

2014

HAVERING FABIAN NEWSLETTER

March \ April 2014

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Introduction

Welcome to the new edition of the Havering Fabian Newsletter. This issue will give a summary of the three meetings in January and February, offer a preview of the upcoming meetings in March and April, and will conclude with some opinions on current political issues.

With the 2014 Council elections on the horizon, the local Labour Parties have selected candidates and are campaigning hard – keep up to date at our twitter site [@haveringfabians](#) for the latest news. We are affiliated to the four local Labour Parties, and will do all we can to support their campaigns.

Local society member Councillor Sanchia Alasia continues with her campaign to win a seat in the European Parliament and we wish her well, and with her campaign to be re-elected to Barking and Dagenham Council.

We were pleased to welcome Sam Gould, the new Labour prospective parliamentary candidate for Romford to speak at the AGM, and wish him well in the coming campaign in Brooklands as well.

Paul McGeary, now the Labour PPC for Hornchurch and Upminster will be speaking to the Society later in the year

We look forward to working with them in the run up to the General Election.

As opinions are the lifeblood of politics, we welcome a reply to any of the articles. The Fabian Society exists to promote political debate, both within and outside the Labour Party. Progressive politics extends beyond the Labour Party and contributions from the Labour Movement as a whole are welcome.

Attendances at recent meetings have remained excellent and the quality of speakers remains exceptional. We are glad to see a number of new people attending the meetings, and have an ever increasing number of followers on Face book and Twitter.



Our Face book site is a closed group, please contact David Marshall to be added to the site or e-mail Haveringfabians@outlook.com and we will add you to the growing list of followers. We now have a public site as well, so follow us on whichever media suits.

European Debate – John Cryer MP and Sanchia Alasia

The European debate is a very live one in the run up to the elections in May and the General Election in May 2015. The Society had long planned a meeting on the issue of a referendum. John Cryer made a return visit to the Society, and as ever drawing a large and interested audience. Sanchia also made a welcome return, and as befits her status as a candidate for the European Elections in May, made an excellent and informed contribution to what was an interesting and friendly debate.

Sanchia – the case for Europe

Sanchia began the discussion. The timing of a referendum is important. A commitment by Labour to a referendum for 2015 would deflect the party from campaigning on the vital issues of jobs and growth.

If there were a vote to withdraw, there would be a lot of work to do to renegotiate Trade Agreements; this could paralyse the legislative process and prevent a future Labour government dealing with the damage done by the Tories.

David Cameron favours a referendum to deal with the divisions within the Tory party on Europe and the fear of UKIP. The European Union is far from perfect (see Polly Billington Newsletter 13 for more on this) but Britain needs to be on the inside of negotiations within the community to achieve improvement.

Some countries do trade successfully outside of the EU –Norway and Switzerland for example. Both a relatively small economies with niche economies (oil and banking respectively). Both follow the rules set down

by the EU but have no say or influence. Indeed they approach UK MEPs to get their views heard.

Is this a position Britain wants? Why would we want less influence? There would be a danger of taxation without representation. Britain would be on the margins of Europe, with the domestic economy dependant on trade with Europe but beyond UK political influence.

Immigration remains an issue, and any debate needs to be grounded in values based on diversity being strength. Labour has supported the free movement of labour throughout the EU. As well as continental Europeans coming to Britain, there are 2 million or so British passport holders living abroad. For example there are 300,000 Britons in Spain. They use the Spanish benefits and Health system at a cost of around 300m euro's a year. Restrictions on free movement would impact on all of this.

What is needed?

- A fair labour market with proper enforcement of the minimum wage
- Training, skills and apprenticeships to ensure the skills taught are required
- Full transitory controls, targeting low pay, and ensuring training for all UK youngsters.

2004 saw the Habitual residency test – now, 10 years on there is a need to review and reform if necessary. While there is some abuse, there is little evidence it is widespread, the evidence suggesting 1%. The EU has been looking at this but has not reported as yet.

Britain being part of the EU is better for UK trade. Britain benefits from EU free trade agreements with the USA- these would be at risk if Britain left the EU. Leaving then would not leave Britain in a position of strength.

John – the case for a referendum

John Cryer welcomed the meeting on this subject; discussion on European issues was not always rational, with polarised positions such as being viewed as a “Little Englander” or “throwing away 1,000 years of

democracy”. John is supportive of neither of these positions, but is in favour of a referendum if possible as part of the 2014 Euro elections rather than the General election.

If Labour is the only Party not offering a referendum, opponents will exploit this, not seen as trusting the people.

If a referendum is held, we need to live with the consequences regardless of the result. So Labour would need to carry through the will of the electorate.

Currently there is a gulf between parliament and the people – MPs broadly favour being in the EU while there is increasing scientism among the electorate.

- Objections to the current arrangements focuses on alack of democracy or accountability – in particular
- There is no register of MEPs interests – so it is unclear what influences are being brought to bear
- The real power rests with the unelected Council of Ministers not the Parliament
- Ireland had rejected the Nice treaty – effectively it had to vote again until the “right” result was obtained
- The backlash against this was often right wing nationalism.
- EU ministers and the Presidency support further change in the EU without changes to the Nice Treaty
- Mr Donzenburg, first EU Minister when talking about the European Central Bank (ECB) was keen not to publish voting records as this would lead to Board members “coming under pressure” – hardly a democratic view.
- The Council of Ministers and ECOFIN (the meeting of EU Finance ministers) meet in private and there are no records of their discussion.

