

# CAMPAIGN

No 64 July 2002

for labour party democracy

## A modern welfare state

*'A modern welfare state'* concentrates on three areas: employment, child poverty and pensioners.

Given the growing crisis in the pensions system, this area of the document gives most cause for concern. The document assumes the continued withering away of the state pension, referring to it as 'the foundation of income in retirement' to be topped up by various private provisions individuals are urged to embrace.

The framework 'work is for those who can and security for those who cannot' means:

- a focus on in-work benefits through tax credits – rewarding the implicitly 'deserving' in-work poor;
- a reduction of the welfare state to the most minimal system of limited support for people not in employment;
- a failure to deal with the reality which many people, especially the more vulnerable, face of regularly moving between work and unemployment.

By its narrow conception of the welfare state, the document discourages the higher paid from understanding what stake they have in the welfare state.

On employment, the docu-

*(continued overleaf)*

## Challenge New Labour's Assumptions

As part of the new cycle of policy-making under 'Partnership in Power' the Labour Party National Policy Forum has published five documents:

- A modern Welfare state
- Improving Health and Social Care
- Britain in the World
- Prosperity for all
- Democracy, citizenship and political engagement

The documents claim to initiate the consultation process that will lay the basis for the party's next general election Manifesto. Every document is divided into sections covering different areas.

At the end of each section or paragraph are questions to which members are encouraged to respond. A list of some of these questions also appears on the last page of each document. [Page numbers in brackets after the questions relate to the illustrated edition of the NPF Consultation Document, *(February 2002)*].

### Preemptive questions

Many questions are phrased in a way which seems to take for granted that members share the assumptions of the authors. Nevertheless, CLPD urges supporters and sympathetic members to take part in local policy forums, or at local constituency level, to discuss the documents

and draw members' attention to the preemptive character of the 'consultation'. It will also give them an opportunity to raise fundamental political issues arising from the questions. If this is done by a sufficiently large number of those taking part, the party's control freaks may not be able to stifle members' criticism and more members will begin to realise that the party leadership offers no solutions to the problems the country faces.

Many who attend local policy forums see the documents for the first time at them. This reduces the value of the discussion. It is vital therefore to ask for the documents to be made available before the forum meeting. Otherwise the discussion at the workshops is focussed almost entirely on pre-set questions which appear at the end of each document, without any reference to the main body of the text.

The Campaign for Labour Party Democracy is encouraging submissions as these will influence the redrafting of the documents which are subsequently agreed by the National Policy Forum. Some of the issues contained in each document are outlined in this CLPD newsletter together with suggestions for answers to the questions.

- Deadline for submissions: 3 October 2002
- Submissions should be sent to The Policy Unit, The Labour Party, Millbank Tower, Millbank, London SW1P 4GT.
- Please send a copy to CLPD, 10 Park Drive, London NW11 7SH

# A modern welfare state

(from previous page)

ment spells out the intention to continue with the expansion of coercive 'new deal' style policies to increase the number of older people, disabled people and single parents in employment. What is lacking is a commitment to tackling the impoverishment of those who, for whatever reason, find themselves unemployed and reliant on benefit income.

## Suggested responses to questions in the document

### ● Tackling unemployment through welfare to work

*Question 5: What more help should we give disabled people to help them find work, stay in work or make an early return to work?*

Measures should be put forward to assist disabled people not in work – for example by addressing the effects of local authority charging or *increasing* benefit rates. Disabled people are falsely polarised in the document into those who can and cannot work, when the reality of partial incapacity and the need for a benefit system that does not penalise *them* must be addressed.

### ● Making Work Pay

*Question 7: What are the main barriers to making work pay and what more can we do about them?*

While in the short term in-work benefits may help to 'make work pay' employers should be pressured to pay living wages, the national minimum wage should be significantly up-rated to half male median earnings and a mechanism

instituted to ensure this is uprated regularly so the level is maintained. The government should use its powers to take measures to eliminate the gender pay gap.

