



Decision time

For the first time since 1994, Labour Party members are voting to choose the leader of the Party. Since the General Election in May, the five candidates have tried to persuade Westminster colleagues, MEPs, trade unions and affiliated organisations, and party members to nominate, support and vote for their bid to lead Labour in opposition to the Tory/LibDem coalition, and re-build the Party.

As well as TV, radio and online debates, candidates have taken part in numerous hustings events in the UK. Four of the candidates have visited Brussels during the campaign, and Brussels Labour has been privileged to welcome three of the candidates (Andy Burnham, David Miliband and Ed Miliband) to address rank-and-file members here. Summaries of those three meetings appear in this edition of *Germinal*.

During these meetings, Brussels Labour raised the issue of the voting rights of British citizens living abroad. The three candidates said they were not aware that we lose these rights after fifteen years abroad.

Brussels Labour then wrote, on 1 August, to all five candidates to summarise the situation and what we propose. As a reminder, the current situation is that British citizens living abroad lose their right to vote in UK national elections after 15 years outside the UK except if they are, or are married to, Crown Servants or British Council employees. To compound the situation, these British citizens cannot vote in national elections in their country of residence, such as Belgium, and are therefore disenfranchised.

The reason for this situation is Article 141 of

the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000, which amended the Representation of the People Act 1985.

Brussels Labour has long taken the position that the right to vote should be linked to an ongoing commitment to the UK and we oppose arbitrary time limits for a number of reasons. For example, emigrants with no interest at all in the UK can still vote 14 years after they left, while British citizens who live abroad for career or family reasons lose their vote after 15 years even if they still have a close interest in British matters and remain connected through family and other links.

As a solution, we propose a simple mechanism: voting rights should stay with British citizens who remain continuously on the electoral register, regardless of the time they have been away from the UK.

We have asked for the views of the candidates; at time of publication, no responses had been received.

Members of the Labour Party in Brussels should have received their ballot papers by time of publication - if this is not the case, then you are advised to contact the Party in order to ensure that you can cast your vote - online, or by post - by the deadline of 22 September.

As well as voting for the new leader, Party members will also be asked to elect a new Labour Party Treasurer, with Diana Holland, a member of the NEC and the Assistant General Secretary of Unite, on the ballot paper alongside John Prescott, the former deputy leader of the Party. A third election is also being held for CLP members of the NEC.

From 25 September, Labour can look forward, with renewed optimism and a new leader, to taking on the Coalition, rebuilding the Party, and winning back power both at a national and local level.

Belinda Pyke and David O'Leary

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Views expressed are those of the individual authors, not necessarily of Brussels Labour.

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2 Germinal

Labour leadership election **Andy Burnham**

"I will re-connect Labour"



Andy Burnham, the former health secretary, addressed Brussels Labour on 22 June, setting out his vision for Labour's future and his thoughts on Europe, making his case to be the Party's next leader.

He started with a bold statement that underlines what he considers to be his unique selling point: "I can give Labour something the Tories don't have, I can connect to the people who thought Labour wasn't on their side". He said Labour did many good things in government, was right to be pro-business and to support job and wealth creation, but slipped up when it appeared to be seduced by power.

Andy Burnham said that immigration was the biggest issue on the doorstep during the election campaign and that we have to deal with it directly, adding that it was the failure to deal with the knock-on effects of immigration (on housing, benefits, and public services) that was the problem. "People are not xenophobic," he said, "but we hadn't helped them deal with change." He maintained that the two-way free movement of labour in Europe should be a priority.

Andy pointed out that his own father worked abroad when it was tough finding work in the UK. He acknowledged that Westminster MPs did not listen to what Labour MEPs were saying about equipping people with the skills and protections to face the reality of a more mobile workplace in the European Union - for example, through the Directives on agency and posted workers.

Andy made it clear that he did not just want to talk to the Labour heartlands, and that Labour needs to be credible in opposition. However, it is important to oppose cuts, such as to the future jobs fund. He pointed out that the LibDems had campaigned for cuts to be delayed until the recovery was secured, so he argued that there is not a democratic mandate for cutting the budget now.

