



POSTCARD FROM

BOURNEMOUTH

by Martin Whelton

our delegate's report from Annual conference

On a Saturday in late September, I made my way to the Labour Party Conference in Bournemouth. Although I had been to Labour Party Conferences previously, this was my first time as a Delegate. Clearly I was at Conference for a purpose and that was to represent the constituency and to put their view across and would be different to any previous conference I had attended.

At this year's Conference, the constituency put forward a motion on the National Health Service supporting the Government's Health Service Reforms and Foundation Hospitals. On the Sunday of Conference the submitted motions were voted upon and Health was selected as a subject of debate. When the result was announced I had to attend a meeting, which would come up with a motion that brought together motions submitted on Health.

I went along not knowing what to expect and the end of the meeting I was chosen to second the motion that had been agreed. Here I was at Conference and I would be speaking in one of the most important debates at Conference, what should I expect, would I fall flat on my face and how will I come together with a speech that is coherent and makes sense, anyway I was lucky in that I had a few days to prepare.

Anyway, after rewrites, redrafts, I eventually come up with a speech, now was the time to practice and if necessary make changes. With help from Margaret Mc Donagh and Mark Allison along with advice from Siobhain we practice the speech. After a few practices, it was time to leave and as we were waiting for the

train to take us to the Conference Centre, I practiced the speech at the end of Boscombe Pier. Here I was with wind and cold air blowing in my face at the end of the pier sounding like someone who sounded slightly bizarre, it was an experience like no other and to top it all the train driver gave me the benefit of his advice which made us all laugh!

After our trip we arrive at the Conference Centre, we go through further practices and enter the Conference Hall, after what seems like an eternity they move to the Health debate. Here I was with my three minutes, with the cameras pointed at me, I went about making my points, supporting the Government's record but also pointing out that the Health Service needs to be modernised. The speech has ended with catchphrase **POWER TO THE PEOPLE** as a reference to Citizen Smith of Tooting and returning power to the people which is an essential part of the Government's Health service reforms and the introduction of Foundation Hospitals which I supported in my speech.

After the speech I had a sense of relieve, I had enjoyed making the speech even though it was in front of 2000 people and being televised on TV and the audience at applauded at the end.

On the Tuesday of Conference I also had the opportunity of addressing Conference on Northern Ireland Labour Party membership, although this was in front of a half empty hall it did give me more confidence for my speech on Wednesday. The main



Councillor Martin Whelton at the Annual Labour Conference

speech before this debate by Tony Blair was an inspiring speech and it was clear that he had the full support of people at Conference for the policies we are pursuing and for what we have achieved in Government.

Two conclusions emerged from Bournemouth. First, the Labour party is not riven by vicious infighting and on the verge of disintegration, as some journalists would have people believe and that the party is supportive of what we are doing in Government. Second, the diversity of views was as great as ever, and standing ovations for public consumption were balanced by complex and thoughtful discussions away from the media glare.

I would like to thank Mitcham and Morden Labour Party for giving me the opportunity to attend conference, an experience I will remember for a long time to come and for being given the opportunity to represent the constituency and to speak in a major debate.



Merton's Labour Leader Cllr Andrew Judge

Council update from the Leader of the Council

It's been a busy time at Merton Council as we progress on our Journey Towards Excellence — to be awarded an Excellent rating by independent auditors within three years. We are now in the process of recruiting a full-time Chief Executive who will be charged with delivering improvement. Shortlisting is under way, and I hope to announce an appointment by the end of the year.

TACKLING CRIME

Beating crime is one of our top priorities, and we have launched a new partnership with the police and other partners called 'Safe and Sound'. This will build on successes like street wardens, the FLAG (fly-tipping, abandoned cars and graffiti) project, and recent prosecutions for graffiti tagging and fly-tipping.

Elsewhere, four Council wards are to get additional crime-fighting resources as

'Police Reassurance' areas, and Ravensbury will receive more than £100,000 from the Home Office's Anti-Social Behaviour Unit to pay for a full clean up of the ward, and to provide schemes to tackle youth crime and improve community cohesion.

MY MERTON

The Council has launched a new-look community magazine, My Merton, which is being delivered to all households every two months. It contains news, features, profiles of staff, local history, letters and a full 'what's on' guide, and replaces the double-page advert in Wimbledon Guardian, which many residents did not receive.

ST HELIER HOSPITAL

Following proposals from the Conservatives' health spokesperson in the House of Commons that could lead to St Helier closing, the Council has passed a

Labour motion to retain key medical services on the St Helier site.

MORE DROP-IN ADVICE SESSIONS

As we aim to make our services more accessible, a Tamil-speaking interpreter is now available in Merton Link one day a month for a trial period, after which the scheme may be extended, possibly to include other languages. Our Housing and Social Services team are also trialling Outreach Surgeries at our District Housing Offices.