### ● Easing the return to work

*Question 11: We want to help families balance work and home responsibilities. How can the welfare system help?*

Tax credits are also posed as the main way to support childcare. But research in London has shown that, even where parents qualify, the average cost of, for example, a full time childminder would leave a net gap of £33 a week to be found. The great lack of affordable childcare is not seriously addressed: in London day nursery and childminding places are available for only 14 per cent of under-five children, with worse provision in the poorest areas. One answer is the provision of significantly more affordable childcare, via the expansion of state provided places – for example greater funding to local authorities for this – as well as incentives to employers to provide places.

### ● Tackling pensioner poverty

*Question 18: How do we best meet our commitment to let pensioners share in rising national prosperity?*

The proposed income of a 'Pension Credit' to top up modest savings is extremely limited. What is needed is the restoration of a secure state pension system, to guarantee that all workers have a decent minimum retirement income. *In particular* the link between increase in earnings and the basic state pension should be restored.

# Britain

*We urge submissions on the most crucial failings in the Britain in the World consultation document particularly the direction of Britain's foreign policy and its endorsement of the United States' unilateralist agenda. The US withdrawal from the Anti Ballistic Missiles (ABM) Treaty and the US campaign to launch a war on Iraq both endanger the prospects for world peace. Britain needs an independent foreign policy that promotes security through conflict resolution and diplomacy, not increases in armaments and war.*

## Suggested responses to the questions in the document

### ● SECTION 1: Tackling World Poverty and Promoting Global Justice.

*Question 1: How can we pursue a radical agenda that actively tackles the crosscutting issues that contribute to global poverty? (pp. 2 & 12)*

The consultation document makes the point that globalisation has helped create new wealth in many areas of the world, but fails to acknowledge that it has simultaneously deepened poverty in large parts of the developing world. The unfair terms of international trade alongside the direct transfer of finance to the industrialised richer nations are contributing to a situation in which the world's poorest nations are getting even poorer. Currently mass starvation is taking place in a number of sub-Saharan nations. The World Trade Organisation, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund generally pursue the interests of their more powerful members. Additionally the world's richest nations have been reducing their developmental assistance over the past decade. The British government would be pursuing a genuinely radical agenda if it campaigned in the international arena to expose and tackle these inequities.

### ● SECTION 2: Working for Peace and Security in an Uncertain World

*Question 5: How can we best contribute to building a more peaceful and stable world? (p.12)*

Britain needs to have a foreign policy that is independent of the US. We should make a clear division between British and US foreign policy. Government ministers should not act as foreign policy spokespersons for

# in the World

the American President. We welcome the government's dissociation from US policy on the Palestinian leadership and on the issue of US withdrawal from UN projects in the absence of American immunity from the International Criminal Court. We believe that such independence in foreign policy needs to go much further.

The United States' greater resort to military means to assert its influence in the world significantly undermines the prospects for peace and security. The US has unilaterally withdrawn from the ABM Treaty in order to build itself a National Missile Defence (NMD) system – aiming to be effectively a “shield” over the US, permitting it the first-strike use of its nuclear weapons without facing the risk of retaliation.

To build for peace and stability in the world the British government needs to oppose the US launching a war on Iraq and the US building an NMD system. The British government should not grant permission to the US to construct part of its NMD system at the Fylingdales and Menwith Hill bases in Britain. If the US builds part of its NMD system in Britain the UK population would become a sitting duck in any nuclear confrontation. The Bush Administration is also campaigning to launch a war on Iraq, in which the US has indicated it is considering the use of nuclear weapons.

**Question 6: After 11th September, how do we defend our homes, families and interests against the new threat posed by international terrorism, including the potential for terrorists using weapons of mass destruction? (p.12)**

Use of the term “international terrorism” is misleading. On the one hand it imposes blanket condemnation on actions produced by widely different situations whilst excluding others. There is no justification in applying it to, say, the World Trade Center attackers whilst at the same time not using it for US forces guilty of indiscriminate bombing of Afghan civilians unconnected with the New York carnage. Similarly, it is inconsistent to classify the Palestinian suicide bombers as terrorists whilst excluding from the definition the Israeli forces in Jenin.

