

How to Select or Reselect Your MP

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*Campaign for Labour Party Democracy
Institute for Workers' Control*

Dedicated to Mr Reg Prentice and the 180 Labour MPs who sent a written appeal on his behalf to Newham North East CLP.

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Introduction

Mandatory reselection is now part of the Labour Party constitution. Those who fought for it must now make sure that it works.

Reselection means that in future all Labour MPs will have to come before their constituency parties to seek renomination once during the lifetime of each Parliament. The sitting MP will have to seek renomination in competition with any other candidate that any branch of the party wishes to nominate.

Many party members, particularly those who live in safe Labour seats, will be unfamiliar with the process of Parliamentary selection. The main aim of this booklet is to provide a brief guide to the mechanics of selection and reselection. It also sets out some of the practical ways in which Labour MPs can be called to account by the Party they serve.

Used properly, reselection will help to bridge the gap that has grown up between the Labour party in the country and its representatives in Parliament.

Labour MPs — Their Record in Office

“The time has come to assert the rights, duties and role of the Parliamentary Labour Party without equivocation. It should be said loud and clear that Conference cannot instruct the Parliamentary Labour Party.”

Mr William Rodgers, speaking at Cambridge, October 14, 1980.

Mr Rodgers may well be right. He has done us all a service by highlighting with his customary frankness the central dilemma of the Labour Party. Namely, that many of its representatives in Parliament simply do not believe in the programme they are elected to implement. Others, while not actually opposed to the programme of their party, do not feel sufficiently strongly in favour of it seriously to resist attempts by Labour Cabinets to water down, neuter or reverse policies to which the Party is supposed to be committed.

This has been the experience of all Labour governments since 1964.

The 1964 government came to power with a National Plan designed to replace the traditional Conservative method of managing the economy

by alternating reflation with deflation (known as Stop-Go) with a system based on planning and the encouragement of manufacturing investment. Whether it would have worked or not we shall never know because at the first whiff of a sterling crisis, which traditionally accompanies the election of Labour governments, the Labour government abandoned the National Plan and reverted to Stop-Go. From then on it was downhill all the way. By the end Labour was supporting the Americans in Vietnam and attempting to legislate against the Party's own power base, the trade unions. The result was a haemorrhage of members out of the Party and defeat in the 1970 general election.

After the election defeat most Party members and many Parliamentary leaders vowed that no Labour government would ever again pursue such an ignominious course. Over the course of three years a new industrial strategy was fashioned based on planning agreements to give the people a say in determining not only their wages, but investment, production and a range of other decisions that affected their lives. Secondly, there was to be a National Enterprise Board which would invest public money in profitable private industry, and not just the lame ducks and service industries to which public ownership has been restricted in the past. Thirdly, it was agreed that future government aid to private industry would be made conditional upon industry's co-operation with the government's economic policy.

Once in office the 1974-9 Labour government jettisoned these policies with record speed. This time, even without waiting for the inevitable sterling crisis, they made planning agreements voluntary. As a result there is to this day no single example of a viable planning agreement between management, the unions and government. A National Enterprise Board was set up but its activities were severely restricted. As for linking government aid to co-operation by industry, this policy was abandoned before it was started.

Next in 1976 the government surrendered to calls by the International Monetary Fund for cuts in public spending, and unemployment more than doubled. The manifesto commitment to achieve a fundamental change in the balance of power and wealth in favour of working people and their families was forgotten. By the time Labour left office the gap between rich and poor was as wide as it had ever been and the Labour government had again turned on its supporters by trying to impose a 5 per cent wage limit.

By the end Labour were pursuing policies that not even a Liberal government would adopt. Journalists were tried under a section of the Official Secrets Act that the Labour Party was pledged to abolish; the former CIA agent, Philip Agee, and another journalist were deported in response to American pressure; in Northern Ireland a Labour minister presided over the systematic torture of prisoners.

By way of a finale, the government ended up doing a sordid little deal with the Ulster Unionists, for the purpose of keeping the backsides of

ministers in the official limousines for another few months. This led to a disastrous election campaign in which Labour, not the Tories, were the party of the establishment, the party of "steady as we go". The radical party, the party of change, was the Conservative Party.

As a result in May 1979 Labour found itself on the streets again and the same Parliamentary leaders who have twice led us to defeat are telling us that all we need is more of the same. In Opposition the Labour front bench has been largely ineffective. Every time a Labour spokesman waxes indignant about Conservative public spending cuts or the increase in unemployment the Tory response is always the same: 'YOU DID IT TOO'. And then the Conservative Minister concerned goes on to quote chapter and verse for identical measures carried out when Labour was in power, sometimes even by the same Opposition spokesman who now protests.

The most humiliating example of this concerned the commitment made in the 1974 Labour election manifesto that there would be no new generation of nuclear weapons. Five years later, when a Labour defence spokesman is on his feet protesting at Conservative plans to spend an enormous sum of public money on just such a new generation of nuclear weapons, the Conservative minister reveals that the expenditure was first authorised by a Cabinet committee set up under the previous Labour government and apparently kept secret even from other Cabinet members.

