

GERMINAL

INTERNATIONAL BRANCH OF THE BRITISH LABOUR PARTY

DECEMBER 2016

The times they are a changin'



Emma Reynolds
Stephen Kinnock
National Policy Forum

brusselslabour.eu

PARTY CONFERENCE // DELEGATE'S REPORT

Europe and the Leadership



This year's conference was characterised by two major themes which recurred throughout the week. The first was Europe and handling the result of the referendum. The second was the division between the party leader and the PLP. On the first, most speakers argued that the party should accept the result of the referendum; not primarily on the democratic argument but mainly to avoid antagonising or patronising the many people who voted to leave. However the consensus was that the party was not bound to accept the outcome negotiated by the government. The aim would be to defend workers' rights and to ensure that the cost of exit does not fall on those least able to deal with it. For most speakers understanding the leaver's motivation means accepting limits on migration. The exception was the party leader who stuck with the old position of dealing with the stresses migration puts on services and the abuses in employment.

On the second question there was a real desire for unity in most of the public debates. A few platform speakers made coded criticism of Corbynism by focusing on the need for Labour to win power; only by being in power can Labour deliver for its people. On the other hand Mr Corbyn himself and many of his supporters also argued that Labour's aim was to win power.

Sunday's afternoon session was taken up with discussion of the NPF reports on Communities and Transport. The debate on the Communities report focused largely on housing, and major speakers Teresa Pearce (Shadow Housing Minister), Nick Forbes (LGA Labour Group Leader) and Rachael Maskell (Shadow DEFRA Minister) all spoke of the need to increase house building, particularly council housing.

Sunday also saw reports from Wales and Northern Ireland. Carwen Jones, Welsh First Minister, spoke of the success in the Welsh Assembly elections where seats lost in the 2015 General Election had been won in 2016. His theme was the benefits of Labour in power. Wales's unemployment is 1% below the UK figure, he said with not just jobs but better jobs. He announced the Universal Child Health initiative which the Welsh government would launch the next day. On leaving the EU, he emphasised the need to keep access to the single market and argued for listening to the message on the free movement of people.

Dave Anderson, Shadow Northern Ireland Minister, reminded delegates of the role of the Labour Party in the peace process and praised the part played by Mo Mowlam. He spoke of the positive role played by trade unions during the troubles - without them he claimed the troubles would have become a civil war.

Conference then held a tribute to the life of Jo Cox, showing a short film. Rachel Reeves and Jan Royall also spoke.

The results of the ballot for contemporary motions were announced and the Brexit motions were not prioritised.

On Monday, Glenys Willmott (leader of the EPLP) spoke about the referendum campaign. She thanked and congratulated all those who had campaigned with the Party for remain. The task now, she said, was to hold the "leavers" to account for the promises they made and the lies they told. We should not try to reverse the result but we needed to stand against populism. Labour should be prepared to reject any deal which did not have the right protections for the environment, for employment and for public services.

Emily Thornberry, Shadow Foreign Secretary, gave a wide ranging speech beginning with an attack on David Cameron for his handling of the referendum. The lack of planning showed gross negligence, which had turned to gross incompetence. We can't let the Tories take all the decisions, she said, the people with the most to lose should be protected.

Kate Osamor (Shadow International Development Secretary) attacked the Tories for trying to bring conservative values to international development. She committed Labour to retaining the Department for International Development and meeting the 0.7% of GDP target. She would give an emphasis to women's economic empowerment. Labour would be tough on corruption and tough on the receipts of corruption, which meant action on British tax havens and international tax evasion. She paid tribute to the work of Alf Dubs and Yvette Cooper on child refugees.

In his speech Clive Lewis (Shadow Defence Secretary and Energy Secretary) paid tribute to the armed forces and deplored the cuts in numbers made by the government and the lack of funding which left forces personnel in substandard housing. He committed the Party to meeting the NATO target of 2% of GDP. On Trident he declared himself sceptical about its value but accepted the Party's policy on replacement. He wanted to make "multilateralism" a reality. He saw the Tory policy on Trident as an ambush for Labour and one we should avoid. He called for a return of Labour's defence industrial strategy and said he would campaign for the three support ships for the new carriers to be built in Britain.