Andy Burnham said that it is important to make a positive case for Europe, and for Labour to be the internationalist force in British politics. He said we need to communicate better the successes that have been achieved at the European level - for example, on passenger rights and on mobile roaming charges. He admitted that the proper case for a Europe that improves the lives of ordinary people had not yet been made - and yet it could be, with good news on tackling bankers' bonuses and on workers' protection. Now is the time to point out that by isolating themselves, and aligning themselves with the far right-wing MEPs, the Tories have lost their influence. In contrast, he said, Labour should come together with the wider Labour family, including the unions and sister parties, to make a progressive case for fair politics.

Answering questions, Andy said he favoured a wholly (indirectly-)elected second chamber, with seats in the Lords allocated on a regional basis under PR, based on the share of the vote from the General Election. This would maintain primacy of the Commons, but would also give the Lords legitimacy.

Regarding reconnecting with the south, Andy said that we need to get back in touch with ordinary people across the country, and overcome the perception that Labour was helping people who did not help themselves, which led to a sense of unfairness.

On immigration, Andy Burnham said that he had no regrets about his role in the Home Office in the run up to the 2004 enlargement of the EU. Now, it is important to get the balance right on immigration policy, although "we mustn't have a bidding war" on who can be toughest on immigration.

Andy stated his dismay that while the highest

“ I can give Labour something the Tories don't have, I can connect to the people who thought Labour wasn't on their side ”



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earners' wages are increasing, those on middle incomes were staying more or less the same. He said that Labour had not used its values to tackle wealth at the highest level, and that there is a big difference between working hard, and gambling with other people's money.

As a demonstration of Labour's values for the 21st century, Andy Burnham proposed a new National Care Service, to mirror Labour's crowning 20th century achievement, the NHS. He said we should celebrate longer life, and free people from worry about the costs of care through a 10% estate levy. This would leave 90% as an inheritance, whereas voluntary private insurance would cost up to 50% of an estate. You do not pay whilst you are alive, so you can enjoy your hard-earned wealth.

Andy said his own story influenced all his thinking as a politician: he still believes that the elites that run society are incredibly hard to break in to, and he always expected a tap on the shoulder saying "you don't belong here". The cards are stacked against those who do not have connections, perpetuating an unequal system. All internships should be advertised, he said, and the charitable status of independent schools needs to be questioned. Andy added that he is strongly against selection in state schools.

On tax policy, Andy said that we needed to challenge Tory claims on waste. Labour's investment has significantly improved the NHS, and the Tories' proposal on scrapping the 18-week waiting list target will take power away from the patient, when "we sweated blood to get the waiting lists down."

On the Working Time Directive, Andy Burnham pointed out that implementing it had posed a challenge to the health service, but that the opt-out was not permanent and that the NHS did not collapse last summer when it ended.

All in all, Andy Burnham gave a convincing account of how to reconnect with not just traditional Labour voters, but the wider public, through a reconnection with Labour values, promoting fairness in Europe and building relationships across the Labour movement.

Isabel Summers

Labour leadership election **David Miliband**

Honesty, authenticity, new politics - rebuilding the Labour movement

David Miliband addressed Brussels Labour to offer his vision of the future and of the road back to power, and the values that would guide his leadership.

60 Labour members and supporters heard David thank members for their hard work in the election. Without their resolve, drive, and hard work, Labour would have faced a 'wipeout' on the scale of the 1983 defeat. The media and money were stacked in the Tories' favour; however, conversations on the doorstep saved several seats for Labour, such as Birmingham Edgbaston.

David took heart from the local election campaign, saying it highlighted the need for Labour to engage again in the "politics of community organisation". We won 400 council seats on 6 May, so have a base from which we can win - but we need to make sure that we don't need to lose again, as in 1959 and 1992, to win again. To return to winning ways, Labour needs to be honest, be authentic, and to change the way we do politics, he said.

We need to be honest about why we lost: we had the second worst result since the 1930s, and a "southern disaster" that went beyond the 'Southern Discomfort' described by Giles Radice after the 1992 defeat. We polled only 16% in the South-East, and were almost wiped out. (We lost a similar number of percentage points in the North, he added, but had a bigger cushion.) The leadership let down members, and we forced people to vote Tory - without forcing the Tories to win the argument.

We need to be authentic in what we believe, and how we say it - the voice that Gordon Brown found in the last week of the campaign. We need to show our passion about education, climate change, devolving power (including to individuals), and having a compassionate international policy - all points backed up with examples of action by David in government. We need to reform, and not just invest in, our public services. And he defended the war in Afghanistan as a "war of necessity" to build a



“ We need to be authentic in what we believe, and honest in how we say it ”

secure society in and future for that country.