INDUSTRIAL ACTION

As you may know, Merton has been singled out for industrial action by UNISON. This has disrupted a number of services, including Merton Link, and our newly opened call centre, but settling the claim for a £4,000 London Allowance would result in Council Tax increases of £100 and cuts that could result in redundancies.

All Member Meetings

THE CASE FOR AND AGAINST ID CARDS

SOUTH Mitcham Community Centre, Cobham Court, Haslemere Avenue — Thursday 27th November, starts at 7:30pm.

Following on from the success of our debate about the Euro in July, where over 70 members attended, we have organised an equally interesting debate on the introduction of ID Cards. With ID Cards in the news this week, this is indeed a topical subject.

Speaking in favour of ID Cards will be **John Mann MP — Member of Treasury Select Committee and former National Trade Union Liaison Officer.** Widely regarded as one of the best speakers and campaigners from the 2001 General Election intake of MPs.

Speaking against will be **Mark Littlewood — National Campaigns Director of Liberty.** Liberty is Britain's premier campaign organisation for protecting civil liberties.

Please feel free to come along and bring a friend or member of the family. As this will be the last meeting before Christmas we will also be having a few drinks afterwards to get us into the festive spirit!

THE CASE FOR AND AGAINST GM FOODS

In January we will be having another topical debate this time on Genetically Modified foods. Speaking in favour will be **Dr. Paul Rylott Director of the Agricultural and Biotechnology Council.** Speaking against will be **Michael Meacher MP, former Minister for the Environment.** They'll be further details in January but please put **Thursday 22nd January** in your diary.

ELECTIONS 2004 — THE PARTY NEEDS YOUR HELP

Working Towards the Mayor for London, Greater London Assembly and European elections in June 2004

With the Tories re-invigorated after the "coronation" of Michael Howard we are going to be facing a stiffer challenge than we expected at next years elections in London.

But the Tories aren't the only threat, the British National Party has made gains in other parts of the country and did stand a candidate in St Helier ward at last years local elections. As these elections will be fought on a London wide basis, using Proportional Representation, it gives fringes parties, such as the BNP, an opportunity to field candidates who have a chance of being elected.

Evidence shows that where the Labour Party is engaging with local residents, listening to their views and trying to get things sorted out, the greater the likelihood is for them to turn

out on polling day. So its important that we work between elections as well as in the run up to the election itself. Its never too early to start so that residents can't criticise us for only calling on them when we want them to vote for us.

If you can spare an hour or two a week there is always something that needs to be done, just phone Vince on 020 8542 4835 and he'll be able to tell you what we need help with.

There is also an opportunity for you to contribute to the Manifesto which the London election will be fought on. The draft policy document is too big to include with this newsletter, but if you'd like a copy please call Vince. If you have access to the Internet go to our website at:

mitchamandmordenlabour.org.uk

HAVE YOU GOT WHAT IT TAKES TO BE A SCHOOL GOVERNOR?

Being a school governor is one of the most important, and rewarding, activities that members of the party undertake in the community. There are a number of vacancies on school governing bodies that have come up recently. They are at the Lonesome Primary School in Grove Road, Mitcham and at St. Mark's Primary School, St. Mark's Road, Mitcham. The positions are unpaid and you'd be expected to attend approximately 6 meetings a year. If you think you have got what it takes to be a school governor contact Vince in the office on 020 8542 4835 to discuss in more detail what's involved.

EU ELECTIONS CORNER



*By Anita Pollack,
European Candidate*

London will be reduced to nine MEPs next June rather than the ten now in place. This is because most regions are having to chop one MEP due to enlargement of the EU — each country is allocated less seats.

This makes it even more important to get out a high turnout of Labour voters to ensure Labour can still elect four MEPs, to replace Richard Balfe who defected to the Tories after over 20 years as a Labour MEP.

Generally the Tories have selected Euro sceptics in winnable places on their lists, chopping their pro European MEPs, but one of the exceptions has been Richard Balfe who remains No 5 for London with a good chance of getting back once Theresa Villiers goes to Westminster. They may be feeling a bit sorry about rewarding him in this way because Mr Balfe has recently disgraced himself by sending an email to European Parliament President allegedly seeking to besmirch the head of the Court of Auditors in an effort to get him to ease up on the controversial issue of MEPs expenses. Balfe has had to withdraw his email in embarrassment.

Rumours are that Tories may choose to form a Euro sceptic Parliamentary group after the next Euro elections, rather than sit with the mixed bag of European Christian Democrats as at present.



Siobhain McDonagh MP and Dr John Reid MP

OUR local MP Siobhain McDonagh has presented a petition signed by more than 5,000 local residents to Secretary of State for Health Dr John Reid MP calling for the retention of key services, including Accident & Emergency and Maternity Services, on the site of St Helier Hospital.

Siobhain has been leading calls for St Helier to stay open, and has been coordinating efforts with Merton's Labour Councillors. Large parts of Mitcham and Morden have been sent special Labour Roses asking residents to fight proposals by Tory Health spokesperson Chris Grayling MP, a former Merton Councillor, to locate vital health services

public opinion.