Barry Gardiner (Shadow International Trade Secretary) said leaving the EU would change trade and the balance of trade negotiations. If we thought TTIP was a bad deal wait until the UK has to negotiate on its own. He wanted a progressive trade policy which works for Small and Medium Enterprises. On energy, he pointed out that the Paris Agreement was built on Labour's climate change law. He announced that a Labour government would ban fracking and would consult business and trade unions on the transition to a low carbon economy. Local government projects were showing the way forward on a bottom-up energy policy and he committed to free retrofitting insulation in veterans' homes .

The big speech of the day was by John McDonnell (Shadow Chancellor). On leaving the EU he said the Party should accept the decision but not the Tory outcome. He wanted access to the single market for goods and services but would not accept undercutting wages and public services. He would support access for financial services but with safeguards against a repeat of 2008 and Britain should retain a share in the European Investment

Bank. Labour would protect the rights of EU nationals and of UK nationals in Europe.

The Scotland report was given by Kezia Dugdale, Leader of the Scottish Labour Party. She began by thanking members for their efforts over two and a half years of elections. She defended Scottish Labour's policy of adding 1p to income tax and introducing a 50% higher tax rate, berating the SNP government for accepting cuts to NHS services and the education budget imposed by the Westminster government. She accused them of demanding power then refusing to act. Labour would not support an austerity budget nor would they back a second referendum on independence.

The following day, Diane Abbott (Shadow Health Secretary) spoke of the Party's support for junior doctors in their fight on new contracts. Labour was campaigning against the abolition of bursaries for trainee nurses and would restore them when in office. On leaving the EU she pointed out that 50,000 EU nationals work for the NHS and that 80,000 work in social care. Ending free movement of people would be a disaster for the NHS. She pledged that a future Labour government would halt privatisation of the NHS, repeal the Health and Social Care Act and end PFI.

Paul Flynn (Shadow Leader of the House of Commons) gave a rousing speech calling for unity. He invited MPs who had left, to return to the front bench and pointed to the successes the party had had in elections and its achievements in the House of Commons. He attacked the proposed reduction in numbers of MPs saying the Lords had 200 too many peers. Leaving the EU meant this was not the time cut MPs. The party needed one leader, one opponent and One Direction.

The fraternal speech for the TUC was given by Liz Snape. She too called for unity and used the example of resistance to the Trade Union Bill. The Tory attack on trade unions and their link with Labour had failed.

Sadiq Khan addressed the conference as Mayor of London. His speech was preceded by a short film. His theme was Labour in power and he gave examples of what Labour can achieve when in power locally and called for a focus on winning power where it matters most.

The conference adopted two resolutions proposed by the NEC. The first represented the ten point plan set out by Jeremy Corbyn during his leadership election. These points will now be further developed in the NPF. The second concerned international trade deals and reflected the issues raised in campaigns against TTIP and similar deals.

Tuesday also saw the education report from the National Policy Forum and emergency composite on grammar schools. Delegates were supplied with placards reading "Education not segregation" to wave during the discussion.

Angela Rayner (Shadow Education Secretary) made a scathing attack on the Prime Minister's support for grammar schools. She pledged to make all academy and free schools accountable. She promised also that Labour would bring back education maintenance grants and student grants.

On Wednesday, Andy Burnham (Shadow Home Secretary) gave his last speech as a member of the front bench. He spoke first about the battle for justice and truth and the victory of the families of the Hillsborough affair. He hoped to see justice and truth prevail in the Orgreave case. On leaving the EU he argued for a "fair Brexit" - one which protected the rights of people at work. People at the bottom should not be the ones to suffer as a result of leaving the EU. He thought many of those who voted for leave were disillusioned and felt taken for granted. Labour would need to address their concerns. This led into his appeal for "the North" which he said had been failed by Westminster. He was standing for Mayor of Greater Manchester to help bring new investment into the North and to make the voice of the North heard.

The final session of the conference was taken up by the leader's speech. Jeremy Corbyn made a rousing speech which was well received in the hall. He began by thanking the Party workers and volunteers and reminded delegates of the successes of the past year, in elections and on tax credits and disability allowances in Parliament. He added that while campaigning on issues matters, Labour needs to win power.

He saw his re-election as a sign of a demand for a new kind of politics. New movements had sprung up in other countries but in Britain the same forces had converged on Labour. He highlighted housing and the promise to build 1 million new homes, employment and the need to strengthen trade unions, and railways where nationalisation had popular support.

He set out the ten pledges from his campaign as a framework for future Labour policy:

- full employment;
- a homes guarantee;
- security at work;
- a strong NHS and social care;
- a national education service;
- action on climate change;
- public ownership and control of services;

- a cut in inequality of income and wealth;
- action to secure an equal society;
- peace and justice at the heart of foreign policy.