We also need to change the way the Party works: Labour was a successful, disciplined political machine in the 1990s, which worked when we were winning, but sowed the seeds of destruction that grew when times got tough. To counter this, we need to get back to community-based organisation, and invoke the success of Barack Obama. Labour has a tradition of 'people before programmes', and we need to re-discover it. He pledged that his party would be open: at a hustings in Coventry, one-third of the 250 people present were not party members - by the end of the meeting, Labour had 50 new members. We need to involve our supporters, grow the party, and make it successful and appealing.

Answering questions, David said that Labour will fight the coalition when it is wrong, and look to appeal to disillusioned Liberal Democrats inside and outside Parliament.

Labour needs to be the party of community and individual rights and responsibilities, he said, adding that his view of devolved power

was ensuring individual freedom, so long as it does not harm the collective, and emphasising that Labour is not an 'individualist party'.

He said that Labour cannot outbid the Tories on immigration, and so needs to talk about issues such as housing supply and allocation, public service availability and social security, which feed anger about immigration.

However, on inequality, he said that only Mexico, out of the 24 OECD members, did more from 1997 to 2010 to reduce income inequalities. We need to lift up those at the bottom, and instill responsibility at the top.

David wants more women in the shadow cabinet, and said that the proportion in the PLP (31%) needs to be reflected on the front bench - although this requires an end to the high 'attrition rate' among women MPs. The briefing culture must end; David said he has never briefed against colleagues, adding that his campaign would not brief off-the-record.

On Europe, he added that it was important to highlight the divisions between the Tories and LibDems, as well as within those parties. Finally, Labour needs to be a 'red-green' party: the environment, energy and climate change would be key elements of his offer.

Overall, it was a confident, clear, and persuasive pitch - one that he clearly believes in, and will defend with vigour.

David O'Leary

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4 Germinal

Labour leadership election **Ed Miliband**

'The fight for fairness will be the centrepiece of my leadership'



Ed Miliband spoke to Brussels Labour members, without notes, for over twenty minutes, setting out his vision for the Labour Party under his leadership.

In a clear, well-structured speech, he set out five key elements:

Firstly, the need for a different concept of the political economy: Ed believes that Labour's reliance on the free market and free distribution did not take us far enough, and more effort is needed to tackle equality and the gap between 'rich' and 'poor'.

As an example, he said that the banks that were recently 'nationalised' could be put into 'mutual' ownership - rather than just selling back to the private sector.

Secondly, the need for further reform of the state: further reform of the House of Lords and votes at 16, for example, were two

initiatives that could make the state more democratic.

The third element was the role of the state in people's lives. There is a need to balance intrusion that has an overall benefit (such as closed-circuit television, which Ed supports) with freedoms.

For the fourth element he spoke passionately about the importance of people's lives outside the world of work - free time, community and environment.

Finally, he spoke about foreign policy and the need for values to determine our alliances. As an example, he used the disappointing Copenhagen climate change talks: Ed believes that on the one hand, the UK had been effective in persuading the US to support climate financing for the poorest countries, but that the lack of a common EU position weakened our influence in the negotiations. This section was very reminiscent of the 1997 'ethical foreign policy', launched by Robin Cook.

A question-and-answer session followed, with Ed at his most powerful when he touched on the theme of making sure politics is "relevant to people's lives". He believes that the Labour Party must develop a convincing story that in this regard, and affirmed that he is in politics

“ We need a different concept of the political economy: new Labour's reliance on the free market did not take us far enough in tackling inequality ”

because he believes in its power to change lives for the better.

While he stood by the decisions and successes of the last government, Ed said he is very keen to learn lessons from the recent past.

One theme was the need for a stronger party and a mechanism to ensure that the leadership listens more to the party. As leader, he would establish an elected 'President' of the party - independent of the leader. While acknowledging that 'giving power away' was difficult for a leader, he said he is convinced that it will result in a stronger party and would help avoid mistakes of the past (an oblique reference to Iraq).

In answering questions, Ed Miliband was happy to be specific on certain issues: that he is in favour of Turkey's membership of the EU, that 50% of the cabinet (and shadow cabinet) should be women, and that Iraq was a mistake.