It was a overstating the case to put improvements in workers’ rights down the EU – the Labour Party had introduced the minimum wage, it was not down to the EU.

The EU Services Directive ensured it was possible to maintain low pay within low pay Countries.

Article 43 of the EU treaty set out the founding principles of the EU, that there is no obstacle to business, goods and services, with free movement – a founding principle of the EU and Treaty of Rome, the doctrine of common resource.

John held that domestic parliaments should make decisions not the principle of common resource – this had seen the decline of the UK fishing industry. It was no longer the case that domestic governments could impact on the big economic levers

People felt powerless and there was a risk of backlash. This had become an issue in both Western and Eastern Europe, where far right nationalism was on the rise.

The movement of more power to Brussels had been argued for by some in Europe. This could play to extreme elements, as if it appears that there is no point in voting when the main European parties back the EU.

There was a democratic deficit and the people needed an opportunity to vote on changes being made to the political and economic agenda.

In John's view, the bottom line was that Labour should offer a referendum.

A lively and informed discussion followed, with a variety of view expressed. Many of those who had a vote in 1975 had voted no, but were, with varying levels of enthusiasm committed to remaining within the EU.

The point John made about the democratic deficit was generally accepted. The conclusion seemed to be there was a lot about the EU that could be improved and significant risks, political and economic, should Britain leave. There was agreement that more meetings about the issues would help inform debate both within and beyond the Labour movement, and we all wished Sanchia good luck in the forthcoming campaigns.

Sanchia is a Labour Barking and Dagenham Councillor and standing for Labour in the 2014 European Elections

John Cryer is Labour MP for Leyton and Wanstead and was MP for Hornchurch from 1997-2005.



Jon Cruddas – From now until the election

Jon began with an assessment of the 2010 election as the worst for Labour in the last 100 years. Labour secured 29% of the vote, similar to 1983 but without the SDP. Although the 1931 defeat had been bad – only 51 Labour MPs were elected – Labour has secured a higher share of the vote. The 1918 election was worse, although Labour was on the rise to a much stronger position in 1924.

This has not been acknowledged across the party – in some key seats Labour had out organised the opposition to retain some unlikely seats.

These achievements were obscured by the media fawning over the new and exciting prospect of a coalition government. Cameron had been stymied and denied an outright victory. Therefore some in the Labour Party took the view “it could have been worse.” The Liberal Democrats would not be able to keep together the coalition and if the Party kept a low profile, it could be back in Government in a matter of months rather than years.

Jon took a different view – the defeat was a significant one and required re-assessment of approach. As yet the party has not done the “heavy lifting” required.

Labour did not have a great record in opposition – 1945, 1964 and 1997 followed 13, 14 and 18 years in opposition. There had been a tendency in opposition to argue internally and finally reach a view, then revert to previous views in Government.

There is a global crisis for social democracy, with recent defeats in Australia and Germany. This partly reflected a reduction in centre left “energy”, so Britain was not alone and there is a need to re-define the centre left agenda.

The last Labour government suffered from internal disputes with the Blair\ Brown disputes not popular with the electorate. The leadership election that followed the election was broadly conducted between five similar candidates, and the Party spent six months of introspection. This mattered as the Tory party spent the period shifting the blame for the economic position to the Labour government from the global economic collapse. Redressing this position is perhaps the biggest challenge in Labour history.

Opinion polls were patchy – the Labour Party had moved back ahead, anything from 1 to 10% ahead. Jon asked was this real? Is this support or just anti government sentiments usual during a parliament?

Ed Miliband had stopped the internal disputes and unified the Party in a way that David Miliband would have struggled to achieve. So the Party had avoided internal arguments. With 15 months to the election, there is still all to play for.

One nation Labour is an interesting concept – in the three elections that Labour has won with large majorities, it had captured the national mood.

In 1945 Clement Attlee won with a platform of post war regeneration – “Homes fit for Hero’s”, and “The future belongs to Labour”.

In 1964, Harold Wilson had captured the “White Heat of Technology” against the “grouse moor” mentality of Douglas Hume’s Tories.

In 1997, John Major’s administration drifted into sleaze and decline. This compared badly to the positive modernisation agenda put forward by Tony Blair, and Labour was able to contest the national story and unify around the big issues.

So it is vital to contest and define the national story. Ed Miliband is contrasting the Party’s position against the Tories around national renewal, and to trying to develop this- the jury is still out on whether this has been a success.

The approach in the run up to 1997 had three strands:

1. Organisation – the dropping of Clause 4 was of a big change in the Party, with a symbolic ballot of the membership about reform of the Party.

2. Ideology – the Third way, (like it or not) was a redefinition of what Labour stands for, and the move to New Labour reflected change at a time when the Tories had become stale.
3. Policy – there were large numbers of policy announcements, on an almost daily basis, and Blair would visit schools, hospitals and factories etc on a daily basis in the year before the election.