He gave examples of initiatives by Labour councils on energy, busses, Wi-Fi and support to start-up businesses. He praised the in-sourcing of council contracts to provide better services at lower cost.

On the economy he promised to establish a National Investment Bank (NIB) and to borrow to invest. The NIB would have £500 billion to invest in infrastructure. R&D spending would rise to 3% of GDP. Investment was not just physical but there was need to invest in skills.

He also planned a new national education service to provide high quality education for all throughout their lives. He would offer business a new deal investment in skills in exchange for a small increase in corporate tax to fund education maintenance and student grants. Education was not just about work; all school students should have the chance to learn an instrument, visit museums and theatres. To support this there would be an arts student premium for schools to invest in cultural action.

On migration he argued that pressure on services should not be blamed on migrants when the government has been failing to fund and running down services. Action was needed to stop employers recruiting overseas to undercut wages, to restore services and he promised to bring back the migrant impact fund introduced by the last Labour government.

On Europe he said we should not patronise our supporters who had voted to leave and we should hear their concerns. But there would be no blank cheque for the Conservatives. Labour would resist exit which was at the expense of working people. Labour would have its own agenda, such as preserving a right to intervene in industry without a need to liberalise or privatise.

He ended with a warning that Mrs May could decide to call a general election next year and declared that Labour would now be put on an election footing.

Jos Gallacher

(full version on LI website)

More questions than answers



Brussels Labour hosted a meeting with socialist sister parties in September. Our comrades across Europe have naturally been very concerned by the Brexit referendum and its consequences for Britain, Europe and global affairs. Therefore we called a meeting, in a spirit of solidarity, to exchange views on the political situation. We were happy to welcome the Partito Democratico (IT), the Partij van de Arbeid (NL) and the Socialistische Partij Anders (BE) to the debate.

BLPG Chair, Jo Wood, opened the evening saying that each member of Brussels Labour was personally affected by the referendum result. We have chosen to live and work in Brussels, have built a life here with family, friends and commitments and whatever happens we will be directly affected. However, Brussels Labour intends to carry on being active to support the closest relationship possible with Europe. In particular, we would take up the cause of Brits living and working in the EU. Emily Thornberry, Shadow Minister for Brexit, had recently visited Brussels and had invited us to provide the Labour Party with briefings and inputs during the unprecedented negotiations which lay ahead.

I summarized the political situation in Britain, which had been shaken by the referendum. The new Conservative government was trying to give an impression of decisiveness but in fact everything was “in the air” pending the start of Article 50 negotiations. The country remained divided along the lines of the referendum, by nation, region and generation, in a debate that was described as “post-truth”, such was it driven by negative emotions and myths. Jeremy Corbyn, recently confirmed as Labour leader, has said that the referendum should be

respected but also that a Labour government would not seek to reduce immigration.

Jo explained how in Scotland there was little appetite for a second referendum on independence and Scottish Labour was opposing it, so as not to destabilize the situation further. Paul Hagan showed how, in Northern Ireland, the main issue was the border with the Republic of Ireland, which could become an external border of the EU.

Kier Fitch presented a number of difficult policy issues that would be thrown up by Brexit. Trade with Europe was not affected so much by tariffs but by non-tariff barriers. How would Britain retain meaningful access to the single market without regulatory alignment? How would British researchers, scientists and students participate in their European programmes and networks? Moreover, the ongoing court case on the invocation of Article 50 was critical because it would determine if the government would be able to bypass Parliament in negotiating the terms of Brexit.

In the discussion there were diverse views. Some friends thought that, as regrettable as it was, the referendum result had to be respected and there was no point in trying to avoid exit. Others felt that it was best to move quickly to conclude the terms of the exit and then decide on an informed basis whether they were acceptable. Another view was that there seemed to be no real “soft exit” option between becoming an ordinary third country like Canada and remaining in the EU: we should not leave the EU at any cost to working people’s livelihoods and rights.

Friends from sister parties asked what Labour's approach to the negotiations would be. The need for a strategic approach was necessary, but had been forgotten during the referendum campaign.

The Labour perspective on the EU as a way of managing globalization and international capital had

not been articulated. However, with no overarching vision it would be difficult to have a coherent approach.

