**Peter Willsman reports from Labour’s January Executive - NEC Meeting January 23rd 2018**

The NEC lasted some 6 hours, with JC present throughout. There was a comradely atmosphere and positive signs of a coming together to focus on fighting the Tories and winning elections. This was particularly the case with the long discussion over the actions of the majority of the Haringey Labour Group. On the table there were 2 alternative ways forward. Then, after “corridor discussions” the NEC came together in a unanimous decision.

* **Leaders Report**

Jeremy opened by welcoming the 4 newly elected NEC members. He was very pleased to note that, as a result of this election, the NEC have moved from a majority of male members to a majority of women members.

Jeremy took the NEC through the major international issues, especially the serious military action in Turkey and the concerns for democratic rights there. He gave details of the fight our MP’s are putting up against this very harmful government. Jeremy particularly highlighted the steps the PLP are taking to contest the Tory Brexit imbroglio.

Finally, Jeremy went through some of the horrendous detail regarding the disgraceful Carillion scandal, following quickly on the heels of the disgraceful BHS scandal. Jeremy stressed that PFI contracts are notoriously inflexible, and attempts to change them often lead to huge legal costs. It is, as Jeremy emphasised, an expensive racket. PFI has been a deluded attempt to prove that it is possible to get good public services on the cheap and at the expense of the workforce.

* **Reports by Shadow Secretaries of State**

*Jon Trickett MP*

Jon went through the campaigning he has undertaken in the press, in Parliament and in the party. Jon focused, like Jeremy, on the Carillion debacle. The latest Carillion Annual Report boasted of 16 years of unbroken dividend growth, yet pensioners are now being cast off into the pensions lifeboat. Jon asked, how could a company with Carillion’s pension deficit of some £580 million be allowed to pay £83 million in dividends last year. This scandal has left as many as 43,000 workers, of whom about 19,500 are in the UK, plus thousands of suppliers, unsure of their jobs and livelihoods. The banks have been left holding a debt of some £1.3 billion. Like Jeremy, Jon gave an undertaking that this appalling state of affairs will be brought to an end immediately we have the next Labour Government.

In response to Jon’s powerful presentation, I pointed out that several other outsourcing companies are also in trouble, eg Interserve and Mitie. In addition, there is a knock on negative effect for companies such as Balfour Beatty.

*Jon Ashworth MP*

Jon continued in the same vein as Jon T, giving the NEC a powerful report, covering the serious failings of this Government in relation to the public’s health. He outlined the work he has undertaken in Parliament, the press and the party.

Jon highlighted the fact that scores of A&E’s and maternity units are being downgraded or closed. Junior doctors are leaving in droves and our nurses are desperately covering some 40,000 unmanned posts. And, of course, the private sector flourishes and takes up swathes of once-NHS contracts. Jon stressed the policy-driven reality of NHS underfunding and move towards a US style insurance system.

Jon noted that in 2005, Jeremy Hunt co-authored a pamphlet that called for the NHS to be replaced by an insurance-based system and for denationalising the provision of health care in Britain. To stop companies like Virgin Care running the majority of our health services we must fight for a Labour Government.

* **Local Government Report**

Nick Forbes, LG rep on NEC, reported that registrations were now open and planning well under way for the Local Government Conference on Saturday, 3rd February 2018 at the East Midlands Conference Centre. There will be plenary sessions on some of the key issues facing local government, including Social Care and Housing. New councillors will again be able to attend for free.

In the discussion on Nick’s report the trade unions raised the vexed issue of the action of the majority of the Haringey Labour Group. The trade unions argued for a firm line because they believed that the huge and unprecedented Haringey project opens the door to serious threats to the jobs and conditions of employment of the workforce, goes against the Party’s custom and practice and needs further consideration. The trade unions, of course, recognised that Labour councils are under continual attack by the vindictive Tory Government. Nick Forbes argued strongly that there should be a mediation process, which he was prepared to lead.

The Chair then agreed that the meeting be suspended so that both the trade unions and Nick could find a way forward that was acceptable to the whole NEC. The CLP reps had no role in this whatsoever (this includes my friend of 40 years, Jon Lansperson – Jon was restrained and respectful throughout the 6 hour meeting). The CLP reps watched with interest the writing and rewriting for the possible wording of an agreed motion. Within a relatively short time it was all smiles. The composite motion was then put to the NEC by Nick and the trade unions. The motion proposed mediation, led by Nick, and if this draws a blank then the NEC wishes to make it clear to the Labour Group that it believes that this matter should be paused and no contract signed till after the May election. In the debate it was made clear that the NEC reserves the right to exercise the powers that are vested in the NEC by the Party’s Constitution and Rules. The composite motion was carried unanimously. I pointed out that we must have more of these fruitful “corridor discussions”.

I was a little surprised to be told of a letter in the, Tory-supporting and viciously anti-JC, Sunday Times of 28th January, which was signed by some 71 Labour council leaders (apparently several Labour council leaders had refused to sign). The letter suggested that the NEC is acting outside of our Party’s Rules and is being “uncomradely and disrespectful”. It further stated that the leader of Haringey is “inspirational” and that our Party owes her “a huge debt of gratitude”.

The Sunday Times, of course, welcomed this free gift (boasted as being an Exclusive). The article stated that the NEC is now “Momentum controlled”. The heading of the article – in huge letters – was “Labour Councils Defy Momentum”. It quoted one Labour leader (anonymously) as saying the NEC was “utterly politically stupid”. The paper gleefully noted that in May, Haringey will become the UK’s first ever “Momentum council”.

I am not a member of Momentum – CLPD is quite enough to be getting on with. Indeed, a very large majority of the NEC are not members of Momentum. Of course, the Sunday Times stated the contrary – “the NEC has acquired a secure pro-Corbyn and Momentum majority”.