This is the political background against which the move to make Parliamentary leaders accountable has swept the Labour movement in the last decade. Critics have tried to characterise the campaign for Party democracy as an arid constitutional debate; a distraction from the real issues at a time when Labour should unite and fight the Tories. The truth is that plans to increase public spending, cut unemployment and abolish nuclear weapons are just so much hot air until our Parliamentary representatives are made accountable to the Party in whose name they hold office.

Working together

The purpose of mandatory reselection is to establish an open and honest relationship between the MP and his or her constituency party in the hope that, whatever the practicalities of office, our representatives in Parliament are never again allowed to lose sight of the ideals of the movement which sent them there.

Such a relationship cannot develop overnight. The habit of consultation between an MP and his or her constituency party will only be gradually acquired and it will depend as much upon the enthusiasm of party members as upon the MP. To make our Parliamentary representatives truly accountable the following ingredients are essential.

a. *Information:* Unless you know what your MP is doing and saying you cannot hold him or her accountable.

As far as the House of Commons is concerned it is possible to get a clear idea of what an MP is doing and saying from Hansard, which not only contains a verbatim record of speeches but also records how each MP votes in every division. Hansard can be obtained in most public libraries and MPs can, if asked, supply copies of any speech they have made in Parliament to members of their general management committee.

In Parliamentary Labour Party meetings, which are just as important as what goes on on the floor of the House, no record is kept of individual speeches or voting divisions. All balloting for officers of the Party, including the leader and members of the Shadow Cabinet, takes place in secret. Obviously this cannot continue if accountability is to be made effective. A campaign to reform this is already underway.

Meanwhile there is nothing to stop party members closely questioning their MPs about what they say and do at PLP meetings. Clues can often be obtained from newspaper reports (which should not of course be relied upon for accuracy) or from signatories of resolutions on the PLP order paper.

At the time of writing 17 constituencies have members of Parliament on the National Executive Committee of the Labour Party. These MPs are entrusted with many of the most important decisions in the Party. They are, of course, accountable to the movement through annual elections, but members in constituencies represented by an MP who is on the NEC have an important role to play. Until recently NEC minutes have not been made public, but as from last year the minutes of NEC meetings are available and copies can be obtained by writing to the General Secretary at Labour Party Headquarters (a small fee will be charged to cover the cost of postage and duplication). The NEC has also recently agreed to recorded voting whenever this is requested and this information will be recorded in the minutes.

b. *Reporting back:* To be accountable an MP has to be given a chance to report back. The ideal form is a written report to the general management committee at which the MP should be present to answer questions and enter into any discussion. The MPs report should also be sent to all ward branch secretaries who should circulate it at meetings. The MP should also be invited to attend and answer questions at Party branch meetings.

To be fair to the MP one must bear in mind that for MPs with constituencies outside London it is very difficult to attend party meetings held mid-week. Constituency Labour parties with MPs should insist that they attend GMC meetings, but at the same time they must make sure the meetings are held at a mutually convenient time.

c. *Consultation:* It is, of course, not enough for an MP to report back to his constituency on debates which have already taken place and decisions already made. Most important issues can be seen coming far in advance of arrival on the floor of the House of Commons, or the agenda of the PLP or NEC. In most cases there should be ample opportunity for a

constituency party to establish a view and to communicate that to the MP well in advance. Where time does not allow a leisurely consideration of the issues, constituencies should be prepared to hold special management committee meetings (at which any party member may attend and speak, but not vote). This is what many constituency parties did during the recent PLP leadership election. If — and only if — events move too fast for an MP to consult a full party meeting, then he or she should be encouraged to at least consult the principal officers of his or her party by telephone.

A word of warning: you cannot expect an MP to stick his/her neck out by, for example, opposing a Labour government on public spending cuts, defence estimates or wage restraint policies, unless the constituency is prepared to back the MP to the hilt. It is no good taking important policy decisions by margins of one or two votes at ill-attended meetings where the result could easily be overturned a week later. Decisions once made have to be stuck to and fought for. Accountability is a two-way process which confers responsibility on the party as well as the MP.

Reselection — the mechanics

The detailed rules and guidelines of Parliamentary selections are set out in full as Appendix A. What follows is a brief guide to the procedure which some practical hints. The main stages of a parliamentary selection should be as follows:

1. *Timetable:* The executive, in consultation with a Labour Party regional officer, draws up a timetable, which then has to be approved by the management committee. It is most important to make sure that enough time is allowed for all affiliated organisations to submit nominations. Bear in mind that a hasty selection suits the interests of the incumbent. Many sitting MPs will understandably be anxious to get the whole process over as soon as possible so that no rival candidate has a chance to get established. Do not be bull-dozed into a tight selection or reselection timetable.

