floor.

Once the annex has been moved, the proposer of the original motion (at last year's Conference) will have the right to address Conference indicating their view of how the discussions have gone over the year, what progress has been made and the likelihood of resolution of any outstanding matters. They will also be able to indicate their view of how Conference should vote on the annex which might include indicating their approval of the outcome, advising conference that progress has been made but more work is needed or asking Conference to vote against the annex on the basis of their opposition to the outcomes.

When voting on the annex Conference can choose to:

- Accept the report and therefore indicate satisfaction with the resolution of the issue or satisfaction with the progress being made on resolving the issue.
- Vote against the report indicating dissatisfaction with progress being made on the issue.

Contemporary Issue subjects (CIs) from CLPs/affiliated organisations

Following the decision of the 2007 Conference, the former Contemporary Motions have now become Contemporary Issues (CIs).

The closing date for submission of a “contemporary issue” is 12th September. Emergency Resolutions cover an event that occurs after this date. Each CLP can send one CI provided that they have not already submitted a rule amendment in 2008. Head Office issued guidance on drafting CIs. The CI must be expressed in 10 words or less (with up to 250 words of back up). **CLPs need to ensure** that the subject is not substantively addressed by the NPF/NEC Reports. Usually this means that the CI must relate in some way to something occurring after the end of July. The CI must be on one subject only. When assessing whether a CI is valid, the Conference Arrangements Committee (ie. Standing Orders Committee) will ask, “Could this have been sent to the NPF or NEC for inclusion in their reports?” An issue will be deemed to be contemporary, therefore, if it arises after the publication of the NPF and/or NEC Reports or is not substantively addressed by the NPF/NEC Reports.

Head office issues a special form for CIs and it is recommended that this is returned by recorded delivery. (The CI has to be sent by email to the Assistant CAC Secretary but must be followed by a signed hard copy on the special form). (Alternatively membersnet can be used).

The time allowed for choosing a CI is very short. In many CLPs the EC, or the officers, are empowered to agree the CI, provided it is later ratified by the GC.

Before Conference the CAC makes its decision as to whether each CI is judged to be “contemporary”. Usually the CAC contracts the CLP Secretary with its decision a day or two before Conference opens. There is an appeal process on the Friday on the eve of Conference. (See below)

The Campaign for Labour Party Democracy has prepared several draft CIs for consideration by CLPs. (Available from CLPD on 020 8854 7326).

Emergency Motions

Emergency resolutions may be submitted on matters that arise after the final date for submitting Contemporary Issues and, therefore, could not be the subject for a CI. The CAC has tightened the criteria for Emergency Motions. To be valid the issues in an Emergency:

- Could not have been submitted through the Contemporary Issue process
- should not be covered by the NPF Report
- could not have been submitted to the NPF in the ordinary course of its business
- should not appear elsewhere on the Conference agenda
- should cover an issue or issues of urgent and immediate importance to the discussions of the whole party at Annual Conference.

Unfortunately, there can be no guarantee that valid emergency resolutions will be debated at Conference. It is a matter for the CAC – delegates are encouraged to lobby the CAC as necessary.

There is apparently no special form for Emergency Motions. They have to be emailed to the CAC Assistant Secretary, followed by a hard copy signed by the secretary or authorised officer. The closing date for Emergencies is likely to be 12 noon on Thursday 18th September.

Rule changes from the NEC

These are set out in the **Delegates Report** issued to delegates before Conference.

One NEC rule change proposal, in particular, should be strongly opposed.

OPPOSE:

NEC's rule change to alter the composition of the CAC by adding an NPF rep. At present the Conference Arrangements Committee (CAC) consists of 5 trade union reps and 2 CLP reps. At Annual Conference the CAC acts as the Standing Orders Committee (SOC). Like all SOCs, it is accountable for its actions to the Conference. Annual Conference is made up, solely, of delegates from affiliated organisations (unions) and CLPs. As a courtesy, members of the National Policy Forum (NPF) are allowed to attend Conference as observers. It is both inappropriate, and out of line with all existing practice, to give a seat on an SOC to an outside body that is not represented at the relevant Conference. This bizarre proposal, which popped up out of the blue at the NEC, should be firmly opposed.