He distanced himself from Peter Mandelson's remarks from the early years of New Labour by saying he was definitely not comfortable with the notion of the 'super rich'. In explaining this, he said he believes that people have a responsibility that 'goes beyond what the law says or the market allows'.

Interestingly both Ed Miliband and Andy Burnham (who spoke to Brussels Labour on the same evening) gave almost identical answers to questions about what really motivates them in politics. They both spoke of the importance of ensuring that even the most disadvantaged kids in their constituencies have a fair opportunity.

Mark Major



This article is also at brusselslabour.eu/germinal-online

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Labour leadership election

Ed Balls

Defending our values, fighting for fairness

Ed Balls was invited to speak to Brussels Labour during his visit to Brussels, but was unable to find sufficient time in his schedule. The text below is an abridged version of an article that appears on his campaign website.

"I'm very proud of what we achieved together. Labour's legacy is every child who is sitting in a brand new school, the winter fuel payment, our new hospitals, Sure Start children's centres, tax credits, civil partnerships, the national minimum wage and devolution.

"But I know why we lost. From north to south, too many people on lower incomes who voted Labour in the past thought we were not always listening to their concerns on jobs, housing and fair migration.

"So we need a leader who doesn't just listen, but hears, acts and is as at home speaking to mums, dads and pensioners or knocking doors on a council estate as at think tank seminars or international meetings. A leader who can take on the Tories and Lib Dems, as I have, leading the fight against their unfair VAT rise, their plan to break-up the Royal Mail and cuts to free school meals and new school buildings.



"We need a leader who is rooted in Labour values and can make the right calls under pressure - as I did on the Euro and raising national insurance to transform the NHS.

"We need a leader who can deliver credible and radical policies in government - as I did on tackling child poverty. I have set out new policies including a graduate tax to replace top-up fees, starting the 50p top rate of tax at £100,000 and a written constitution.

"Most of all, Labour must win the argument that this government is repeating the deflationary mistakes of the 1930s and 1980s.

"Political parties neglect their base at their peril. I want to strengthen our links with trade unions, reinvigorate Annual Conference, and introduce a Diversity Fund to help under-represented groups get elected and end undemocratic imposed selections.

"Labour needs a leader who can mount an effective opposition, earn the electorate's trust to be the next Prime Minister and have the strength and resilience to do the top job."

Diane Abbott

Turn the page, change the party

Diane Abbott was invited by the European Parliamentary Labour Party and Brussels Labour to address Labour MEPs and members of Brussels Labour.

She declined the invitation, although she did address some Labour International members during a speech to the British Chamber of Commerce in Geneva. The text below is an abridged version of an article that appears on her campaign website.

"I am so grateful to those of you who are supporting my bid to become the next leader of the Labour Party and Prime Minister of Britain.



"I'm standing to be leader of the party I love.

"I am a leader that is ready to turn the page and begin a new chapter in our proud history.

"Labour in opposition needs a strong, vibrant and distinctive voice to lead our movement, protect our people's livelihoods, defend our values and return us back to power.

"I've been standing up for people all of my life and I'm now ready to do it as Leader of the Labour Party.

"I am the candidate that will fight tooth and nail to defend jobs and public services that are so much under threat from the coalition government. I am the candidate that will be the voice for the voiceless and promote radical hope - compassionate and optimistic.

"To those who say I am the token candidate I say I doubled my majority in Hackney.

"To those who doubt my ability to lead I say look at my leadership and strength on issues like the Iraq war and 90 days detention.

"To those who doubt my judgement I say that when the big decisions came I made the right judgement call.

"When Labour got it wrong it was because we allowed our values to be corrupted and government ministers, many of whom are in this election, didn't see it coming until the country voted us out of power.

"It's time to renew and re-energise our party, its membership and its democracy.

"Together we can be the change we wish to see in our party and our country."