2. *Candidates:* Where there is a sitting MP branches may come under pressure simply to nominate the sitting Member and have done with it. This pressure should be resisted at all costs. The purpose of reselection is that the sitting Member should have to compete for renomination against other candidates. In any healthy constituency party there are bound to be several strains of opinion represented and each should have the opportunity to nominate a candidate who reflects its views. Obviously many branches will want to renominate the sitting Member and there is absolutely nothing wrong with this, but the point is they should only do so having had the opportunity to interview candidates that any other members wish to invite.

Attempts will be made to limit the range of candidates available for consideration. These should be strongly resisted. There is no shortage of

potential parliamentary candidates — particularly in a safe seat. The main sources of candidates are as follows: (a) people who are already known by virtue of their local work in the party or a neighbouring constituency; (b) the A and B lists which are available from Local Party headquarters. List A consists of candidates sponsored by their trade unions. List B consists of candidates nominated by their parties. Both lists have been endorsed by the NEC; (c) many candidates will write to the Party secretary asking to be considered for nomination and giving biographical details. Very often the Secretary does not bother to circulate these details; in some cases the Regional Organiser will advise against circulating them. Ward secretaries should insist that all applications should be available to all branches. (d) Some CLPs advertise in *Labour Weekly* or *Tribune* to attract the widest possible range of candidates. Do not be afraid of throwing the selection wide open. Only the fixers have anything to fear from a large field.

3. *Nominations*: Each affiliated organisation (wards, trade union branches, socialist societies, women's sections etc.) is entitled to make a nomination. The secretary of each affiliated organisation will receive a yellow nomination form to be filled in following the decision of the branch. The normal practice is for each branch to hold its own mini-selection conference. Some also hold panel sessions before the formal interview to enable members to get to know candidates better.

At the formal interview it is important to leave plenty of time for questions and not to be too easily swayed by rhetoric or promises — some people will say anything in order to get selected. You may find it helpful to keep a careful note of answers to important questions for use against the day when promises have to be translated into practice. The best guide to quality is deeds rather than words. Any candidate worth his or her salt will have a record of political activity which can easily be checked in advance of the nominating meeting. A little basic research on the background of candidates lends authority to any questioning. Beware of smears, however. Come selection time there is always somebody (usually one of the other candidates or a supporter) prepared to put in a bad word for a rival.

4. *Shortlisting*: Once nominations are in, the executive of the party meets to recommend a shortlist. The executive has the right not only to interview those who have been nominated, but also to make its own nomination. The average size of a shortlist is between four and six candidates.

Before they vote executive members will often be told by regional officers that they must use all their votes on each ballot. In fact there is no obligation to use all your votes. Do not agree to do so because otherwise you may find yourself trapped into voting for candidates you do not feel should be shortlisted.

Once the executive has agreed a shortlist this is submitted for approval to the General Committee. The GC has power to subtract from, add to

or, if necessary, overturn the shortlist. Because of the quirks of using an elimination ballot to draw up a shortlist it is frequently the case that a candidate who has substantial support does not make the shortlist. When this happens the remedy lies with the GC. If it so wishes, the GC may overturn the entire shortlist recommended by the executive; it can replace any of the recommended candidates or it can add to the recommended shortlist.

5. *The Selection meeting:* Each of the shortlisted candidates will be invited to address a selection meeting. A strict time limit will operate for questions and answers.

Parliamentary selections, particularly where a safe seat is at stake, frequently attract as delegates people who have hitherto not played a very active part in the life of the constituency. If there is a strong local candidate, he or she very often finds it worthwhile to go out into the highways and the byways and bring in the halt and the lame so that the final decision is swayed by people who may never be seen again at a GC meeting.

Packing of GCs sometimes takes the form of a sudden rush of affiliations from union branches and other organisations which have either not bothered to affiliate or, if affiliated, have not hitherto bothered to send delegates. In the past it was not unknown for as many as 30 extra delegates from one organisation be delivered to the door of the selection by hired coach, to vote as a solid block for one candidate and then to depart into the night never to be seen again, leaving bewildered party activists saddled for life with a candidate they did not want. Not a few MPs in safe seats owe their careers to this style of selection.

Over the years the Parliamentary selection system has been refined to prevent this kind of rigging. In the mid-1960s the NEC decreed that all union delegates at selection conference had to be individual paid up members of the Labour Party (amazing though it may seem today, GC delegates in the past did not have to be members of the Labour Party). This followed a particularly scandalous selection in Glasgow where overnight the size of the GC swelled from a handful of accredited members to over 300, many of whom were found to come from addresses that did not exist.

In 1978 a further refinement was introduced into the Party constitution with a view to limiting the scope for skulduggery. Rule 14(3)g of the rules for constituency parties states: "To be eligible to attend a meeting of the general committee . . . a person must have been a member of this constituency for at least 12 months prior to the date of the relevant meeting and have attended at least one previous meeting of the general committee during the same period."