Rule changes from CLPs (submitted in 2007, but debated in 2008)

Conference will have the opportunity to debate and vote on the following important rule change proposals. These were submitted in 2007, but under the Party's procedures are not timetabled until 2008. (This procedure is formally called the '1968 Ruling', but it is not really working as it was intended in 1968). But they are not timetabled unless a request has been made to the CAC by the CLP/delegate (the closing time for making this request is likely to be 5.30pm on Saturday 20th September). The safest way is for the CLP Secretary to write to the CAC (c/o Head Office) well before conference. Invariably the platform opposes all rule changes from CLPs which devalues the whole process.

The following are the most important rule changes coming before Conference (full details will be given in the **Delegates Report**).

- **From Islington North and Luton South CLPs on restricting Labour's organisation in Northern Ireland.**

One of the Labour Government's successes has been to establish a peaceful settlement in Northern Ireland through the Good Friday Agreement. This rule change would constitutionally define the territory of Labour's political ambitions to Britain, comprising England, Scotland and Wales, and in so doing not undermine our policy for peace in Northern Ireland.

- **From Calder Valley, Horsham, Newport West and Peterborough CLPs on wider choice of candidates for Party Leader and Deputy.**

This rule change lowers the threshold for a valid nomination for standing for election as Party Leader or Deputy Leader, when there is a vacancy, from 12.5% of Labour MPs to 7.5% [ie from 45 to 27 MPs in the current Parliament].

This rule change could benefit potential candidates from all wings of the Party. It is designed to ensure that a candidate, who might win an eventual majority, is not prevented from even standing. For example, in the 2007 Deputy Leadership election, Hilary Benn only just managed to get the 12.5%, and yet he attracted a larger number of CLP nominations than any other candidate.

The proposed change allows for a wider choice and makes it very unlikely that a possible winner would be debarred from standing because he/she could not obtain enough initial nominations from MPs.

- **From Lancaster and Fleetwood and Westminster North CLPs on democracy in Young Labour**

This rule change would introduce much needed democratic reforms into the hitherto Byzantine structures of Young Labour. It should be given maximum support.

Rule changes from CLPs (submitted in 2007, but ruled out of order by the CAC).

Last year some 10 CLPs submitted rule change proposals on a range of important matters (Twickenham, Hampstead and Kilburn, East Devon, Orpington, Meridan, Islington South and Finsbury, Beckenham, Ilford South, Gloucester and Lewisham Deptford). Unfortunately Conference has been denied the opportunity to consider these rule proposals because they were all deemed to be out of order by the CAC, acting in a heavy handed way. When making its decision the CAC have employed a very controversial and catch-all interpretation of the '3-year-rule' to gag several CLPs. The rule states that when a Conference decision has been made on a rule change proposal, no further amendment to that "part" of the rules will be permitted for 3 years. The key word here, of course, is "part". In other words, if a CLP amends a completely different "part" of a long clause in the Rule Book, compared to other parts that may have been recently amended, then that is in order. The CAC has ignored the significance of the word "part" and applied a catch-all interpretation. This is unacceptable and any challenge from ruled out CLPs, insisting that the Rule Book is correctly interpreted, should be given full support. The CAC has also ruled out proposed rule changes to clauses that have not even been voted on in the last 3 years, so how these can be out of order is a complete mystery. Despite repeated requests to the CAC from the aggrieved CLPs, no clarification has been given. It is difficult enough for CLPs to have their voice heard in this Party, without the CAC gagging them.

Aggrieved delegates may go to the rostrum and seek redress by challenging the chair of the CAC. Every delegate in the hall should do their best to support these challenges and oppose the gagging. It could be your CLP next!

Voting for the Conference Arrangement Committee (CAC) and National Constitutional Committee (NCC)

The CAC has seven members. There are five general section seats (of which two must be women) and two CLP section seats (of whom one must be a woman). In 2008 only the general section is up for election – each CLP has 5 votes in this section.

Biographies of the CAC candidates and information about obtaining the ballot papers at conference are usually issued to CLP secretaries and/or delegates in early September.

[The biogs. are usually printed in the Delegates Report]. GCs should then decide how the vote is to be cast. (The votes for the CAC are recorded and published).

Delegates will also vote for their two representatives on the NCC. It is important that delegates are fully mandated by their CLPs. The candidates' biographies are likely to be sent out in early September and may be sent direct to delegates rather than to the CLP (the biogs are usually printed in the Delegates Report). An application form for obtaining a ballot paper at conference is also sent.

Only one application form for ballot paper per CLP is issued. It is usually sent to the first named delegate. The CAC will report on the timing, etc. of all these elections, but the likely times are given below.