The US Administration itself has indicated it is not possible to eliminate the risk of a further terrorist attack such as 11th September, through its military, policing and intelligence services. International attention needs to be focused on addressing the underlying injustice that is provoking the hostility to the US in much of the Middle East. US policy is widely opposed because of its largely uncritical support for Israel in its occupation of Palestinian territory, US criti-

cisms of those resisting the occupation of their land and its lack of even-handedness. Britain should campaign for the implementation of United Nations resolutions that call for Israeli withdrawal from the occupied territories and the establishment of a viable Palestinian State with respected borders.

Britain should also join with the many governments in the world who are opposing the US's endeavours to extend the “war against terrorism” to a whole list of targets which have no relationship to the September 11th attacks. Extending that war to these other states will do nothing to defend anyone's homes or families, but will undermine global stability.

**Question 7: Are we prepared to see increases in defence expenditure to achieve security at home and abroad, as well as providing the resources needed for our Armed Forces to carry out vital tasks? (pp.7&12)**

Even the colossal levels of military spending of the United States provided no security against the attacks on September 11th. To achieve a real increase in security both at home and abroad attention needs to be focused on addressing the root causes underlying current insecurity. Increasing Britain's military expenditure cannot guarantee that security.

In fact Britain distorts its government spending priorities by devoting a greater share of its G.D.P. to military expenditure than other west European countries. The government should aim to correct this and reduce military expenditure to the average level of other west European countries and utilise the resources released to tackle the considerable problems caused by the underfunding of the public services.

## ● SECTION 3: A Stronger Britain in a Stronger Europe

**Question 9: How do we ensure that the EU delivers on the issues which people most want action on? (p.12)**

In a series of elections taking place across Europe social democratic governments are currently losing power to centre-right parties. These election results show that the electorate has rejected the “third way”. The rise of fascist parties and the rout of social democratic governments shows that Europe's electorates are looking for effective solutions to the economic and social problems that afflict their countries. This underscores the need for parties of the Left to pursue strong, interventionist policies rather than adopting policies that make them indistinguishable from their conservative opponents.

In a number of EU countries the extreme right wing, waging vicious racist campaigns, is now a component of government. This dramatic shift of European politics to the right cannot be resisted by advocating that Britain itself shift its politics to the right. The extreme right's targeting of asylum seekers and migrants cannot be combated by adopting the same framework. The racism of the extreme right has to be confronted and the real economic benefits that immigration brings to Europe explained. The myth that Europe has a problem of an excess of immigration and asylum applications should be rejected. As the United Nations High Commission on Refugees has reported the numbers of asylum seekers has fallen in the EU by more than 40% over the past ten years. As the EU's population ages its real problem is becoming a shortage of migrant labour not an excess.

The government should reject the Euro, since it would hand over to European institutions the right to cut UK spending on public services, as well as giving the right to determine UK interest and exchange rates to the unaccountable European Central Bank.

**Question 11: How do we build on Europe's real achievements in social partnership in order to modernise our economies, improve work-life balance and strengthen equal opportunities? (p.12)**

The achievements of the continental European countries in delivering prosperity for their people has been assisted by policies that emphasise a greater provision of welfare, health, and other public services than in Britain; alongside more secure employment rights. These achievements need to be defended as they increasingly come under attack from the more recently elected right wing governments in Europe. The British government should be linking up with those seeking to retain progressive policies throughout the continent, and not with the centre right wing governments in order to roll back welfare provision and employment conditions across Europe.

## ● SECTION 4: Building a Stronger Global Community

This section of the consultation document highlights the UK's membership of international institutions such as the UN, NATO, and the G8, and the Labour Party's internationalist traditions. Whilst recognising the need for reform of the WTO, World Bank, and IMF particularly to give poorer countries a fairer deal, it does not suggest how this might come about.