Timetable

Voting in the Labour leadership election

2010

Ballot papers issued by the Labour Party

1

SEPT

2010

17:00 BST
Deadline for votes to be cast (receipt of postal ballots and online votes)

22

SEPT

2010

Announcement of the result, on the eve of the Labour Party conference in Manchester

25

SEPT

More information Candidates' websites

Diane Abbott

Web diane4leader.co.uk

Twitter twitter.com/diane4leader

Ed Balls

Web edballs4labour.org

Twitter twitter.com/edballsmp

Andy Burnham

Web andy4leader.com

Twitter twitter.com/andyburnhammp

David Miliband

Web davidmiliband.net

Twitter twitter.com/DMiliband

Ed Miliband

Web edmiliband.org

Twitter twitter.com/Ed_Miliband

More information Labour Party

Leadership website

labour.org.uk/leadership-2010

Contact the Labour Party

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+44 (0)8705 900 200

6 Germinal

Belgian federal election

Socialists become biggest political family in Belgium



The Belgian Francophone Socialist Party (PS) scored a clear victory in the Belgian federal elections on 13 June, scoring 37% of the vote in Wallonia and taking 26 seats. Combined with the success of the Flemish SP.a - which scored 15% of the vote and took 13 seats - the socialists became once again the largest political family in Belgium. In both of these regions, the socialist parties overtook their Liberal opponents.

In Brussels, the Liberal MR remained the biggest party - despite a fall in support of seven points, and a gain by the PS of three points. However, it was the success of the Flemish nationalists - the NVA - which led to most headlines. The party became the largest in Flanders, and its leader, Bart De Wever, was asked by Albert II to advise on a possible coalition.

Elio di Rupo (*pictured*), the leader of the PS, was subsequently named *pre-formateur*, and was asked to convene talks with other parties on the formation of a government. The talks - which included the NVA, the Flemish Christian Democrats (CD&V), the Francophone centrist CDH party, the two Green parties (Groen! and Ecolo), and the two socialist parties - continued through June, July and August, but failed to lead to an agreement.

After already having had one attempt at resignation dismissed by the King, Elio di Rupo finally threw in the towel at the beginning of September, when it became clear that the NVA and CD&V would not agree to institutional reforms that were supported by the other parties.

The King has now appointed two mediators to advise on a way ahead. They are the speakers of the two houses of parliament - Andre Flahaut (PS, from the House of Representatives) and Danny Pieters (NVA, from the Senate). It appears that it could be many weeks or months until a new government can be formed, and further elections cannot be ruled out.

David O'Leary

Recent events

Summer social beats the rain

Despite heavy showers, the Brussels Labour Summer Social was once again a success, with many old and new faces attending the event, hosted by Frazer Clarke and Sara Hammerton.

Many thanks to Frazer and Sara for hosting the event. The Winter Social will be hosted by David Earnshaw and Jo Wood, and will be held on 8 December - for more details, see 'Forthcoming events', right. We look forward to seeing you then.

Coming up

Martin Westlake to give annual lecture

Martin Westlake, the Secretary-General of the European Economic and Social Committee, will give the annual John Fitzmaurice memorial lecture on 13 October.

Martin will be known to many of you as a long-standing member of Brussels Labour, and we are delighted that he has accepted the invitation to deliver this year's lecture. As ever, the lecture will be based on the themes of democracy, socialism and Europe. Martin follows in the footsteps of Neil Kinnock, Poul Nyrup Rasmussen, Geoff Hoon, Julian Priestley, Margot Wallstrom and John Monks, who have all delivered lectures since the event was established in 2004.

To find out more about John Fitzmaurice, the lecture, and to read transcripts and reports of previous events, go to brusselslabour.eu/john-fitzmaurice-memorial-lecture.

ETUC day of action

On Saturday 29 September the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) is organising a European day of action in reaction to the austerity measures in force in a number of European countries. 100,000 people are expected to protest in Brussels, and there will be events in other European countries.

The event aims to voice concerns over the economic and social impact of cuts and alarm over unemployment and rising inequalities.

For more information, visit etuc.org/a/7407.

Noticeboard

Forthcoming events

2010

15
SEPT

Branch meeting and EGM

Maria Damanaki
Commissioner for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries
Arthur's, Rue de Treves 26, 1050 Brussels
EGM begins at 19:45

2010

13
OCT

John Fitzmaurice memorial lecture

Martin Westlake
Secretary-General, European Economic and Social Committee
The Centre, Avenue Marnix 22, 1000 Brussels
From 20:00

2010

10
NOV

Brussels Labour quiz night

compared by
Michael Cashman MEP
The Staff, Rue de Treves 42, 1050 Brussels
From 20:00

2010

8
DEC

Winter Social

hosted by
David Earnshaw & Jo Wood
Square Ambiorix 6, 1000 Brussels
From 19:30

Join Brussels Labour

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€25 waged / €5 stagiaire/unwaged

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