The NEC has issued a Code of Conduct for internal elections which 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 inform CLPD of any infringements of the Code).

CLPD and the Centre-Left Grassroots Alliance are supporting candidates in the CAC and NCC elections (details from CLPD on 020 8854 7326). Details will also be given to delegates in our daily Campaign Briefing, distributed outside the Conference Centre.

In early/mid September Head Office issues delegates' credentials, rail tickets, card vote booklets and application forms for obtaining ballot papers at Conference for the Priorities Ballot and other ballots. These were always sent to CLPs, but recently they have gone to regional offices for distribution to delegates at the Pre-Conference Regional Briefing meetings (see below). Conference documents are usually sent to delegates around mid September.

Late Accreditation (eg for replacement delegates)

CLPs can apply to the CAC at Head Office if a replacement delegate becomes necessary.

CLPs should advise the Conference Unit in writing and (unless an emergency) well in advance of Conference of any change of delegate giving the reasons. The Conference Unit is in Newcastle and can be contacted by the Head Office switchboard. Due to the tight security arrangements all late registrations at Conference itself involve a long wait. New delegates are therefore advised to attend the Late Accreditation office on the Friday or Saturday morning before the start of Conference (the office usually opens at 9am and is open throughout Conference). New delegates need to have a letter of authority from the CLP Secretary, personal identification and their Party membership card (delegates must have been a member for at least 12 months). They also need a passport-style photo and full payment (recently it was around £100).

Pre-Conference Regional Briefings

Before Conference delegates are usually called to at least one briefing meeting in their region. In the last few years the practice has developed of handing delegates who attend these meetings their Conference credentials and other conference material (eg card vote booklets and applications for ballot papers). Any delegates unable to attend these briefings must contact their regional office to make alternative arrangements for obtaining their credentials – any delegate without a credential is denied entry to Conference.

Delegates should be aware that sometimes in the past Regional Briefing meetings have been used, illegitimately, to pressure delegates to follow the platform line on the contentious issues coming before Conference. If delegates encounter this sort of behaviour by party officials they should formally complain at the meeting and to the Chair of the NEC (and inform CLPD).

In recent years a further platform-inspired tactic has developed of regional officials calling groups of delegates out of the hall during Conference sessions to be pressurised by Ministers. Delegates are, of course, at Conference to represent the views of their CLP and are accountable to their own CLP and not to ministers or regional officials. They should stand firm and not be bamboozled. Regional officials may need reminding that they are Party Civil Servants and should, therefore, be impartial.

Conference Times

Delegates should arrive early each day, as the security arrangements involve long delays. Any delegate who misplaces documentation will need to report to the CAC for replacements. (Before Conference opens the Secretary of the CAC can be contacted at the NEC hotel). Delegates need to be in Conference from the start of each session since this is when the CAC gives its very important reports.

The Conference sessions will **probably** be:

Saturday:

Doors open 12.00 noon

14.15 – 17.30 Conference Session

13.30 – 16.00 Contemporary Issues ballot
(ie Priorities Ballot)

Sunday:

9.00 – 10.30 Policy seminars

10.45 – 12.45 Conference Session

14.15 – 17.30 Conference Session

Monday:

9.30 – 12.45 Conference Session

10.00 - 16.00 NCC Ballot (CLP Section)

14.15 – 16.00 Conference Session

16.15 - 17.30 Policy Seminars

Tuesday:

9.30 – 12.45 Conference Session

10.00 - 16.00 CAC Ballot (General Section,
Each CLP has 5 votes) The Leader's
speech is likely to be Tuesday pm)

14.15 – 16.00 Conference Session

16.15 – 17.30 Policy Seminars

Wednesday:

9.30 – 12.45 Conference Session

14.15 – 16.00 Possible Conference
Session, but Conference may finish at
lunchtime

During the debates there will be a platform introductory speech and a platform reply. And during policy debates members of Policy Commissions will move reports. Ordinary delegates often feel they are not given a fair chance to speak. Platform speakers usually make lengthy speeches but ordinary delegates, if they are lucky enough to be called, are strictly limited to three minutes.

