

SAVE THE LABOUR PARTY

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NEWS RELEASE

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For immediate release

Activists seek open Party debate as Brown airs British constitution

London, 3 July - STLP invites Branch and Constituency Labour Parties (CLPs) to unite around its campaign for Party renewal and support Labour's new government under Gordon Brown.

In particular, STLP welcomes the return of Cabinet government and the forthcoming debate about constitutional reform for Britain. It looks forward to the debate about renewal of the Labour Party being conducted in the same spirit.

STLP Chair, Peter Kenyon, said: "It is vital that Labour practices what it preaches when it comes to constitutional reform. What confidence would the public have (say) in a written constitution, if the Party's own Rule Book appears to be being overlooked by its new Leader?"

STLP asks all BLPs and CLPs to consider as soon as possible the LabOUR Commission statement (see below) issued following the publication (online) of "*Extending and Renewing party democracy*" by Gordon Brown, which includes a proposal to abolish CLP and affiliated organisations' rights to table Contemporary Motions at Conference, and replace with a right to propose an 'issue' for debate.

The LabOUR Commission under Angela Eagle MP published a 10-point plan with evidence-based recommendations about Party Renewal immediately after the 2007 May elections. This was sent to all key stakeholders and STLP members. STLP considers the LabOUR Commission proposals and its statement are a better basis for transforming the Labour Party into an election-winning force in British politics. They will enable Labour to re-connect with its supporters. They herald genuine collaboration between those sharing and supporting Labour Values whether as voters, supporters, members or elected representatives.

STLP urges BLP and CLPs to publicise their views on political renewal in local papers, as well as post them on their own website, the Labour Party's and public blogs.

STLP calls on the Party's NEC to debate the LabOUR Commission recommendations alongside those of the new Leader, and advise members about their respective merits.

Note to Editors

1 STLP has attracted support from all sections of the Labour Party. It has close links with other campaigning organisations in the labour movement in England, Scotland and Wales, including the Campaign For Labour Party Democracy and the Centre Left Grassroots Alliance, which last year had four of its candidates elected to the NEC. Its committee decided next steps in London on 30 June.

2 The LabOUR Commission's report "*Renewal – a two-way process for the 21st century*" was published after the polls closed in May 2007. It includes a 10-point plan to rebuild the Labour Party as a financially sound, mass membership democratic socialist organisation. It can be downloaded from <http://www.labourcommission.org.uk>

3 The Labour Party consultation document "*Extending and Renewing party democracy*" by Gordon Brown can be downloaded from:
http://savethelabourparty.org/Extending_and_renewing_party_democracy.pdf

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The LabOUR Commission statement is as follows:

"The Commission agreed that the new Leader's focus on Party membership was extremely welcome. But we have serious reservations about the possible withdrawal of the right to table Contemporary and Emergency motions without any balancing package, such as the right to submit and move amendments to consultative documents at Conference. The Commission considers that there should be mechanisms providing democratic safety valves for both members and affiliates. They enable some accountability and a much greater sense of involvement and legitimacy for the policy process.

Party Conference has to remain the Party's sovereign body, with ultimate responsibility for policy formulation. Among the checks and balances in the Party's Rule Book some means have to be re-established to enable members to amend directly policy proposals as set out in our 15 recommendations for reform of *Partnership in Power*.

The Commission strongly welcomed the passion and commitment to breathing new energy and vigour into *Partnership in Power* and strengthened the National Policy Forum, and believes this reinforces the importance of three of our major recommendations for:

- (a) One Member, One Vote elections for National Policy Forum members representing Constituency Labour Parties providing greater legitimacy and profile for the body as well as greater accountability.
- (b) All consultations, comments and analysis of submissions to be transparent and published on the Party's website at least open to all individual and affiliated members.
- (c) Consider the right of local parties and affiliated organisations to table amendments to consultation documents, which could be prioritised for discussion and voting at Conference. This allows some redress beyond just approving or rejecting a whole document

The Commission reaffirmed its findings that Labour Party policy making should be separated from government policy making, locally rooted, transparent and offer members a real sense of ownership following democratic discussion and deliberation."

The Labour Commission News Release is available from: <http://www.labourcommission.org.uk>