# Prosperity for

**The *Prosperity for all* document vindicates Peter Mandelson's recent pronouncement that "we are all Thatcherites now". It accepts the private ownership of all national resources, calls for the unrestricted operation of the market, upholds the maximisation of private profit and supports extensive labour market flexibility with scant regard for its effect on working people.**

This is not spelt out. Capitalism is referred to as "*the modern world*" [in which] "*a dynamic economy and fair society go together*" (p.1). The questions assume not only that existing economic structure cannot be changed, but that such change is undesirable. *Prosperity for all* reads like a commercial for capitalism, rather than a consultation document for a democratic socialist party. Any discussion of the issues raised must start by questioning the document's assumptions.

## **Suggested responses to questions in the document**

### **● SECTION 1: The Competitive Framework**

The document repeatedly asserts that increased productivity is essential to improve the economy's performance. But throughout it assumes that competitive markets are the only "*key drivers of productivity*" and "*provide the best means of ensuring that the economy's resources are put to their best use.*" (p.3)

They, so the story goes, make firms more efficient and reward consumers with lower prices, higher quality and wider choice. Competition is treated as a cure-all. Such is New Labour's pathetic attempt to resurrect in the 21<sup>st</sup> century the dreamland of the 19<sup>th</sup> century economists.

***Question 1: How can we boost competition and further protect and empower consumers in Britain? (pp.3&15)***

The notion of consumer sovereignty exercised through the market is a myth spread by apologists for the status quo. Under capitalism decisions as to what to produce are not taken by consumers but by private owners of the means of production. Their decisions don't necessarily reflect consumers' wishes. The primary motive of private enterprise is not consumers' welfare but profit maximisation. It may lead to the production of shoddy goods, or increased prices through

promotional costs. Thus the document's showering of praise on the government's "*opening up to competition of the electricity and gas ...markets*" (p.3) is unconvincing. Instead, we witness deteriorating service and companies touting the same product at virtually the same price thus increasing administrative costs which are passed on to consumers.

But much of economic activity cannot be efficiently regulated by competitive markets. Transport is a good example. Companies which bought up British Rail's assets at knock-down prices made substantial short-term gains but failed to invest in modernisation on the required scale. The prospects of profits that would make railways attractive to private investment are non-existent without massive state subsidies. It is difficult to see the benefit of such industries remaining in private ownership. The collapse of Railtrack forced covert re-nationalisation on the government. The lesson to be learnt is that "natural monopolies" should be in public ownership.

The main reason for the privatising nationalised industries was the Conservatives' desire to rid the state of responsibility for the country's infrastructure. When these industries were in public ownership their upkeep and modernisation had to be paid for partly by taxation. Conservative governments hoped to buy electoral popularity by reducing progressive taxes. Taxes on consumers could be only partly finance this policy. The rest was paid for by neglecting the infrastructure. Thus competition, far from 'empowering consumers', has led to chaos and deaths on the railways and roads.

***Question 2: How should we balance the benefits of competition with the universal provision of essential services? (pp.4&15)***

The question implies that there is a conflict between universal provision of services and the operations of the market, but that any problems can be resolved by striking a balance between them. For, as productivity rises, the document informs us, "*we will not only pay our people better but also have the*

*resources to invest more in our public services*" (p.2).

In fact whilst the market may help to generate wealth, this is then unequally shared between "the few" who already possess wealth, and "the many" who don't. If it were left to the market, services would be provided only where they are essential for carrying on successful businesses.

The extent to which services are 'universal' is not determined by the market but by government action. Which services are thought to be "essential" depends on whether you belong to "the many" or "the few". Consequently there is always tension between these two groups. It cannot be abolished so long as their interests pull in opposite directions. "The few" will seek to minimise universal provision, whilst "the many" will aim to increase it.

How the benefits of economic growth are shared between profits, producers/consumers and universal services is decided in the political arena. The extent of universal services then largely depends on how much a government is prepared to raise in taxation.