The purpose of this is to stop people being signed up into the party for the sole purpose of influencing selections and to prevent otherwise inactive GC delegates attending for the selection only.

This means that every party must keep a complete record of atten-

dance at GCs and every delegate should be aware of the importance of signing the attendance book. In addition the date of joining or transfer into a constituency Labour Party must be carefully minuted. Not to do this risks exclusion from a selection meeting.

Mandating of delegates at parliamentary selections is not permitted. In practice, however, many delegates consider themselves bound by the collective views of the branch which they are representing. There is nothing unreasonable about this. Members of GCs are by definition delegates and must be expected to take very seriously the views of the branch they represent. Once the shortlist is known it is advisable for GC delegates to discuss with members of their branch how they should use their vote. Do not simply discuss a first choice; consider to whom the vote should be switched in the event that your first or second choice is eliminated.

Voting will take place on an elimination basis until one candidate has achieved more than 50 per cent of the vote.

Aftermath

You now have a prospective Parliamentary candidate who may become the MP. Hopefully, this is the beginning of a long and fruitful relationship. To be successful, however, party members must make sure that their MP lives up to the promise that attended his/her selection.

Many Labour MPs who go to Parliament with the best of intentions end up being seduced by the job prospects or by the club facilities afforded by the Palace of Westminster. Many come to believe that the Parliamentary Labour Party is an independent institution with a life of its own, with a right to make its own policy decisions and generally to behave as it pleases. To some MPs the Labour Party, to which they owe everything, becomes an inconvenient pressure group — except at election times when grudging lip-service has to be paid to the Labour manifesto.

Reselection must be used to make clear to Labour MPs that this elevated view of their role in life has had its day. Labour MPs have no rights more or less than the ordinary card carrying Party member. They are simply the Party members to whom has fallen the honour of giving practical expression to the ideals of the Labour movement.

Appendix A: Guidelines for the Selection of Parliamentary Candidates

The guidelines governing parliamentary selections are drawn up by the National Agent's department and agreed by the National Executive Committee. Although they are made available to Regional Organisers and their assistants they are not widely available. This has meant that responsibility for interpretation has usually resided with full-time Party officers who attend every stage of the selection procedure.

CLPD believes that they should be available to all Party members and we therefore have pleasure in publishing for the first time the complete, unexpurgated guidelines for the selection of Parliamentary candidates:

Selection of Parliamentary Candidates

The selection of candidates is primarily the concern of constituency parties with the National Executive Committee responsible for the observance of the rules relating to Parliamentary Candidates and the proper functioning of the machinery. It is a democratic procedure which has stood the test of time for over forty years. The extremely rare cases of dispute arise mainly through the lack of attention to detail at some stage and the purpose of this memorandum is to remind all concerned of the provisions of the Rules and the procedure laid down by the National Executive Committee.

"A constituency party must select its candidate in consultation with the National Executive Committee. The National Executive Committee must be represented at all meetings at each stage of the selection procedure — usually by a member of the Regional Organising staff."

1. Before commencing procedure

Before commencing the constitutional procedure the Constituency Party may if it so desires arrange for possible nominees to meet the Party and affiliated organisations. Where this procedure is followed the Executive Committee must decide, in consultation with the Regional Organiser, how this is to be arranged. For example: (a) branches might be supplied with List 'B' with the suggestion that they invite three or four possible nominees to attend a branch meeting, (b) the General Committee could organise a series of public or semi-public meetings and invite a number of possible nominees to address them, (c) a social function could be arranged and a number of possible nominees invited to meet members informally.

2. Executive Committee Meeting

a. Time-Table

Before permission is given on behalf of the National Executive Committee for a constituency party to set in motion the procedure for selection, a time-table which has been agreed between the constituency party and the NEC representative must be submitted to the National Agent.

This is a precaution to ensure that every party and affiliated organisation has adequate time to submit a nomination and that the constituency party and Head Office have sufficient time for consultation at each stage of the selection procedure.

The rules require nominations to be made on the prescribed form and that at

least four weeks notice be given from the date nominations are invited before the closing date. In some instances a longer period may be required. The time-table must not be of too long duration nor too short for it to operate effectively.

Sufficient time must be allowed between the closing date for the receipt of nominations and the Executive Committees' shortlisting meeting for the nomination forms to be submitted to Head Office for validation and for them to be returned.

It is unwise to allow too long between the meeting of the Executive Committee which draws up the shortlist and the General Committee meeting which will receive their report, or between that meeting of the General Committee and the Selection Meeting, in order to avoid the possibility of canvassing and other pressures within the constituency.

Example of Time-table

The following time-table is for guidance; the actual time-table must be agreed with the representative of the National Executive Committee:

Freeze date	As fixed in paragraph (d) below.
Invitation to nominate	8-14 days after freeze date.
Closing date for receipt of nominations	5-8 weeks after invitation to nominate.
Executive Committee to shortlist	10-14 days after closing date.
General Committee to approve shortlist	1-7 days after Executive Committee meeting.
Selection Meeting	7-10 days after General Committee meeting.