Martin Dawson

MEMORIAL LECTURE//BRUSSELS LABOUR

Time for tough decisions



This year's Brussels Memorial Lecture was held in remembrance of John Fitzmaurice and Mike Ridgeway. Mike passed away earlier this year and had participated in Brussels Labour for many years, including as auditor of our accounts. We warmly welcomed Françoise, Mike's partner, to the meeting.

His fellow auditor, Peter Wragg, told us how Mike was well known in Brussels circles and was also an active member of the Belgian Parti Socialiste. He was quite a private person with a dry sense of humour but who was fiercely loyal to Labour and, today, would have called strongly for party unity. Peter had known well Mike and John and he was moved to remember how they had both been discreet but selfless and learned comrades.

Also on this occasion, Labour International was pleased to give Frazer Clarke an award in recognition of his services as Treasurer.

Emma Reynolds, MP for Wolverhampton North East led a Delegation of UK Labour MPs and gave the

keynote speech. Emma had been Shadow Minister for Europe, as well as a former Treasurer of Brussels Labour! She was delighted to see many old friends and had come to Brussels to discuss the situation in her new role as a representative on the Brexit Committee in the House of Commons.

She recalled the first ever John Fitzmaurice lecture given by Neil Kinnock. In those days Socialists were in power in 11 countries across Europe and there was a sense of possibility. Never would we have imagined what was happening today.

However, Emma went on to say that today we needed to accept the situation. Working people did feel that they were neglected and were worried about their livelihoods. The Theresa May government seemed to put migration above all other issues, to the extent that it seemed to put UKIP into power without being in office. A hard Brexit was possible but it posed huge questions.

The recent High Court ruling clarified that since Parliament voted for the European Communities Act when the UK joined the EU, then only Parliament could repeal it. Labour MPs are pressing for a transitional free trade arrangement to fill the gap between the end of the Article 50 exit procedure and the conclusion of a full free trade agreement in compliance with Article 218. Otherwise there was the risk of less favourable WTO rules coming into force.

Emma outlined her principles for an exit settlement. We should defend progressive rights and avoid race to bottom. We should also ensure the closest possible relations with the EU and reform free movement. There was a spectrum between all or no free movement and a debate was needed to convince voters that we had a fair system.

UK financial expertise and the role of the City of London were valuable to Europe as well as to the UK it was in our mutual interest to preserve this. Furthermore, it was in all our interests to have a new relationship with Europe including British participation to deal with strategic issues such as security.

In the discussion that followed several friends questioned whether Labour should support Brexit following a referendum based on misinformation and which risked leaving the UK worse off. Emma

underlined that in her view it was necessary to respect the result of the referendum, where 17 million people had voted to leave the EU. It was fundamentally important to respect democracy.

Theresa May was apparently intent on leaving the single market and therefore Labour had to focus on setting its own objectives for the Brexit process. We needed to say that European cooperation was still valuable and have the softest Brexit possible.

Stephen Kinnock, MP for Aberavon, spoke about how Brexit and the Trump victory pointed to a new post-liberal age where popular opinion had shifted. Labour had a choice between continuing to fight for existing policies, and risk perpetual defeat, or engaging with this new mood.

Other comments included that the softest Brexit will leave Britain worse off than what we have now with no Schengen and the budgetary rebate; the need to be pragmatic if the Brexit negotiations revealed that the Leave promises were unattainable and public opinion changed; and the need to ensure reciprocal rights for EU and UK workers and respect of acquired rights.

Martin Dawson

No one-party Brexit



If everything goes according to Theresa May's plan, Britain will leave the European Union in less than 30 months. The British people have voted and, after a summer of silence, Theresa May has finally set the timer for negotiations. But whilst it's true that the countdown has begun, it is clear that neither the government or the country have any cogent idea of what Ms May plans for their future. Her incantation 'Brexit means Brexit' must surely be the most vacuous phrase in modern political history.

Despite that, there can be little doubt that the process of exiting the EU will confer on this government more power to re-shape Britain than any government has had since the Second World War – extricating us from forty years of EU law means dismantling a vast number of safeguards, rights and standards that are woven into the fabric of our economy, society and constitution. And we know that many Conservative ideologues would like nothing better than to turn the UK into a North Atlantic version of the Cayman Islands, with these hard-won safeguards, rights and standard becoming little more

than bargaining chips in their drive to make the UK more 'competitive'.