Under successive Conservative governments progressive taxes (which go up with income) were reduced by something like one third. Even though some of the government's lost revenue was regained by regressive taxes (e.g. VAT and other purchase taxes) this didn't make up for the losses, particularly as the cost of universal services (e.g. state pension, NHS) were rising. The Tory 'solution' was to cut services. They index-linked pensions, robbed those who took out SERPS, ran down the NHS and favoured private health care. All this in the name of teaching people self-reliance and not to depend on the nanny-state.

Ironically this same ideology now dominates New Labour's arguments.

The level of service must depend on what the economy can sustain. This doesn't depend only on the positive aspects of competition but also on the efficient running of the economy's public sector, unencumbered by competition's negative 'benefits'.

***Question 3: Should we be doing more to deepen and widen the European single market? (pp.5 &15)***

Labour must oppose the mirage of a single market where consumers are alleged to be sovereign but where the democratic governments of Member States lack the power to control their economies. Entry to the Euro is not in country's economic interests and should be rejected.

# all

## ● SECTION 2. High Performance Workplaces and Fair and Flexible Labour Markets

*Question 6: What further steps can government, business and trade unions take to raise the level of skills in the workplace? Is the quality of management adequate and what should be done about it?* (pp. 6&15)

Workers need access to training to raise and update skill levels in response to rapid economic change. The Labour Government must overcome the intransigence of employers who are resisting adequate levels of training levy needed to ensure high performance (as in construction) and ensure that time off from the workplace for training receives statutory support.

*Question 9: Where employers and employees differ in their requirements of flexibility, how should they be reconciled?* (p.15)

To the private owners of industry and commerce a “flexible” labour market means minimal legal regulation of working conditions. The classic example is the ease with which British workers can be sacked or made redundant compared to other European countries. A further example is Britain’s low level of pensions and corresponding low level of employer contribution. Labour needs to resist pressures for more flexible labour markets.

*Question 11: What more can the government do to promote productive dialogue based on partnership in the workplace? Does more need to be done? Is there more that can be done to encourage dispute resolution to take place within the workplace, rather than through the tribunal system?* (pp.8 &15)

The document talks only of social partnership without clarifying how the inevitable conflicts between capital and labour are to be contained. Nowhere in the world has an economic system based upon private ownership and a so-called flexible labour market produced consistently full employment and a fair distribution of income, wealth and social provision. The document fails to address this.

Although the government has granted statutory (but ambiguous and hard to enforce) recognition rights to unions, signifi-

## Stop Press Slap in face for CLPs

The choice of which Contemporary Motion subjects should be discussed at Annual Conference is monopolised by the major unions voting as a block. Last year a Conference Arrangements Committee (CAC) consultative exercise showed that the most popular demand was for Conference to consider eight contemporary subjects, four chosen by the unions, four by the CLPs. At Conference the platform promised to take this on board.

But the CAC has gone back on this undertaking. At this year’s Conference there will still only be four Contemporary Motion subjects. But if an issue were supported by over 50% of CLPs it would be added as an extra subject. However, this would never happen as CLPs always choose many subjects. The CAC constituency representatives, Yvette Cooper and Stephen Twigg, supported this sell-out of the CLPs.

cant numbers of workers remain uncovered. The right to strike is highly restricted, with unions entangled in lengthy and expensive procedures and continuing to suffer financially damaging challenges from employers in the courts. The Labour Government should, urgently, implement into domestic law international trade union rights ratified by the UK.

## ● SECTION 3. Promoting Innovation and Enterprise

*Question 13: What additional measures should the government and business take to help raise the level of innovation and investment in British industry?* (pp.9 &15)

Ever since the Second World War official declarations of the British Labour movement have been pointing to the low level of investment as the basic cause of the problems of manufacturing industry. Even so, the UK has consistently been a foremost overseas investor. Chronic under-investment, the flight of domestic capital and growth of multinationals hinders the desirable ends of *Innovation and Enterprise* being achieved. Indeed, in line with its dismissal of the need to revitalise the manufacturing sector, the government is pinning its hopes on the Financial Industry and on a rag bag of services. Currently the economy is only being kept out of recession by an unsustainable consumer boom. The economy cannot be sustained by opening hamburger chains, upmarket restaurants and West End musicals - however successful in the short term.