Siobhain told the Members' Newsletter:

"John Reid knows that thousands of people think this area has historically lost out in terms of health services. We want the Trust to reject Conservative plans to downgrade St Helier, but if they don't we hope that John will intervene. Any future health strategy must bear in mind the health needs of people round here, and the relative good health of other parts of Surrey."

If you haven't signed the petition there is still time to register your support for St Helier and express your concern that it may close. Simply write to:

5,000 STRONG "SAVE ST HELIER" PETITION PRESENTED TO HEALTH SECRETARY

in Epsom rather than St Helier.

The St Helier and Epsom Hospital Trust has been consulting on a clinical review of the future healthcare needs of our area, and Mr Grayling has submitted plans that could lead to the demise of St Helier. In contrast, Siobhain believes that St Helier must remain central to local health services, and is hoping that health chiefs at the Trust will listen to

*Chief Executive
Epsom & St Helier NHS Trust
St Helier Hospital
Wrythe Lane
Carshalton
Surrey, SM5 1AA*

To find out more about the campaign go to Siobhain's website at: siobhainmcdonagh.org.uk/st-helier or call Vince on 020 8542 4835.

MAYOR AWARD

Cllr Edith Macauley, who lives in Lower Morden, was recently entered into the national Mayor of the Year Award, as she had managed to raise so much money for charity, and had done so much to raise the profile of the Borough's ethnic minorities. Despite there being more than 100 applicants, we are very pleased to say that she was chosen as runner up. Well done to Edith! With Cllr Maxi Martin of St Helier ward doing such a good job as the current mayor, Merton's Labour Council is enjoying some great publicity from its Mayors, and we are extremely lucky to have them.

PASTURES NEW

A quick word to say *au revoir*, but hopefully not goodbye, to some close friends and activists who are moving out of the constituency. Our best wishes go to Tony and Jean Nicholson of Longthornton ward, who are leaving to be closer to their daughter. Tony, who was Chair of the CLP for many years, was a fantastic local Councillor as well as a very successful Mayor, and Jean will also be sorely missed.

We're also saying good-bye to Jonathan and Fiona Hibberts of Lavender Fields ward. They are off to Welwyn Garden City, so that they can be nearer their families in the north. Jonathan has been CLP Chair for the past year, and Fiona has contributed much to the Party — including appearing on the front page of the Party magazine, 'Inside Labour', when she was nominated UK Nurse of the Year.

Finally, all the very best to Ben Cooper, who is moving from Graveney and Figges Marsh to Kingston and Surbiton. Although he is only travelling a short way, we wish him well.

NEW APPOINTMENT

Good luck to Cricket Green member Donna Neblett who is taking up her new job running South Mitcham Community Centre in Haslemere Avenue. The Centre provides a vital role to the community, and it is great that someone so committed to their community is involved in it in this way.

LIONS SHARE DIVIDEND

Thank you to everyone who helped with the Lions Fayre back in August. Our stall managed to raise more than £600 for local campaigns. A special word of thanks must go to Shirley Wyschna and Sandra Connolly, who put so much effort into organising the stall and ensuring that everyone involved had such a fun time.

UNWANTED CHRISTMAS PRESENTS

We hope that next year's event will be even more successful, so we're asking you to keep hold of those Christmas presents which you're not sure want to do with. In particular we're looking for items such as aftershave, perfume, children's toys, books, CDs, DVDs or anything you would be happy to donate to our Tombola. Please ring Vince on 020 8542 4835 to arrange for your items to be picked up, or deliver them yourself to the office in Crown Road, Morden.

DO YOU WANT
THE CHANCE
OF WINNING
£100
A MONTH?

If you do, Join the 100 Club. All you have to do is take out a regular Standing Order for just £4 a month and you have the chance of winning £100. Call Vince on 020 8542 4835 and you can be part of the draw in January. What better way to pay off those Christmas bills!



EILEEN ANNIS (1917-2003)

MANY Mitcham and Morden members will be sad to hear that our great friend Eileen Annis died at the beginning of October. Eileen was a former Branch Secretary of Pollards Hill and Longthornton Branch. She is widely credited with helping us take control of the Council by returning six Labour Councillors from Pollards Hill and Longthornton instead of the normal six Tory Councillors.

Eileen was a great campaigner and as well as helping us here in Mitcham & Morden she travelled the country working in by-elections for months at a time with her side kick Margaret McDonagh.

Eileen grew up in Battersea in a

working class family and was self-educated. She went to work for BT as a telephone operator and became fluent in French so she could become an international operator. In the last few years of her life Eileen moved to Maidstone to be near her son Michael. She was a CND member and committed campaigner for peace. Right up until the end Eileen was arguing against the war in Iraq. Eileen will be remembered best for her charm, sophistication and the warmth of her welcome. All who knew her could be sure of a gin & tonic if they called at her Beverley Road home after 6pm. We raise our glasses to her now.