The time-table must be approved by the National Agent before it is put into operation.

At the same time as the time-table is submitted to the National Agent for approval, a request should be made for the required numbers of

- a. nomination forms;
- b. Lists 'A' and 'B' (one set will be supplied free of charge).

A copy of the approved time-table must be sent to all affiliated and party organisations when inviting nominations so as to give them adequate notice of the necessary meetings in connection with the selection procedure. At the same time they should be informed that affiliations, delegations and membership in relation to the selection procedure have been frozen.

b. Organisations entitled to nominate

The organisations who may nominate are those entitled to representation on the General Committee of the Constituency Party. The NEC representative must check the Constituency Party Rules with regard to representation on the General Committee and make certain that invitations to nominate are sent only to those bodies entitled to receive them. No organisation may submit more than one nomination.

The Constituency Party Executive Committee may make a nomination but such nomination must be submitted by the date laid down for the receipt of nominations. The General Committee is not entitled to nominate.

c. Sponsored Candidates

In the event of the name of a person nominated being on the official panel of

available Parliamentary candidates of an affiliated organisation of the Labour party, the consent in writing of the National Executive Committee of that organisation must be obtained and sent in with the Form of Nomination, otherwise the nomination will be invalid.

d. *Freezing Date*

In accordance with the decisions of the Annual Party Conference, the freezing date for affiliations and delegations for the period of the selection of a Parliamentary candidate is the day on which the Regional Organiser meets the Executive Committee of the Constituency to arrange the time-table, (or in the case of a Parliamentary by-election, the day the seat falls vacant).

In the case of an MP announcing that he/she will not be seeking re-election, the freezing date shall be the date on which the MP announces his/her intention to retire at the next General election.

e. *Affiliations*

No new or increased affiliations can be accepted after the freezing date and no new Party organisations established after that date shall be allowed representation on the General Committee during the period of the selection of the candidate.

f. *Delegates*

Only accredited delegates may be present at meetings throughout the selection procedure. The delegates entitled to attend are those appointed by organisations entitled to representation on the General Committee and no additional or substitute delegates shall be allowed after the freezing date with the exception of where there has been a change of Labour Party branch secretary. (The branch secretary is not an elected delegate and is on the General Committee ex-officio by virtue of his office.) *All delegates must be individual members.*

Note:

- a. Delegates must either reside or be registered as electors in the constituency.
- b. Delegates from Party branches must either reside or be registered as electors in the area of the branch.

g. *Members*

New members accepted into membership after the freezing date shall not be entitled to participate as delegates in the selection procedure.

The representative of the National Executive Committee attending meetings in connection with the selection procedure, must ensure that all delegates invited to attend the meetings fulfil the Conditions for the Appointment of Delegates laid down in the Constituency Party Rules.

The National Executive Committee representative shall also check that no organisation has more delegates than the number to which it is entitled based on affiliation fees paid or the membership of the Labour Party branch.

3. *Validation*

Immediately following the 'closing date for receipt of nominations' all the nomination forms, together with any written notices from affiliated organisations who are sponsoring candidatures, must be sent to the National Agent for validation on behalf of the National Executive Committee, before the Executive Committee meets to draw up a shortlist.

The term 'validation' does not mean 'approval'. It means that the particulars on the form denote that the nominee conforms to the conditions of candidature as laid down in the Constitution, that the nomination was to hand by the date in the agreed time-table, and submitted by an organisation entitled to nominate.

4. *Executive Committee to Shortlist*

When the forms have been validated and returned to the constituency party, a meeting of its Executive Committee shall consider all the nominations.

The Rules provide that the Constituency Executive Committee may give such advice as it deems necessary to the General Committee on the nominations found to be valid. The Executive Committee should consider carefully the nominations and recommend to the General Committee a shortlist of nominees to appear before the Selection Meeting.

Where practicable, it is desirable that the Executive Committee should interview all nominees before shortlisting. If there is a substantial number of nominees it may be necessary to have two or more meetings of the Executive Committee before reaching a conclusion. In making up its mind the Executive Committee may discuss the nominees. If more than one meeting of the Executive Committee is necessary to interview nominees, only those Executive Committee members who have been present throughout both or all meetings may vote on the shortlist.

Any member of the Executive or General Committee who is nominated for the candidature must not attend any meetings dealing with the candidature except that he/she may attend the selection meeting in the event of their not being shortlisted.

Before determining the shortlist, a decision must be taken as to the number of candidates to be shortlisted, and also whether or not all Executive Committee members must use all their votes (e.g. if it is agreed to shortlist five then any ballot paper with less than five votes shall be invalid).

Shortlisting must be carried out by eliminating ballot removing names as necessary (e.g. those who receive the lowest vote) until the number required is obtained; the eliminating ballot must continue until only the required number remains; a simple majority is not sufficient.