## ● SECTION 4: Building a Green Economy

*Question 18: What should the government do to encourage the*

*development and adoption of green technologies?* (pp. 11&16)

The key objective of phasing out Nuclear Power by 2020 is not addressed. While we note government initiatives on waste recycling, alternative energy sources and energy conservation programmes, much greater effort and resources need to be put into these areas. In particular greater support is needed for domestic energy insulation and efficient heating systems to reduce consumption and heating bills for householders and thus attack issues of fuel poverty.

Waste management needs to be urgently addressed with the abandonment of municipal waste incineration and the early phasing out of existing plants - which are major polluters. Targets for recycling of household waste should be raised from the current poor level of 9% to 60% by 2010 with concomitant economic benefits for both jobs and the environment.

The Labour government should establish a mandatory requirement for companies to comply with a set of key environmental indicators.

## ● SECTION 5: Prosperity for All

*Question 25: What other steps can the government take to ensure that every part of Britain benefits from economic growth?* (pp.13 &16)

In Britain the gap between the wealth and income of the people at the top of industry and finance and the majority of workers has widened considerably.

Prosperity for all can only be achieved by growth of the *national* economy.

Regional programmes do not allow for net transfers of wealth to lower income areas - a major concern reflected in current regional economic and demographic imbalances.

# Improving health and social care

**‘Improving health and social care’ focuses mainly on the future of the National Health Service. Increased private sector involvement in the NHS is advocated throughout, including franchising private sector management to run ‘failing’ NHS services and the use of the Private Finance Initiative.**

Members and organisations are encouraged to point out the inherent problems of involving the private sector in public services – ever-greater costs for the public sector leading to cuts in the quality of service provided and moving public services further away from democratic control. Instead, there must be public investment, democratic accountability and high quality public sector management.

The document rightly reaffirms Labour’s commitment to progressive funding through central taxation for health care as the fairest and most efficient way of pooling risks across society in order to ensure equity and universality. However, this commitment should be reaffirmed in respect of the delivery of care.

## **Suggested responses to questions in the document**

### **● SECTION 2: Reform of health services — High National Standards**

*Question 7: What more can we do to overcome persistent problems in local health services? What are the barriers to change? How best can we overcome them? (pp. 6&15)*

[Refers to the proposal that private sector management could be franchised to run ‘failing’ NHS services]

Bringing in the private sector to manage public hospitals is not in the interests of patients, health workers or wider society. There is no evidence that the private sector has inherently better management skills than the public sector. Under-funding over many years means few efficiency savings that can be made without driving down the pay and conditions of the workforce and decreasing the quality of service. Instead, increased public investment is required to provide a comprehensive and universal health care system free

at the point of use.

*Question 8: How can we improve the accountability structure of PCTs and trusts so that both patients and public have a bigger say on their local health services? (pp.6&16)*

Trusts should be abolished and services made accountable to local communities through elected boards. Community health councils should be restored and strengthened in a new form.

### **● SECTION 3: Capacity and investment — Modern hospitals and facilities**

*Question 19: How can the NHS combine the best of public and private resources and expertise to expand and modernise hospital equipment and systems, including bed numbers? How do we make sure that we are getting value for money from all capital expenditure within the NHS? (pp.10&16)*

The Private Finance Initiative (PFI) should be abolished. Bringing in private corporations to run health services will not expand and modernise the NHS.

PFI has increased inflexibility in the NHS; decreased diversity and access; reduced beds; undermined universal provision and failed to meet public needs for health care. The claim that PFI provides value for money is not substantiated in practice. As public bodies are responsible for service delivery and will bear the economic, social and political costs of failure, in reality there is little transfer of risk to the private sector. The new smaller PFI hospitals are much more expensive than larger hospitals they replace. PFI also results in the permanent loss of skills and resources in the public sector along with its ethos of dedication to the public good.

