

NEC report - July 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.**

July was a busy month for meetings of Labour's NEC and its sub-committees. Extended meetings of the Organisation Committee, Disputes Panel and Equalities Committee preceded the full meeting of the NEC on 22 July, all packed with business carried over from the cancellation of meetings in May to accommodate the European elections.

After a fulsome tribute to Walter Wolfgang, Jeremy gave a thorough and wide-ranging report of Labour's priorities. He talked at length about Brexit and Labour's prioritising of fighting the very real threat of a no deal Brexit under Boris Johnson. He thanked members and voters for their support in recent election and paid particular tribute to those who had worked so hard in the Peterborough by-election and retained the seat against the odds. As usual Jeremy demonstrated his wide-ranging knowledge and understanding of international issues, reporting from the International Social Forum and sending a message of solidarity and support to Lula in Brazil. He then ran through Labour's recent policy announcements which are setting the agenda for a progressive government – insourcing local government services, extending the minimum wage to over 16s, support for veterans, National Care Service and putting action on a climate emergency front and centre.

Jeremy then outlined the threat from racism and rise of the far right, including Trump's recent 'go home' comments and increasing support for fascist parties in Europe. He ran through the extensive progress that has been made in handling complaints of antisemitism in the Labour Party, including increasing staffing on complaints, increasing the size of the National Constitutional Committee and the introduction of more agile NEC panels for hearing cases. He defended members, pointing out that antisemitism is an anathema to everything that the Labour Party and the vast majority of members stand for.

Jennie Formby supplemented the report with new figures that demonstrate the extent to which the rate at which these cases are processed has been speeded up under her leadership, and highlighting other measures, such as on education, where so much progress has been made. There is some concern that expulsions are not quick enough where there is clear *prima facie* evidence against members, and it was agreed to investigate a new system of fast track expulsions – about which CLP reps raised multiple concerns – alongside an appeals process, to introduce a more rapid process while not removing the right to a fair hearing.

Other key issues raised during July meetings:

- NEC members are still very concerned about the small numbers of BAME prospective parliamentary candidates selected and asked for additional measures to be taken, within the law, to increase these numbers. These would be alongside the Bernie Grant leadership programme which was already underway and on which Equalities Committee received a report.
- Organisation Committee noted and made some amendments to a paper on Trigger Ballots. Implementation is now proceeding in the Regions, but CLPs have been advised not to embark on implementing the procedures until they have had agreement to do so from the Regional Director.
- An autumn timetable was proposed for ballots for the BAME seat and Disabled seat on the NEC. Concerns were raised about the low return so far of the equality monitoring survey

which will create the electorate for these two seats. The majority of CLP reps voted to push ahead with the timetable while at the same time promoting the survey, arguing that democracy review recommendations should not continue to be kicked down the road. However, unfortunately the timetable was not agreed. All Labour's stakeholders have a responsibility to promote the survey wherever possible so that our data is as complete as possible.

- CLP reps raised the issue so often raised with us by members of when CLPs in less winnable seats will be able to select their candidates for a future general election. Unfortunately these are not currently being prioritised, with trigger ballots and selections in more winnable seats understandably taking precedence. Suggestions that procedures in less winnable seats may need less tight supervision have not currently been accepted. Moreover, there is a potential issue with the number of candidates the Party can provide adequate support for over an extended period, but we will continue to raise the issue.
- Women CLP members have consistently asked for progress to be made on the 2020 annual standalone women's conference building on the great success of February 2019. We have been assured that this will take place in May/June 2020 and we have asked for a timetable that will allow plenty of time for women's forums and CLPs to meet to discuss motions.
- Motions from CLPs were noted at July's Organisation Committee. It was pointed out that the high number of motions expressing a lack of confidence in the Deputy Leader should be a cause of concern to him.
- New guidance on administrative suspensions was agreed, coming out of the NEC's Procedures Working Group, designed to make the process fairer and more transparent.
- A working group has been set up to take forward the Democracy Review's proposal to review membership fees and CLP funding. A CLP rep will be a member of this group and it will bring recommendations in time for annual conference 2019.
- Members raised concerns about the functioning of local democracy in a number of places, including concerns about the situation in Enfield, where NEC actions are due to be implemented to improve functioning locally, and in Tees Valley.
- Organisation Committee received updates on Police and Crime Commissioner and Metro Mayor selections and a number of issues relating to CLP and members involvement were raised.
- The NEC looked at a provisional timetable for annual conference and the case was made for NPF and NCC CLP reps to be represented at conference, which was unfortunately rebuffed.
- Equalities Committee took an extensive discussion on new rules for Equalities Branches, where several amendments were made and rule changes will come back to the NEC before being considered by Annual Conference; and on new equality structures for women, BAME and disabled members. This was a more wide-ranging discussion, but some principles were agreed and CLP reps argued strongly that progress is desperately needed in this area almost a year on from the Report of the Democracy Review.
- The issue of job shares for roles came up at the NEC. It was agreed that when one part of a job share became vacant for whatever reason, the by-election should be for that part of the job share and not the whole position.
- CLP reps and the youth rep raised serious concerns about the democratic deficit in Labour Students, the failure of the organisation to publish the results of its elections, and the need for the Party to enable student Party members to organise effectively to win support for Labour.

- The NEC considered an update on the National Policy Forum consultation. Questions were asked about CLP involvement in agreeing the final NPF documents as there are no CLP co-convenors of policy commissions and no current CLP reps elected to the Joint Policy Committee. CLP reps also expressed an urgency in the need for NPF reform to fully include members and affiliated members in the policy-making process.
- The NEC was given a report on finance and membership, debunking some media reports which appear to be entirely fictional, and demonstrating the Party's very healthy position and readiness to fight a general election whenever it comes.