



Syriza wow Labour delegates at Yorkshire conference

Over 50 Yorkshire and Humber Labour Party delegates packed into Saturday's fringe meeting in Leeds to hear from the front line in what has been labelled 'A Very European Coup'. Professor Costas Douzinas, Professor of Law at Birkbeck College in London told a packed audience that there was a parallel between Chris Mullin's classic story A Very British Coup and recent developments in Greece.

The capitalist establishment in Europe have closed ranks to protect their own interests in spite of Syriza winning a democratic majority and now commanding 80% public support in the opinion polls. Greece could now be forced into bankruptcy for failing to pay €1.8bn which is now due. There is still hope that the 4 month extension to the Eurozone loan deal will go ahead although the cost could be very damaging.

What is happening in Greece should serve as a warning to other countries. He said austerity has created obscene inequality and that Greece was a neoliberal laboratory for policies to be tested in Greece which would then be exported to the rest of Europe.

Delegates also heard from Haringey Labour Councillor Isidoras Diakedes who made a plea for socialist and Labour groups across Europe to come together to defend workers against the neo Liberal economic politics of austerity. To rousing applause the Syriza representatives call for unity and democracy were given the warmest of receptions.

Labour's Prospective Parliamentary Candidate for Leeds East Richard Burgon spoke of the imperative for an incoming Labour government to reject the massive cuts being proposed by George Osborne. He called on Labour leaders to reject austerity and to protect services. He said Labour needed to change and recalled Nye Bevan saying that the "role of Parliament is to point a sword at the heart of private property."

Steve Jennings Senior Organiser and political officer for the GMB explained how workers terms and conditions were suffering as a result of centrally impose economic policies across Europe. He spoke of the need for Labour to find a real alternative to austerity around which the trades unions could come together.

Delegates spoke of the need to reject neoliberal economics for a genuinely Socialist model reminding attendees of the success of the radical Labour government of 1945.

They expressed a real desire for Ed Balls to firmly reject policies which could see the economy contract further and called on him to borrow for investment in key services.

They also expressed a clear need for Labour to learn lessons from the experience of the people of Greece and a desire to continue to build links with Syriza and other socialist parties in countries like Spain and Portugal in order to prevent further decline in the living standards of working class people.

Organising the meeting, the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy's George McManus reminded delegates that the Labour Party had rejected CLPD's calls to reject austerity in favour of an emergency budget at last year's National Policy Forum. The electorate are now coming to realise that austerity is now the problem and not the solution. He thanked delegates for attending and gave the re-assurance that the dialogue would continue with, hopefully, the new Labour government post May.