The Executive Committee must also consider the following matters concerning the procedure at the Selection Meeting and recommend to the General Committee:

- a. Time limit for each nominee
 - i. to make a statement;
 - ii. to answer questions.
- b. Order of appearance at the Selecting Meeting (It is usual to recommend that the nominees shall draw lots).
- c. Appointment of door stewards to check credentials etc. (n.b. delegates should be required to present their Individual Membership cards for the current year.)
- d. Appointment of scrutineers to issue and count ballot papers.
- e. That delegates who arrive at the Selection Meeting after the first nominee has commenced to speak shall either:
 - i. not be permitted to enter the Selection Meeting Room,
 - or
 - ii. be allowed to enter the room but not permitted to take part in the Selection Meeting in any way.

- f. Decision as to whether voting figures shall be given at each stage of the ballot.

The meeting should also consider a report on delegations, deal with any queries there may be, and make arrangements for:

- i. Preparation of biographical notes of nominees.
- ii. Preparation of ballot papers.
- iii. Provision of a suitable waiting-room for nominees.

All shortlisted nominees must be sent full details of the selection conference and asked to arrive at least 15 minutes before the commencing time. They must be informed how long they will be allowed to speak and that they will be required to produce evidence of their Party membership (for a full two years) and trade union membership (where applicable). They must be warned that if they are unable to produce evidence of Party membership and trade union membership (where applicable) they will not be allowed to address the selection conference.

5. *General Committee*

The report of the Executive Committee to the General Committee meeting should be considered in two parts:

a. *Shortlist*

All nominations must be reported to the General Committee which has the power to accept, amend, or reject the proposed shortlist. The General Committee has the final word on the composition of the shortlist of nominees to be interviewed at the Selection Meeting.

The General Committee has the power to determine that all nominations are unsuitable or are insufficient. In this event, the Selection Meeting would be deferred and additional nominations invited. This would mean recommencing the procedure for the selection and a new time-table must be agreed and submitted to the National Agent for approval. Alternatively, instead of recommencing the entire procedure, the time-table may be extended and submitted to the National Agent for approval. In this case nominations already received stand and only additional nominations be sought.

b. *Procedure for Selection Meeting*

The General Committee may amend any of the proposals made by the Executive Committee, but no amendment which goes against the spirit and intention of the rules should be allowed.

Note: All shortlisted nominees should be notified immediately of the decisions of the General Committee for the Selection Meeting. Nominees not shortlisted should be notified accordingly.

6. *Selection Meeting*

The notice convening the Selection Meeting may be duplicated locally but the wording contained in the form of convening notice supplied by Head Office must be used. Alternatively, convening notices can be supplied by Head Office.

It is also necessary to prepare biographical notes for each of the shortlisted nominees and these must be sent with the convening notice to each delegate entitled to attend the Selection Meeting.

When entering the room each delegate must present to the appointed door stewards the prescribed form convening the Selection Meeting, and/or credential form prepared locally for this meeting, together with a current Individual Membership card.

There is no provision in the Rules for visitors to attend the Selection Meeting. Therefore no visitors are allowed except with special permission of the Regional Organiser or the National Agent.

Before commencing the selection meeting, the National Executive Committee representative together with the Chairman of the meeting should meet the nominees to inspect their Party and trade union membership cards, explain the procedure and to draw lots for order of appearance where that has been agreed.

At the commencement of the meeting, the National Executive Committee representative should request the Chairman to 'prove their delegation' and/or 'check the delegates' credentials'. The full list of delegates should be read to the meeting.

Delegates should be given every opportunity at this stage to challenge the credentials of any other delegate.

Only when the National Executive Committee representative is satisfied with the bona fides of all delegates should the selection meeting be allowed to proceed.

The NEC representative should then outline fully the procedure to be followed and give opportunities for questions to be put.

Before the first nominee is invited in to the meeting room, the door stewards should be asked to report on the number of the delegates present.

The first nominee will then be asked to speak and at this stage the door stewards will act according to the General Committee's decision regarding delegates who arrive subsequently.

Each nominee will address the Selection Meeting and answer questions in accordance with the agreed time limit. Should a nominee not take the time allotted for his initial statement, additional time must not be added to the period allowed for questions.

No questions on financial sponsorship may be permitted .

When the last nominee has been interviewed the Chairman should put a motion to the meeting 'That we now proceed to ballot'. *When seconded this motion should be put to the meeting without discussion.* Delegates who consider none of the nominees to be suitable should vote against the motion.

If the motion is defeated, the meeting shall close immediately and the NEC representative shall consult with the Constituency Executive Committee and agree a new time-table for submission to the National Agent.

If the motion is carried the ballot will proceed.

The scrutineers will then issue ballot papers to the number as reported by the door stewards. The scrutineers being accredited delegates are entitled to vote.