PFI effectively means a government guarantee to use public money to provide funds for the private sector for the next 20-30 years, costing considerably more than paying up front. PFI capital spending should be replaced by normal public sector capital spending financed through the traditional method of selling government bonds or gilts or through the current account surpluses of recent years. Government policy should not force public agencies down the PFI route by tying funding to partnership schemes.

*Question 20: How can we best work with the private sector to use their spare capacity for NHS patients to be treated on the basis of need and not on the basis of the amount they can pay? (pp.10&16)*

The public and private sectors have different motivations. For-profit operators will not, by nature, place other values above profit maximisation. Obligations to investors take priority over social obligations. Evidence shows that for-profit operators of hospitals provide lower quality of care; have higher administration costs and are less efficient than publicly managed hospitals.

Using public resources to buy capacity from the private sector is not a value-for-money way of providing a public service. The extra costs of using private sector capacity will be borne by staff, patients and local communities. The introduction of market mechanisms into health care delivery segments patients into winners and losers, creates inefficiencies and decreases equity. The government should dismantle the internal and external market with its expensive contracting and pricing and restore block budgets and the allocation of resources based on need.

The burden for funding improvements in the NHS must not be shifted further on to patients and no further user charges should be introduced. Only universal health care, funded through progressive taxation, can provide the service we need.

# Democracy, Citizenship and Political Engagement

In attempting to deal with the problem of political disengagement, the document seeks to gloss over the most glaring point of disillusionment and disagreement from party members and the public, namely the deliberate erosion of democratic discussion, control and accountability from the grassroots up.

## Suggested responses to the questions in the document

### ● SECTION 1: Effective and Legitimate Government — Further constitutional and parliamentary reform

*Question 1: What change to the practices of Westminster and other political institutions are needed to make them more effective in both engaging and responding to the public? Is there more that could be done to make Parliament and government more responsive to the public using modern technology? (pp.3&12)*

Replacing hereditary peers with ministerial appointees will not make the House of Lords more democratic or accountable. An elected second chamber would inevitably challenge the authority of the House of Commons and would replicate the United States system of “checks and balances” which continually blocks progressive change. The House of Lords should be abolished and not replaced by any form of second chamber. This does not, however, preclude the establishment of additional scrutiny committees of the House of Commons which would be restricted to examining the technical merits of legislation and which would not have significant delaying powers.

### ● Making politics more representative

*Question 2: What more should be done to increase the representativeness of our political institutions in general? What is the balance between the responsibility of political parties and that of government to bring about this change? (pp. 4&12)*

An objective system for effectively applying women-only shortlists is needed, for example, to have a women-only list in every Labour seat that becomes vacant and in by-elections. Otherwise the application of women-only-shortlists is at the discretion of national or regional officials, a mechanism which is routinely misused. Labour should address the appalling political under-representation of black and minority ethnic communities by introducing positive discrimination in the selection of candidates for Westminster and devolved assemblies, backed up by any necessary legislative measures.

### ● Devolution of power

*Question 3: Have we found the right balance between government from the central and from other levels? (pp.4 & 12)*

Measures such as directly elected local mayors radically centralise power in local government and should be scrapped.

### ● 2. Civil Society — Tackling Racism and Inequality

*Question 8: What further practical steps can we take to reduce the inequalities between the different communities in Britain and to promote equality of opportunity? How can positive action contribute to a more equal society? What is the balance between this and equality of opportunity? Should we look to combine the separate Commissions for race, disability and women into one Commission for Equalities? What are the advantages and disadvantages of such an approach? (pp.8&12)*

There should be a commitment to substantially increased funding into areas hit by decline of manufacturing industry and racist divisions. These require state financial intervention, combined

with strengthened anti-racist legislation.

On the gender pay gap, the government should implement the Equal Opportunity Commission’s call for pay audits, and introduce legislation to oblige employers to pay workers equally.

Merger of the equality commissions should be rejected. The different commissions have vastly different areas of concern and specialism, and work to very differing legislative frameworks. The commissions are not urging the proposal. Merger would lessen the effectiveness of the bodies.