The "Great Repeal Bill" that was proposed by Theresa May will in practice give ministers carte blanche to change the law without parliamentary debate, primarily through the wide and prolific use of Statutory Instruments – a mechanism intended to facilitate the application of law but capable of being used to make law by stealth. Forty years of legislation – of rights, of standards, of protection – can now be changed without oversight.

At this moment where our democratic oversight is so vulnerable, and the tasks ahead – of re-building a vibrant, shared and open British society and economy with a new relationship to the world – are of huge magnitude, the scope for abuse is almost limitless. This is why the Prime Minister must deliver a balanced Brexit in process and in result. She must secure a Brexit that is driven by the national interest, not by her need to manage the various warring factions of her party.

David Cameron was a short-sighted gambler and a chancer; traits that led him to put our entire economy

and place in the world on the table in order to stop his party from bothering him about Europe, rather than finding solutions to the challenges the country faced. Theresa May needs to demonstrate a decisive break from Cameron's slogan-driven, party-before-country, 'anything goes' politics. But her first steps have not been promising: you don't appoint David Davies, Liam Fox and Boris Johnson to be your key ambassadors to the world with the expectation of improving your country's reputation. The Prime Minister must now level with the British people: she must be honest about what Brexit, in her opinion, actually means. From the Conservative conference, we can only assume that Ms May is steering us towards the rocks: into a harsh, intolerant Brexit.

Which is why we can't simply leave it to the government. At this moment of national challenge, with such a fundamental change on the horizon, the Labour Party must stand up and be counted. It is therefore deeply dismaying that Brexit, which will shape and determine almost every issue for the next decade and beyond, has hardly featured in our party's discourse in the last three and a half months.

Coming to terms with the Referendum result has been tough for those of us who campaigned passionately for Remain, but we must now accept the result, and move forward. The principle of democracy is at stake. Talk of a second referendum must be put aside - we have to engage with the world as it is, not how we would like it to be. Yes, the campaign was a horror show of dishonesty, and the realities of the consequences of the choice were obscured or misrepresented the future, but the final outcome was clear. We cannot re-run the campaign; it would damage trust in democracy and accountability at a time when we need to strengthen and assert both.

The challenge facing us now is how to build a society, economy and politics that will realise Labour and fundamental British values from where we are today, rather than from where we were on 22 June. If it is to rise to this challenge, the Labour Party must represent and be the voice for all those who wish to see a balanced Brexit that respects our democracy, champions our values and serves our national interest. It is clear that this is the political leadership that the overwhelming majority of British people are looking for, and that our country desperately needs.

Therefore the defining question for the Labour Party today is this: will we stand by and watch the Conservatives dismantle, law by law, what successive governments over the last 40 years have built, shoulder-to-shoulder with our European partners; are we going to sit on our hands as this government destroys all those rights, protections, safeguards, standards and alliances that have been such a force for good, for so long?

Or are we going to rise to the challenge by holding the government to account in the national interest, setting a new, optimistic and patriotic vision for post-

Brexit Britain, and earning the trust of the British people?

The choice is clear: we simply we cannot allow this government to inflict a One-Party Brexit. Labour must take a comprehensive approach, that I believe consists of these three strands.

First, we must require that the Prime Minister delivers control and full sovereignty to Parliament in Brexit, with full legislative and scrutiny powers. Using Statutory Instruments to ram through changes to fundamental rights, protections and standards would completely contradict the Referendum's demand that Britain 'takes back control' through a fully sovereign parliament. The Prime Minister must now act to restore the people's faith in our parliamentary democracy by setting out how the Brexit negotiation process and subsequent withdrawal from the EU will work, and how both will be subject to the full scrutiny of Parliament, every step of the way.

Second, for the Brexit negotiations, we must set the following tests for the Prime Minister:

o **TEST 1:** Deliver managed movement of EU citizens to the UK, and of British citizens to the EU.

No one can deny the central role of the desire to limit the Freedom of Movement as a key motivating factor in the vote to Leave the EU. It's an issue we, as a country, must tackle head on, because we've seen where ignoring it leads: exit from Europe, fractured communities, and the emergence of a publicly confident xenophobia and racist insult. In the last few weeks Theresa May's government seems to only want to exacerbate these divisions, rather than heal them.

However, heal them we must if we are going to create a post-Brexit future for our country that offers hope to all. The challenge is therefore to deliver a holistic system of carefully managed immigration that balances the need for control over the system with the need for immigrants as vital contributors to our economy, public services, community and culture. To be pro-immigration means making it an economic, social and political success in the long-term: as much immigration as possible and sustainable, to be limited only by our ability to create the environment for all of Britain to thrive and feel valued.