The choice of a candidate must be made by an eliminating ballot. The delegates will continue to ballot until one nominee has an overall majority of the votes cast. (n.b. *spoilt papers, including blank papers shall be deducted from the total number of ballot papers issued before deciding whether a nominee has a clear majority of the votes cast.*)

It is wise to prepare sufficient sets of ballot papers to provide for the maximum number of ballots — they should be duplicated on different coloured papers or be numbered 1, 2 and 3 and so on.

It is recommended that the voting figures should not be announced after each

ballot vote or for the final vote. If however, the meeting insists on the figures being given, the Chairman must comply.

The nominee lowest in the voting should be eliminated from the next ballot together with any others whose votes added to those of the nominees lower in the ballot do not equal the number of votes cast for the nominee immediately above.

The Chairman is entitled to his vote as a delegate in the ballot, but not to exercise a casting vote in the event of a tie. In the event of a tie, the National Executive Committee representative will advise that the nominees concerned be invited to answer questions for, say, a further five minutes. Should there still be a tie the meeting will stand adjourned and the same shortlisted nominees and all eligible delegates invited to another Selection Meeting.

When a candidate has been selected, the Chairman should put a Motion

“That this General Committee recommends the National Executive Committee to endorse the candidature of Mr/Mrs _____”

This enables the selected candidate to feel he/she has the support of the General Committee.

Three copies of the Financial Agreement should be completed:

- a. One to be retained by the Selected Candidate.
- b. One to be retained by the Constituency Party.
- c. One to be sent to the National Executive Committee.

If the selected candidate is sponsored by an affiliated organisation, all three copies of the financial agreement should be retained by the National Executive Committee representative and forwarded to the National Agent so that the agreement can be completed by the organisation concerned who will then retain one copy and another copy will be returned to the constituency party for its files.

In the case of sponsored candidates, there is no need for the candidate himself to sign the agreement.

The National Executive Committee representative must, in addition, obtain from the selected nominee a signed acceptance of the Parliamentary Labour Party's Code of Conduct which must be sent to the National Agent with the financial agreement.

The selection of a prospective Parliamentary candidate should not be regarded as completed until endorsement has been given by the National Executive Committee to the selected candidate.

Until a constituency party receives written notice of endorsement it shall not introduce its prospective candidate to the public.

7. By-elections

Note: There is a different and usually shortened procedure.

The various meetings are usually attended by a National Officer who supervises the procedure.

Example of Delegate's Credential for local reproduction

BLACKTOWN CLP
Secretary/Agent
Mark Canvass

32 High Street,
Blacktown, Links.

I hereby declare that I am a member of the _____

Constituency Labour Party, complying with the Constitution and Rules of the Labour Party and that I am not a member of any organisation ineligible for affiliation to the Labour Party.

Name of Delegate:

Home Address:

Organisation:

Signed: _____ Delegate

Date: _____

Appendix B: Reselection of Members of Parliament

(As agreed by the Organisation Sub-Committee of the NEC on 12.1.81.)

The 1979 and 1980 Party Conference amended the Rules for Constituency Labour Parties to provide for the mandatory reselection of Members of Parliament.

Where a Constituency has a Labour Member of Parliament, the procedures laid down in Clause XIV of Constituency Party Rules must be commenced not later than 36 months after the General Election. If however, the Member of Parliament was elected for the first time for the Constituency at the General Election, then the procedure cannot be started until eighteen months after that election.

The procedure is the same as that set out in the Memorandum on 'Selection of Parliamentary Candidates' with the following exceptions:

Nomination

The Member of Parliament is eligible for nomination and whether or not he is so nominated he is entitled to be regarded as a nominee and to all the rights accorded to any other nominee. Therefore, if there is no nomination for the Member of Parliament, a nomination paper must be prepared and sent to the Member of Parliament for completion.

Shortlisting

At the Executive Committee meeting, the details of all nominees (including the sitting Member of Parliament) shall be read to the meeting. Since the rules require that the Member of Parliament shall be automatically on the shortlist, a motion is needed to determine how many additional nominees shall be added to the shortlist, and any ballots shall only be for the additional places on the shortlist. A shortlist of one is permissible only if the sitting MP is the only nominee.

At the General Committee meeting when the shortlist is considered no motion to delete the Member of Parliament from the shortlist may be considered. They may, of course, delete, add or amend the other nominees.

Selection

At the Selection Conference the Member of Parliament must be given exactly the same consideration as any other nominees.

Appeal

If the Member of Parliament is not selected, he/she has the right to appeal to the National Executive Committee but only on the grounds that the procedure laid down in the rules and the general provisions of the Constitution and rules have not been properly carried out.

If the Member of Parliament is reselected he/she becomes the Prospective Parliamentary Candidate.