Unconnected to the councillors’ letter, it does seem to be the case that our Party’s hard right (self-defined as “moderates”) and the hostile Tory press have an unholy alliance to smear Momentum relentlessly. Everything this motley crew are critical of is all down to Momentum. I wouldn’t be surprised to read that England’s loss of the Ashes was somehow linked to Momentum – there might be a claim that some of the team were watching Momentum videos instead of practising in the nets. Of course, the hidden agenda is that it is really all part of the campaign to undermine JC. I see their cheerleader, John Mann MP, is now saying that Jeremy is too old.

Our esteemed council leaders seem to be a little rusty in relation to our Rule Book and the all-encompassing powers it gives to the NEC. Perhaps I should propose to the NEC that the leaders are all sent a copy of the bright red 2018 Rule Book that has just been published.

* **European Parliamentary Labour Party Report**

Richard Corbett MEP stressed that Labour MEP’s continue to work hard for policies that deliver socialist values. Labour MEP’s have voted for greater controls on the export of dual-use items – items which can be used for both civilian and military purposes, and are often used by brutal regimes for repression – and the insertion of a human rights dimension into the controls, and uniform standards across the EU. Labour MEP’s also recently backed calls for an EU arms embargo against Saudi Arabia – Tory MEP’s voted against.

In relation to Brexit our MEP’s are united in opposing the damaging, job-losing, rights-destroying, trade-disrupting, tax-revenue-reducing shambles that this Tory government is lurching towards.

* **International Report**

It was reported that Iain McNicol attended the PES General Secretaries Conference and presented on “new ways of involving citizens and party members”. Jeremy Corbyn attended the PES Congress in Lisbon and met with Prime Minister Costas and the Portuguese Socialist Party. A Labour Party delegation, including members of the Brexit team, held bilateral meetings with our sister parties from Bulgaria, Sweden, Denmark, Norway, Germany, Czech Republic, France and the Netherlands. We also participated on a Rainbow Rose panel on the implementation of the PES LGBTI Roadmap.

* **Review of Annual Conference 2017**

There were 1278 delegates representing 579 CLP’s, 757 female and 521 male. This is an increase of 457 delegates from last year. 10 trade unions had delegations which totalled 104 female and 145 male delegates. There were 21 female and 14 male Socialist Society delegates representing 20 organisations. 426 fringe events were held. Over 3,000 people were seated in the main hall for the Leader’s speech. Almost 300 international visitors attended this year’s Annual Conference from some 65 countries. Visitors included sister party representatives, sister party organisations, the diplomatic community and international organisations.

Following a rule change carried in 2016, Conference had for the first time the right to “reference back” parts of policy documents. 4 reference back votes were put to Conference, of which 3 were passed. These 3 issues, relating to health and social care, education and welfare, will now go back to the NPF for further consideration.

*Women’s Conference*

1,337 women attended Women’s Conference 2017 which was a significant increase. 414 were voting delegates. It has been agreed that the 2018 conference will be held in Liverpool on 22nd September. Following this, there will be a stand-alone women’s conference in 2019 and 2020.

* **Democracy Review**

Katy Clark and Claudia Webbe introduced this item. The Review is being led by Katy Clark, assisted by Andy Kerr and Claudia Webbe and will report to the Leader and Ian Lavery MP (Party Chair). A report will be produced prior to Conference 2018. There have been over 3,000 submissions to the Review to date with the vast majority from members and the remainder from Party units and affiliates.

* **National Policy Forum Report**

The Joint Policy Committee had agreed that the following consultation topics would be examined by the policy commissions as part of their work this year:

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| Topics | Policy Commission |
| Towards a National Education Service | Early Years, Education and Skills |
| The future of work | Economy, Business and Trade |
| Tackling health inequalities | Health and Social Care |
| A greener Britain | Environment, Energy and Culture |
| Giving people the power to shape their local communities | Housing, Local Government and Transport |
| Achieving Sustainable Development Goals | International |
| Protecting our communities and turning lives around | Justice and Home Affairs |
| Addressing in-work equality and working age inequalities | Work, Pensions and Equality |

A full NPF will be held on 17 & 18 February 2018.

I raised the issue of the NPF in relation to the Democracy Review. Some comrades argue that the NPF should be replaced by another policy-making structure. Others argue that the NPF needs to be overhauled to make it more effective and member-friendly. I suggested that the NPF in February should have a session devoted to the future of the NPF and that Katy C could be there to feed the ideas into the Democracy Review. It was confirmed that such a session would be timetabled.

* **Sexual Harassment Awareness and Training Programme**

Now that our agreed policy and process are in place and operational, our Officers are working up proposals for improving awareness and rolling out training throughout the wider party. A draft was provided for the NEC.

The Party will engender a culture of care and respect between party members at all levels, and to provide awareness and training to facilitate this. Where practicable we will combine delivery of communications and training on Sexual Harassment with a parallel programme being planned by our Safeguarding team.

* **Membership of NEC Committees**

Rachel Garnham, one of the new CLP reps, had been invited to the Equalities Ctte on 16th January. However, at the NEC, Rachel was not included in the membership of the Equalities Ctte for 2018. I rather emphatically objected to this. Ann Black, in her usual reasoned way, argued that Rachel had made a major contribution to the committee on 16th January and therefore Ann stressed that Rachel should not be removed from the committee. As usual, Ann’s reasonable arguments carried the day.

* **Postcript**

"Some serious economists have begun to advocate a wealth tax" - Investors' Chronicle, 5 January 2018

# This quote and loads more are on the CLPD website (“Quotes of the month” left hand side, scroll down).

As you will see, the CLPD website has lots of useful stuff for members and CLP’s, eg a guide for new members. It also has an archive going back to the 1970’s.