Daily Business

Friday

In the last few years the CAC has adopted the practice of being in session on the eve of Conference. This is in order to receive appeals from CLPs and affiliates that have had their contemporary issue motions ruled as not “contemporary” and, therefore, not appropriate for the Priorities Ballot. Written appeals will be considered and there is the possibility of a telephone conference. It has to be said that major unions have had much more success than CLPs at getting the CAC to reverse its decisions. Nevertheless, it is always worth a try. The CAC meeting is likely to be within the secure area and so delegates going to the CAC must have their Conference credentials. Contemporary Issues that are ruled out are not published and are referred to the NPF or NEC, whichever is appropriate. In effect they disappear without trace.

Saturday

CAC Report No 1 (and the Delegates Report) moved by the Chair of the CAC. Delegates who feel the CAC has acted unfairly should challenge the CAC’s position by moving “reference back”. It is likely that CLPs, who have had their rule amendments ruled out unfairly under the 3-year-rule, will challenge the CAC on Sunday. In the interests of party democracy they should be given full support. Each day there is at least one report from the CAC. All of these can be challenged if a delegate is not satisfied with what is being said.

The Party produces a conference newspaper, which is usually available inside entry points to the centre every morning. The paper contains the very important daily Record of Decisions. Delegates should keep these for reporting back purposes.

In 2008, ballot and card vote results may be published in the daily CAC Reports.

The Priorities Ballot

Those Contemporary Issues that slip through the CAC’s nets and reach Conference will be grouped into subjects. These subject headings then go into the Priorities Ballot, which will be held on Saturday, probably between 1.30pm and 4.30pm. The Ballot opens before Conference opens, and therefore delegates are prevented from overturning any controversial decisions by the CAC in relation to what are, and what are not, valid Contemporary Issues. Thus, for the first time ever, the CAC is not accountable to Conference in respect of a major part of its decision-making powers.

Don’t Waste your Vote

Following pressure from the rank and file, and a successful rule change from several CLPs, the procedure used to calculate the result of the Priorities Ballot has been changed. It has now been agreed to adopt a ‘4 and 4’ formula. This guarantees that the top four issues voted on by the unions and the top four issues voted on by the CLPs, will be debated. So, for example, if the CLPs and affiliates both vote for three of the same issues, with a fourth issue that is different, then there would be five debates on contemporary issues. Thus, if CLP delegates want to make maximum use of this rare

opportunity to control what conference debates, they should seek to ensure that eight issues are chosen (four by the Unions and four different ones by the CLPs). This means that CLP delegates must **not** vote for any of the four issues that are favoured by the Unions, since to do so is to waste your vote. The four subjects that the Unions will choose are known well in advance of the Priorities Ballot (the Unions vote as a block to ensure they get the four they want). On the Saturday morning, before the Priorities Ballot takes place, CLPD will give CLP delegates advice about the four issues the Unions have chosen. This advice will be given at CLPD's rally on Saturday morning in the Jurys Inn Hotel and in the Saturday edition of CLPD's **Campaign Briefing** handed to delegates outside the conference centre.

Saturday evening – CI meetings

The delegates involved with the successful CIs emerging from the Priority Ballot, will be requested to attend meetings, probably on Saturday evening. Every delegate must attend, unless they are given permission by the CAC to be absent. At these meetings delegates will meet the relevant NEC Policy Commission co-convenor and minister to discuss how the subject could be taken forward. Speakers to propose and second the subject on the Conference floor will also be chosen. After debate at Conference the subject is remitted to the Policy Commission for deliberation over the next 12 months. Reps from those organisations involved with the subject should be invited to these deliberations.

Sunday and Monday – voting for the CAC and NCC

The votes for the CAC and NCC are likely to be on Sunday (CAC) and Monday (NCC).

Referring Back sections of the CAC reports and NEC reports

A delegate who wishes formally to challenge any recommendation by the CAC goes to the rostrum immediately after the Chair of the CAC has made a report and moves “reference back” of the relevant section of the CAC report. This is the established procedural convention which ensures a vote on the point raised and, if carried, is effectively a defeat for the platform.

Delegates also have the right to force a vote on any point in the NEC report by formally moving “reference back”. Delegates should have the same democratic right in relation to NPF/Policy Commission documents and NEC statements but this has not yet been granted. Instead delegates, who may only object to one or two sentences, are forced to move reference back of the whole document. This, of course, suits the platform but is out of line with the basic democracy that operates elsewhere in the Party.

The platform is invariably very unsympathetic to the right of “reference back”. Nevertheless delegates should stand firm and insist on their democratic rights.