So far, the short-termism endemic in British politics means we haven't done this well, which has led to the current fractured state in which we are living. Therefore, building from here, we must manage immigration holistically and carefully, which includes a new approach to entry requirements in the post-Brexit world, underpinned by a long-term strategy and purpose, and rooted in evidence and logic.

One way of doing this would be to create immigration skill and number requirements on a sector-by-sector basis, through a dialogue between industry, trade unions and government. This 'gap analysis' would be

focused primarily on jobs with salaries at the lower end of the scale, and it would enable the setting of credible numerical targets for the amount of immigration that required across each sector. This strategic, needs-based framework for immigration should then be underpinned by a points-based entry system, leading to the granting of work permits through employment contracts, which would be the pre-condition for entering the UK as a migrant worker. This logical and contribution-related approach to entry would help to build public trust in the system, and in the government's control over it.

In short, the movement of labour must be managed as a durable strategy instead of resorting to empty, disillusioning slogans.

Whilst the establishment of a credible system of managed immigration is vital, there must also be a full policy programme across government to create an environment that facilitates immigration and celebrates immigrants. A properly resourced Migration Impact Fund to sustain vital services and promote community cohesion; an adequately staffed HMRC to crack down on unscrupulous employers; an expert commission to advise on how best to encourage firms to recruit and train British workers (as opposed to Amber Rudd's repulsive and self-defeating 'badge of shame' approach). These are just some of the measures that must urgently be put in place.

Being pro-immigration means not simply paying lip service to the ideal, but doing what we must to make it successful for all, and therefore sustainable. It is only with such an immigration system that we can build a United Kingdom that reflects the values we hold so dear: compassion, openness, solidarity and civic pride.

o **TEST 2:** Deliver maximum access to the single market.

We have felt the first tremors of Brexit. The pound has dipped to a 31 year low, with repercussive effects on everything from food import prices to pension fund value. And we haven't even left yet. To mitigate the negative impact of Brexit and build a foundation for a prosperous future, we will need as much access to our biggest and nearest export market as possible. The government's cavalier rhetoric on international trade grossly underestimates the importance of the EU market and the complications of expanding trade elsewhere, while giddily exaggerating the enthusiasm with which the rest of the world currently regards us. And the Tory push for a harsh Brexit appears to have forgotten the one promise on Europe from their 2015 election manifesto for which they do have a mandate, namely:

"We are clear about what we want from Europe. We say: Yes to the Single Market" and "to safeguard British interests in the Single Market".

Labour must relentlessly remind the Government of this undertaking and use all means to secure maximum access to the single market in goods, services and capital. Our economic future depends on that. After all, we know that much of the UK's £17 billion of foreign direct investment depends on our tariff free access to a market of 500 million consumers.

It is clear that there is a tension between tests 1 and 2, as we know that the other EU member states are currently insisting that the free movement of goods, services, capital, people and labour must be treated as a single, inviolable whole. However, the fact is that there is considerable appetite across the EU for revisiting free movement of labour. Governments across the bloc would dearly love to formulate an approach that re-builds trust and cohesion, but they are constrained by a system that was set up in an EU of 11 – and then 15 – Member States: in a far less mobile and fluid age**.

The Prime Minister must therefore seek to use this opportunity by adopting a pragmatic step-by-step approach to the negotiations. She should present constructive proposals for the introduction of managed migration as a pan-EU solution, try to secure agreement to this across the EU, and only then open up negotiations on the goods, services and capital pillars of the single market. This sequenced approach is the only way in which it will be possible to secure the best possible deal for Britain, striking the right balance between border control and market access.

So far the Prime Minister has appeared unwilling and unable to think creatively about the negotiations. At her party's conference, she made clear her preference for the path of least resistance to her Eurosceptic backbenchers - namely a harsh Brexit, which means 'quit and damn the consequences'. That is not leadership. That is not standing up for British interests. That is defeatism, pure and simple, and it could end up causing deep and lasting damage to the British economy and people's lives. We must not allow this government to take such a course. We must insist on a bold, ambitious negotiating strategy, for the achievement of a sane and balanced Brexit that puts the security and potential of the British economy first, and we must hold Theresa May to account on that basis.

o **TEST 3:** Deliver protection of standards and rights.

