

NEC report - March 2019

This is a collective report on behalf of all NEC CLP reps: Yasmine Dar, Huda Elmi, Rachel Garnham, Ann Henderson, Jon Lansman, Navendu Mishra, Claudia Webbe, Darren Williams and Peter Willsman.

Reports

March's National Executive Committee meeting began with moving obituaries, with our fellow CLP rep Darren Williams raising the immense legacy Paul Flynn leaves behind in Newport. Similarly, USDAW reps spoke of the impact Garfield Davies had not just on shopworkers but the wider Trade Union movement.

This was followed by a local government report, with special mention made about the second edition of "100 innovations by Labour in Power". Available on the LGA website, this literature is a useful compilation of our Party's achievements in local government that can be incorporated into manifestos, used on the door-step or adapted as best practice for Labour controlled councils. Important questions were raised on insourcing, maternity leave and councillor pensions- with commitments made to campaign more vociferously on these issues.

Brexit dominated discussions, with the report from European Parliamentary Labour Party leader indicating that the EU would be willing to further negotiations around the 5 pillars Labour has put forward to avoid a catastrophic no-deal Brexit. Jeremy echoed this in his report, stressing that the historic parliamentary defeat of this Government's deal calls for either a GE or impetus to negotiate a new agreement.

Very clear from Jeremy's report was that the Government could collapse very soon, and as such the Party should be in constant campaign mode. From Scottish Party Conference, PES conference to launching Local Government Elections, Jeremy and his front bench team have travelled extensively to energise the membership and increase the Party's presence. Targets include the East and West Midlands, where the upcoming local and/or general elections will be critical and hard fought.

We joined Jeremy in wishing Jennie Formby the speediest recovery, with many on the NEC giving thanks to the tremendous work she has done so far. He ended his report reflecting on the Christchurch shootings, indicating he had spoken with Jacinda Ardern and the high commissioner of New Zealand to offer our solidarity and praise the courage and leadership they have shown. He warned of the nefarious far-right ideologies perpetuating Islamophobia and threatening the bonds that tie us together.

The deputy leader spoke of his work on digital rights, notably the means in which gambling in videogames targeted at children is becoming normalised. Many on the NEC questioned his involvement with "Future Britain", and the lack of transparency around its role or operational

objectives. The deputy leader clarified that it is not a “party within a party” and admitted its main purpose is to appease disaffected parliamentarians.

In response to questions around the possible GDPR breach of demanding complaints be emailed directly to him, he reassured the NEC that he has consulted a data lawyer and wishes to work closely with the General Secretary’s office to ensure any actions taken are lawful. An update on finances indicated the budget is both balanced and includes funds for a (seemingly imminent) general election campaign.

The meeting received an update on the review of relations with Sister Parties. This is looking at how to develop international relationships with new or existing organisations that reflect our aims and values.

The meeting received an update on National Policy Forum activity. CLPs, members and affiliates are encouraged to get involved with the current round of policy consultations. CLP representatives raised some of the inadequacies of the current process and suggested that members need to see meaningful engagement with their submissions if the process is to be worthwhile.

Preparations for local and possible general and European elections were discussed. CLP reps raised some concerns about the functioning of Organise as a tool for communicating with members. This will be followed up outside the meeting.

Democracy Review:

National Constitutional Committee

- There was detailed discussion about proposed improvements to NCC operations, which aim to speed up the process whilst ensuring there is fairness for members, with less involvement of lawyers.

NEC and CAC elections

- BAME and disabled NEC elections will take place as soon as “viable electorate” is formed- members must complete equalities survey to receive ballot. CLP reps raised the need for clarification on what is considered a “viable” electorate, we will receive an update on this.
- New CAC disabled members rep will be elected this Annual Conference, adhering to same cycle as current reps. It was agreed job shares will be possible.

Local Digital Media Strategy

This paper brought together a range of issues and current practice.

- CLP reps argued for NEC minutes to be available to all members, behind a secure and password protected wall on the website. There was considerable push back on this.
- It was agreed that it would be helpful for CLP secretaries to use standardised emails (for example, CoventrySouthLabour@gmail.com) that can be passed on to successors, but the technical and compliance implications of issuing “@labour.org” email addresses to all CLPs would be too great and expensive.
- A proposal from the Democracy Review to make individual branch and CLP standing orders available to all members in a secure area was rejected as too resource intensive. It was noted that all CLPs are supported to have their own individual websites, but these are public-facing and therefore not necessarily suitable for standing orders.

Young Labour

- After much discussion a paper was passed, including an amendment to the constitution’s own amendment process to give young members the ability to shape their own policy and edit the constitution itself.
- The most drastic change is the creation of student representatives on Young Labour’s national committee- but it must be stressed they do not have rule book rights to organise the Party’s student membership. It is important students continue to fight within Labour Students, with many on the NEC noting in debate their failure in adhering to democratic principles foundational to our Party. The new student representatives will go some way in tackling the deficit in democratic accountability and political leadership.

Regional structures

New rules were discussed at March’s Organisation Committee. While some standardisation of regional rules is much needed to ensure minimum requirements are met, such as annual conferences, CLP reps put forward an amendment to the proposals that would enable some flexibility for regions to change their own rules at regional conference, subject to NEC endorsement. Unfortunately, this was not supported. The new standard rules will mean elections to Regional Executive Committees every two years – for some, a reduction in democracy and accountability, Amendments from CLP reps to ensure that Regional Conferences have standing orders and a timetable for submission of motions were agreed.

Women’s conference

Unfortunately, there was no agenda item either for committees or the full NEC to discuss the brilliant standalone, policy-making women’s conference held in Telford in February. It fell to women NEC reps to highlight the huge and diverse attendance, the comradely fashion in which

policy-making took place and the scope and lessons for further development of our equality structures.