Voting at Conference

Voting at Conference is normally by hand unless a card vote is requested by a delegate or by the chair (voting on rule changes is always by card, although they may sometimes be unhelpfully grouped together – delegates need to keep their wits about them. Quite often the platform gets in a muddle, which makes the situation doubly confusing).

Making a Speech

Note – Speakers from the floor are usually only allowed 3 minutes.

The makings of a good speech:

Thorough preparation. Set out your aims and plan the structure. Assemble a few choice facts but don't overdo it – speeches that are a list of facts turn the listeners off.

Write the speech out in bold clear writing; always use short punchy sentences and shorter words rather than longer.

Try to find a startling beginning or try working backwards from a stunning conclusion.

Develop an easy and logical progression of ideas.

Brief personal anecdotes can be helpful for illustrating a point.

Properly rehearse the speech several times in front of friends.

Time the speech to the precise minute.

Remember everyone is nervous before giving a speech to Annual Conference. This is natural.

At the outset say who you are and give your organisation. Indicate which resolution(s) you are speaking in favour of/against.

Stand easily. Avoid making distracting gestures. Don't move about – the microphone has a short range.

Often a major argument is built up or emphasised by rhetorically asking three short questions/making three bullet points and raising the voice as you do this.

Vary the pitch.

Pauses for effect are a useful tool.

Clarity of speech, so the audience understands each word.

The knack is speaking to listeners and not at them.

Conclude with a flourish

Always remember:

- Matter, Manner and Method
- Preparation, Practice, Pace, Pauses, Pitch and Punch.

Finally some Don'ts

Learn your speech by heart and then recite it.

Speak so quickly that your listeners can't follow.

Speak in a monotone.

Harangue or shout.

Give lengthy statistics.
Patronise your listeners.
Over-use slang expressions.
Use jargon.
Contrive to introduce humour or tell off-colour jokes. If a joke falls flat, ignore it and continue.
Be apologetic.
Name dropping should be avoided.

Movers and seconders of rule changes should get together and aim to make their speeches complement each other, rather than repeating the same points. But vital points are worth repeating in both speeches. Votes on rule changes are always by card vote. At other times delegates have the right to demand a card vote and this right is set out in the CAC's advice booklet issued to delegates.

Having difficulty? Consult CLPD

CLPD are always available to give advice. Before Conference we can be contacted by phone – 020 8854 7326. At Conference we can be found outside in the street distributing our daily Campaign Briefing – a must for all delegates and visitors! Indeed, last year Michael White of The Guardian went on record to describe Campaign Briefing as “indispensable”.

CLPD has a very informative website, which contains a wealth of both up-to-date and archive material.

After Conference – Decisions Booklet

Several months after Conference a Record of Decisions booklet is published. This gives full details of each day's business. It also gives a breakdown of the election results.

HAVE A GOOD CONFERENCE !

Peter Willsman (phone 020 8854 7326)

Peter Willsman has uniquely represented CLPs on all four of the Party's national bodies: CAC (1981 - 94); NCC (1995 – 98); NEC (1998 – 99 and 2005-8); NPF (1998 – 99 and 2002-2008).

As necessary, please photocopy this Guide for other members. It can be downloaded at www.clpd.org.uk

Regular and full NEC reports are available at www.scgn.org.uk

CLPD sponsored events at Conference 2008

Saturday 20 September

CLPD Rally and Delegates Briefing. 10.30 – 12.45 at Jurys Inn Hotel, very near to Conference venue.

Saturday 20 September

Grassroots Umbrella Network reception for delegates. Welcoming event for delegates and visitors – lots of “superstars” to chat to 12.45 – 2 pm Jurys Inn Hotel.

Tuesday 23 September

Assessment of Conference and discussion of the way forward for Labour. 6pm Relish Bar, Deansgate.

Support the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy

Return to: CLPD Secretary, 10 Park Drive, London

NW11 7SH. Phone/Fax:: 020 8854 7326

Annual rates: £20 individuals; £5 unwaged and low waged (under £8,000); £25 couples (£6 unwaged); £25 national & regional organisations; £15 CLPs, TUs and Co-op Parties; £5 CLP branches.

I/we enclose £ subscriptions/renewal/donation

Name (1) (2)

Address

Post Code

Phone Nos (H) (W)(Please give codes)

CLP Region

TU Date

E-mail

(CLPD has an active email group; we also have a regional organiser in each region to co-ordinate local activity).

Financially supported by the

