**LABOUR PARTY DEMOCRACY REVIEW, THIRD TRANCHE**

**Labour CND submission on policy making**

Labour CND is a caucus of Labour Party members who are members of CND. We work within the party structures to encourage support for policies of global nuclear disarmament, including the abandonment of Trident, and which promote dialogue rather than military action as a means of settling conflicts. Our committee has more than 30 years experience of working within Labour Party structures to make the voice of party members heard on foreign and security policy.

We have confined our comments to those areas of policy-making procedures we have knowledge and/or experience of. The 15 numbered points below represent the changes we believe would make Labour more democratically accountable to its members.

**Overview:**

**How party democracy helps get a Labour government elected**

A Labour government will only be voted into office if the electorate is convinced that the party’s commitments – on international as well as domestic policies – are equitable, fair and in the interests of society as a whole, not simply the few elites who exercise political, economic and social power.

In the last analysis, it’s policies that win elections. We believe that the most effective way of ensuring Labour hits the spot with the electorate is by:

* electing a party leader who respects our members, and is prepared to listen to and reflect our views, recognising that half a million people provide a significant cross-section of opinion in British society as a whole;
* greater involvement of members in deciding the policies contained in Labour’s manifesto;
* ensuring CLPs and affiliates have clear and fair access to local, regional and national policy-making; and
* integrating party members into policy-making structures at all levels.

Over a number of years differences of opinion within the party have been actively discouraged in the mistaken assumption that uniformity of view equates to unity of purpose. It does not. Debate is positive, not divisive. It guarantees issues are properly aired so that sound policy decisions can be reached.

**Party Leader**

The leader of the Labour Party plays an irreplaceable role in formulating policy and presenting it to the public. We support the collegiate approach taken by the present leader, and his respect for party opinion. We believe party members should exercise a stronger say in choosing the leader. But they can only do so, if there are candidates from across the spectrum of party views. Therefore:

1. A method of nominating candidates should be adopted to ensure all significant political trends within the party are able to be represented.
2. Under the present system the Parliamentary Labour Party is able to exercise what is in effect a veto on candidates. The number of nominations required to participate in the contest should be lowered to prevent this happening.
3. The system should be reformed so that CLPs, affiliates and elected representatives should have the ability to nominate, as well as vote for, leadership candidates.

**Manifesto**

The Joint Policy Committee oversees policy development including the drawing up of the manifesto, and acts as a steering group for the work of the National Policy Forum. Under the present system, the JCP is made up of National Executive Committee members, government/shadow front bench members and NPF representatives. Labour CND would like to see the strategic oversight of policy brought closer to national representatives who are directly elected by members.

1. The Joint Policy Committee should be replaced by a sub-committee of the NEC.
2. A rolling programme of policy-making should form the basis for Labour’s manifesto. It should be presented as such to conference and subject to amendment.

**National Policy Forum**

The National Policy Forum and its commission play an increasingly influential role in annual conference. Labour CND shares the considerable reservations which exist across the party about this method of drawing up policy, believing it to be more removed from members control than previous ways of setting policy.

In particular, the NPF meets infrequently, with insufficient time for members to properly consider the policies presented to them. Its proceedings are dominated by the PLP front bench. And the report it presents to conference for voting is extremely long (88 pages in 2017 for example) and does not always reflect the diversity of views expressed. Therefore, as long as it continues in this role:

1. The proceedings of the NPF should not be dominated by Labour’s front bench.
2. The NPF and its policy commissions should meet more frequently, with increased staff support to facilitate a greater role and input by individual members.
3. Submissions by CLPs and affiliates should be given more consideration and acknowledged in the final report.
4. Commission should give due weight to on-line submissions and responses by individual party members; and where a particular topic/point of view attracts significant numbers of contributions this should also be reflected in the NPF conference report.
5. In the event of a substantial minority of NPF members disagreeing with a policy, this should be made clear in the NPF report to conference, with provision for their view to be reflected in debate.
6. Conference delegates should vote on the NPF report in sections, with provision for amendment and effective reference back of parts of the report.

**Annual Conference**

Over a period of three decades, conference has played a less active role in setting policy. More and more conference time is taken up with front bench speeches and policy seminars, and the role of CLP delegates and affiliates has been reduced commensurately. The importance of annual conference in both the manifesto and policy-making processes should be reasserted, and delegates role reinforced.

Debating a limited number of contemporary motions has proved a controversial and highly inadequate substitute for the former procedure which emphasised debating and voting on motions, composites and amendments from CLPs and affiliates. Contemporary motions have also been shown to be more open to manipulation. For example in September 2017, when the Korean Peninsula crisis was at its height, a number of resolutions were ruled out by the Conference Arrangements Committee on the ground they weren’t contemporary! Therefore:

1. At least 50 per cent of conference time should be allocated to debate involving delegates.
2. Conference timetable should allow for debate of a motion(s) submitted by women’s conference.
3. A fairer and more transparent system for selecting speakers in debates should be adopted.
4. Motions should be debated and voted on separately and with provision for amendment, not as part of a tranche of reports, statements etc.

ENDS