One of the EU's greatest successes has been securing progress in standards and rights for

- o Workers;
- o Consumers; and
- o The Environment

With these now vulnerable to the whim of government ministers, the Prime Minister must provide a clear legislative programme to ensure that all our cherished and practical standards and hard-won rights don't go up in a bonfire of deregulation. Labour must make it clear that these safeguards are sacrosanct.

o **TEST 4:** Maintain useful co-operative frameworks.

We are members of a range of EU-based groups and agencies that are vital to our security, health and prosperity - EUROPOL, the Air Safety Agency; the Medicines Agency; the European Investment Bank, and many others. To create our own agencies would be expensive and unworkable, so the government must develop and secure associate status for the UK, across the range of these agencies.

o **TEST 5:** Deliver on promises of global trade.

Given that our relationship to the EU will change, Liam Fox must deliver on the Leave campaign's promises of a globally engaged Britain. This will require significant, some would say super-human, effort: the EU negotiations will prevent meaningful interactions with non-EU countries until the break is complete, Britain has long lagged behind other countries in investing in and trading with countries across the rest of the world, and recruiting hundreds of expert trade negotiators will take time and money. It will be vital to quickly see a comprehensive plan from Dr Fox as to how his Department will help to transform our international trade over the next decade.

An important part of this is trade defence. Particularly relevant to my constituency in South Wales is the question: how are we going to protect our steel industry from the deeply damaging impact of Chinese dumping, when our leverage has been so dramatically reduced by leaving the EU? There is clearly strength in numbers in deploying trade defence instruments, so how does Dr Fox propose to defend British industry from illegal practices such as dumping, when we are no longer a member-state of the 500 million consumer EU?

O **TEST 6:** Ensure that EU-funded programmes are replaced and replenished on a like-for-like basis

As a Welsh MP I am acutely aware of the pivotal role that EU-funding has played in parts of the UK dealing with the pressures of de-industrialisation and regeneration. From our agriculture to infrastructure, to R & D and vocational training, there are not many areas of our economy or society that have not been supported by EU programmes. So far the

government has made a few vague promises about guaranteed like-for-like funding until 2020, which at most will be a year beyond our actual departure from the EU. That doesn't begin to be enough. The Leave campaign exalted the claim that the UK's contribution to the EU budget would be clawed back and recycled in its entirety in the event of Brexit. Now they must fulfil that promise and we must ensure they do, every step of the way.

In addition, Labour must also develop a new vision and policy platform for the post-Referendum world, to show that we can be government in waiting. Some may wish to re-create the world of two or three decades ago. That is not viable. Nostalgia offers no constructive means of dealing with the transformative impacts of automation, digital technology, or the rise of self-employment and the gig economy.

The referendum result was in part fuelled by resentment, rejection of the unfettered free market and the backlash against the bulldozing impact of unmanaged globalisation. It has opened up the space for fresh thinking: a twenty-first century vision for Britain, which redefines the role of the state, redesigns our economic growth model, rebuilds our fractured country, and reconstructs our place in the world.

To achieve these aims we must challenge ourselves to work from where we are now, after the referendum. We must make a mercilessly honest assessment of the challenges and opportunities and, with resolute determination, develop a programme of solutions that are practical, credible and forward-looking. Radicalism is only useful when it is rooted in reality.

Brexit is plainly the beginning of a new era for the UK. It is a huge step into the unknown. But we do know that the challenges are greater than anything faced by the UK in the last 70 years, that this government has more power to re-shape our society than any before it, that it has no specific democratic mandate for the forthcoming negotiations and that it has no coherent strategy for securing and advancing the wellbeing of the UK.

And we also know – above all – that the impact of a One-Party Brexit would be disastrous for the people that we are elected to represent. It is a fate that we can and must avoid, but we will only do so if we take concerted action to defend the sovereignty of Parliament, hold the government to account on the basis of our Brexit tests, and shape a radical, coherent and realistic vision and programme for our country.

This article is reprinted with the kind permission of Stephen Kinnock MP. The original version was published in The New European in October.

Back to work



The National Policy Forum (NPF) sprung back to life in November with a plenary meeting. The forum had been quiescent since the spring leading some to question whether the body would continue in its current form. The two day meeting in Loughborough showed that the NPF is full of vitality and eager to get back to work. All members of the Shadow Cabinet were in attendance and the NEC members are all members of the NPF. This provides the CLP delegates with a chance to lobby and for new members like me a chance to build contacts.

The NPF elected a new chair and vice chairs, one from each affiliated bodies, CLPs and elected members.