### ● A British Citizenship?

*Question 9: Can we define Britishness in a way that we can all recognise and in a way that respects our diversity? What norms, customs and institutions are British? What does it mean to be British? Would a national identity card give people more of a stake and identity in society? (pp.9&12)*

The notion that lack of English language skill and of ‘shared ideals’ and ‘norms’ explain lack of social integration should be rejected. It is racism and discrimination which bear the major responsibility for the lack of integration. We must be careful not to set the clock back to before the Lawrence Inquiry Report – which acknowledged pervasiveness of institutional racism.

We also :

- oppose ID cards – which will be used to harass visible minorities;
- oppose English tests and an oath of allegiance;
- reassert the framework of the Lawrence report.

### ● 3. Improving Political Engagement — Electoral System

*Question 12: What lessons can we learn from the new voting systems used in Scotland, Wales, London and Europe? (pp.10&12)*

Proportional representation should not be introduced for elections to the House

(continued overleaf)

# Democracy, Citizenship and Political Engagement

(from previous page)

of Commons or in local government. The 'first past the post' electoral system should continue to be used for elections to the House of Commons and local government, and reintroduced for British MEPs in the European Parliament.

## ● Young people and pressure group politics

*Question 14: Is there more that we should be doing to encourage political activity in whatever form? What specifically can we do*

*to involve young people in the political process? Should we reduce the age at which people can stand for public office? (pp.10&12)*

Nearly five million fewer people voted in the 2001 general election than in 1997, with 2.8 million fewer voting Labour. The answer to this does not lie primarily in new technology but in government policy, particularly on public services. To engage young people, party policy needs to address their concerns – the ending of student grants and imposition of tuition fees has alienated many young people. The minimum wage

should apply to young people without discrimination. The assumption that reducing the age of eligibility to vote and stand for public office would, by itself, increase involvement of young people avoids the real issue.

Falling participation by Labour members in Labour's own structures, in campaigning and even loss of members, mirrors the lack of accountability and inability to influence decisions. Modest steps towards increasing participation and interest include:

- At annual conference, increase debate based on resolutions submitted by local parties and unions. There should be at least 4 debates chosen by and based on CLP resolutions and 4 by trade unions;

- A more open National Policy Forum process, including ability of CLPs and affiliated organisations to move specific amendments to NPF reports at annual conference;

- The restoration of an annual policy-making women's conference.

## ● Political Parties

*Question 15: Have we got the balance right in legislating on political parties? Should we consider greater state funding of political parties and if so, for what? (pp.11&12)*

State funding of political parties should be rejected. It will prove unpopular with the electorate and would militate against political accountability and, in turn, membership participation. State funding will also lessen the need for party leaderships to respect the political decisions and concerns of party members – in Labour's case whether of affiliated trade unions or individual members.

## Labour Party Annual Conference 2002 Blackpool

### Campaign for Labour Party Democracy Pre-Conference Rally

# Keep the Party Labour – Keep the Link

**Sunday 29 September**

**10am to 12.30 - Doors Open 9.30**

**Regency Suite, Ruskin Hotel, Albert Road**

**Speakers: Tony Benn, Ann Black, Aileen Colleran,  
John Cryer MP, Rozanne Foyer, Kumar Murshid,  
Alice Mahon MP, Mark Seddon, Christine Shawcroft,  
Dennis Skinner MP**

**Special Briefing for delegates : Pete Willsman  
Chair: Manuela Sykes**

**Admission £2; Unwaged & Low Waged 50p  
(please have your money ready)**

**JOIN NOW**

## Support the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy

Return to: CLPD Secretary, 10 Park Drive, London NW11 7SH. Phone/Fax: 020 8458 1501

Annual rates: £15 individuals; £5 unwaged and low waged (under £8,000); £20 couples (£6 unwaged); £25 national & regional organisations; £10 CLPs, TUs and Co-op Parties; £5 CLP branches. Extras: EC papers and bulletin £5; Bulletin £3.

I/we enclose £ ..... subscriptions/renewal/donation

Name (1) ..... (2) .....

Address .....

Post Code .....

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

CLP ..... Region .....

TU ..... Date .....