Removing a Prospective Parliamentary Candidate

If a Constituency Labour Party, after selecting (or reselecting) a Prospective Parliamentary Candidate feels that circumstances have changed and they now wish to change the candidate, the matter must be discussed at a properly convened meeting of all the General Committee and the business to be discussed must be notified to all delegates in writing at least seven clear days before the meeting. This meeting can consider and decide on a motion to ask the National Executive Committee for permission to reconsider the selection of the candidate again.

A letter conveying the decision and the reasons for it, shall be sent to the National Agent to be placed before the National Executive Committee. If permission is given, a special meeting of the General Committee shall be convened in accordance with regulations sanctioned by the National Executive Committee. The prospective candidate will have the right of appeal to the National Executive Committee.

Emergency Provision

If Parliament is dissolved before the selection meeting takes place, the procedure is suspended and the Member of Parliament must be reselected as the prospective Parliamentary candidate unless he or she has already announced their intention to retire. In the latter case the special provisions in Clause XIV(4) shall apply.

Appendix C: Mandatory Reselection — A Short History

1973 The Campaign for Labour Party Democracy was set up after the then leader, Harold Wilson, vetoed the inclusion in Labour's programme of a proposal that the State should take a controlling interest in 25 top companies. At the annual conference in Blackpool CLPD organised a meeting on Party democracy which 200 people attended. From the debate at the meeting it was clear that the power to reselect MPs was the top priority in delegates' minds. For that reason reselection of MPs became CLPD's principal aim.

1974 The proposal for mandatory reselection appeared on the agenda of the 1974 Conference backed by several CLPs. The NEC advised Conference to reject the motion and it was defeated. Ian Mikardo on behalf of the NEC said "Divorce should not be easy".

1975 12 CLPs put forward motions calling for mandatory reselection. The motions were not allowed to be published (under the three year rule).

1976 45 CLPs put forward mandatory reselection as their resolution to Conference. This was by far the largest number received on a single subject, but the motions were again not allowed to be published under the three year rule.

1977 79 CLPs put forward mandatory reselection as their resolution to Conference. The NEC asked Conference not to press a vote. Ian Mikardo on behalf of the NEC pledged that the NEC would table a constitutional amendment in the following year providing for "automatic reselection in the way and in the sense" that the 79 CLPs intended.

1978 The NEC broke its pledge given in 1977. It introduced the so-called Mikardo compromise — a constitutional amendment providing for reselection to take place only after a party had effectively passed a vote of no confidence in their MP. The NEC recommended rejection of the resolutions from 67 constituencies calling for mandatory reselection. A clear majority of unions, including the AUEW, had been mandated to support automatic reselection, but Hugh Scanlon, on behalf of the AUEW delegation, abstained from the vote. After heated representations from his delegation Scanlon appealed to the NEC Chairman, Joan Lestor, claiming that he had been confused and sought another vote. The Chairman refused. The Mikardo Compromise was then put to Conference and passed.

1979 22 CLPs put forward automatic mandatory reselection as their resolution knowing that it was out of order under the three year rule. The NEC advised Conference that the three year rule should be waived in respect of mandatory reselection. This was carried. The NEC supported the CLPs' constitutional amendment which provided for automatic mandatory reselection. This was then carried by 4,521,000 votes to 2,356,000.

1980 The National Agent's office announce they have discovered certain drafting errors in the constitutional amendment on reselection which they approved in 1978. Tidying up amendments therefore had to be put to conference. These, taken with a resolution from the clerical workers union, APEX, provided an excuse for another full scale debate on reselection. The drafting amendments were carried by 457,000 votes and the APEX resolution was lost. At last mandatory reselection was part of the Labour Party constitution.

Appendix D: Your MP's Voting Record

The voting record of each Member of Parliament is recorded in Hansard at the end of every Parliamentary debate. Hansard should be available in any good reference library. To use Hansard all you need to know is the date of the debate in which you are interested.

To assist Labour Party members to discover where their MP stands we have listed below the dates of debates on 10 crucial issues since 1975. This list does not purport to be comprehensive and members should bear in mind, when consulting Hansard, that when Labour is in office all members of the Government are obliged, on pain of dismissal, to vote with the Government, except on issues of conscience where a free vote is allowed.

The Campaign for Labour Party Democracy is compiling a table of each Labour MP's voting record on key issues.

Ten Crucial Issues

- April 9 1975: EEC Membership.
- July 22 1975: £6 pay policy.
- December 21 1976: Government Economic Policies following IMF loan.
- May 3 1977: Agee and Hosenball Case.
- February 1 1979: Rhodesian Oil Sanctions.
- March 27 1979: Defence Expenditure.
- July 13 1979: Corrie Abortion Bill.
- May 6 1980: Abolition of House of Lords.
- March 4 1980: Continuation of Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1976.
- December 10 1980: Northern Ireland Emergency Provisions.

For information about MPs' voting records, and about CLPD itself write to *The Secretary, CLPD, 10 Park Drive, London NW11.*

JOIN NOW!

To: V. Schonfield, Hon Treas.
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