Jeremy Corbyn made the keynote speech on the first morning. John Mc Donnell made the speech on the economy in the closing plenary session. Another plenary was given over to discussing EU exit. Kier Starmer, Shadow Secretary of State for Leaving the EU, restated the party's current position that we will respect the outcome of the referendum but that we have different priorities from the government. The government has prioritised immigration over the impact on the economy. For Labour the key issues were security for citizens and the economy. Emily Thornberry, Shadow Foreign Secretary, talked of the impact on the importance for Europe for the UK'S world role (Iran deal, Paris agreement, NATO). The government should represent 100% of the people not just the extreme 5% who want a hard Brexit.

Much of the time was spent in parallel workshops examining the remits of the various policy commissions which are due to begin work in December. Each NPF member will serve on one policy commission. A new list of commissions has been created adding an additional one to deal with work, pensions and equality. Members had an opportunity to express their preferences for which commission they wished to contribute to. I have indicated either the international or the economy, industry and trade commission.

The workshops on these topics aimed to identify the priority issues for the commission. There were good opportunities to propose topics and even to suggest who to invite to give evidence. It is difficult to have an overview as the same topic was repeated at different points over the weekend but delegates were invited to attend different topics.

The next stage will be the allocation of members to the commissions. At that point, each commission will meet to agree on priorities based on the discussions at Loughborough. The process is due to start in December but at the time of writing the dates of future meetings have yet to be announced.

Jos Gallacher

Labour International meets in Germany



Labour International organised a members' meeting in Wiesbaden, Germany over the weekend of 22-24 October. Members had come from Belgium, Netherlands, Luxembourg, France, Spain, USA and Germany. The weekend had a mix of social events and political discussions which provided a good chance to get to know activists from different parts of the CLP.

Members were welcomed to the city by the Mayor at a small reception on Friday evening. Saturday was spent in very interesting seminar sessions held in the SPD meeting room in the City Hall. The morning session began with discussion of the implications of the referendum results led by Roger Casale, founder of the New Europeans. This was followed by a presentation on the debate on land value taxation by Anthony Molloy, who chairs the Labour Land Value Tax Campaign, and an academic, Professor Dirk Löhr.

Lunch was a delicious traditional German meal in the "Ratskeller", the basement of the City Hall!

The afternoon sessions looked more at the internal Labour Party functioning. Ann Black, a constituency representative on the NEC, gave a wide ranging

report on the political events of the past year as it appeared from the inside. The final session, on the National Policy Forum, was led by the undersigned who represents Labour International on the NPF.

That evening, dinner was in a Turkish restaurant, at which the Labour International Coordinating Committee conferred the award of its first Merit Award on Fraser Clark.

Delegates who remained on Sunday spent the morning on a guided tour of the city.

This was the second time that members have met in this way and the intention is to continue with an annual members meeting. Brussels Labour would be able to offer to host a future meeting.

Jos Gallacher

NOTICEBOARD

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Provisional dates for Branch meetings in 2017

Wednesday 25 January

Tuesday 28 February

Wednesday 22 March AGM

SUBS 2016

Are you up to date?

To confirm your membership of Brussels Labour as well as to the Labour Party, you need to pay a small additional subscription. Unlike constituency Labour parties in the UK, Brussels Labour is entirely self-funding so to help support our activities members are asked to pay an annual fee of 25 euro (waged) 5 euro (unwaged/stagiaires).

It is easy to forget if you have paid, or perhaps time has passed so quickly that it was last year – or even the year before – that you last paid.

If the answer to 'Have you paid your Brussels Labour subscription' is one of the following

*Not sure

*Once, but I am not sure when

Please contact Sue at: membership@brusselslabour.eu

The best way to pay is through an annual standing order, or you can pay cash at a branch meeting or event.

Account number

IBAN: BE 33 7370 4656 0346

Account name

Brussels Labour International

Bank

KBC

BRUSSELS LABOUR ONLINE

Website

Brusselslabour.eu

Twitter

[@brusselslabour](https://twitter.com/brusselslabour)

Flickr

[flickr.com/
brusselslabour](https://www.flickr.com/photos/brusselslabour/)

Facebook

[facebook.com/
brusselslabour.eu](https://www.facebook.com/brusselslabour.eu)

GERMINAL

Editor Martin Dawson

Email

germinal@brusselslabour.eu

All views expressed in Germinal are those of the authors, and not necessarily those of Brussels Labour or the Labour Party.