The proposed change in organisation of the Party (the meeting was held before the Special Conference on 1st March) would change the way MPs voted for Party leader, and allow Trade Union Members to opt in.

Community Organisation was also being addressed with Arnie Graf employed to increase participation.

However, the whole approach was less intense than 1997. The ideology is undercooked and needs more work. Miliband had periods of intense media visibility that are not continuous.

The Party is relatively united, although there is organisational torpor and a lack of energy.

The last Labour Government had ran out of steam, and was managerially shallow at the end.

The scale of the challenge is vast. Policy development will be addressed via the National Policy Forum which is due to report in July to agree programmes around

- Economic policy
- Social policy
- Democratic Reform

A total of 17 commissions will report on various issues from March to June, with a report to conference and subsequent inclusion in the manifesto.

The task for the Party is to get things moving. There has been some progress, for example, the proposed energy price freeze had been well received. The Party had made strong statement on the bedroom tax and on childcare.

This was not the whole package, and we need to be radical.

Issues to address included

Housing	Devolution
Cities	Energy
Banking	Rights at work
Adult Social care	

The big issue would be how the Party pay would for it.

Barking and Dagenham Council will face a 60% cut over a 7 year period which would take provision of service below a statutory level. There are different challenges in Havering. The gravity of these challenges requires the Labour party to take a different stance on these issues by midyear.

For John, many in and around parliament do not see the key issue. He described a contrast in views, where on the one hand many believe that by keeping a low profile the party can get back into government via the back door. On the other hand there are those who believe that a radical and different policy manifesto is required

This is an on-going debate, and a battle to get across the character and leadership offered by the Party- can we offer a vision of hope and renewal?

This is a hope v despair issue and the signs are not good.

Casework for Jon and local councillors has doubled over the last 2 years. Living standards and related pressures have driven this.

Children used to be able to look forward to greater opportunities than their parents- not now, the wheels of progress have stopped, and social mobility has gone. This is generating intergenerational pressures.

The nature of work is now very different. Ed Miliband has struck a chord with the cost of living crisis, and the point that if there is a recovery it's a recovery for a few.

For John, Labour needs to be bold and imaginative. There is a need to be radical, with a view of making a genuine difference. Winning power by the back door, without a clear vision, will end in misery and a Tory government in 2020.

A lively question and answer session followed with excellent contributions from the audience. Chris McGeary spoke passionately about

the need for maintain adult social care; she will be a great addition to the Labour group if elected in May.



Sam Gould - Immigration on the doorstep.

Sam was recently selected as the Romford Labour party prospective parliamentary candidate for the 2015 General Election. He is also a candidate for Brooklands in the May 2014 Council elections.

He chose immigration as the issue to discuss. This is not an area regularly debated by the left, although dominates UKIP and Conservative thinking. He was clear that Labour can win votes on this issue and should engage in the debate. Immigration was now the second most important issues in the polls (the economy being the first), and has been in the top three for almost a decade. Labour ignores this at its peril.

The country has an obligation to the poor and disposed. However the consequences are real – the number of east Europeans is considerable, and there had been examples on the doorstep of people being priced out of jobs by Polish workers who will work for lower wages.

It is therefore dangerous not to talk – the left has to shift the debate. Concerns are generally not an irrational hatred of foreigners but concerns on their impact on economic wellbeing. Labour has a strong case on schools, hospitals and jobs and needs to make sure this is heard.

The proposal that employers should employ a young British worker as an apprentice for every foreign employee would be well received.

Sam then asked the meeting to engage in the debate. A range of points were made;

- Sanchia made the point that there are a considerable number of UK nationals living and working overseas

- Others that Britain's history meant there were links with Africa, Asia and beyond that meant immigration was a long standing tradition.
- Immigrants have rights as well and the anecdotes of working for low wages, living in crowded and poor quality accommodation were plentiful

The meeting ended with best wishes to Sam for the forthcoming election in May and from there on to May 2015 and the prize of removing Andrew Rosindell as MP.

Future Meetings

17/03/2014, 7:30pm Councillor Mike Le Surf, Leader of the Labour Group in Brentwood. The subject will be "Learning Disability, Labour's concerns". The venue is the Large Meeting Room, My Place, 343 Dagnam Park Drive, Harold Hill RM3 9NE

Mike has lived & worked in Essex and is a strong supporter of working class folk being given the chance to become MPs. Mike works for learning disability charity Mencap. A campaigner for the rights of people who need extra support to reach their goals, Mike is the prospective parliamentary candidate for Labour in South Basildon & East Thurrock. Nearest Rail station is Harold Wood. Buses 174;256;294;499 & 674

08/04/2014, 7:30pm Jennette Arnold OBE, AM. London Assembly Member for NE London and former Chair of Assembly. Jennette is Chair of the Assembly's Education Panel, and will speak on Academies

There will be **no meetings in May** as there are Council and European elections to win. We will have another Newsletter before the elections which we hope will contain articles from Local Labour candidates

We recommence meetings on 10th June with **Christian Wolmar**, so far the only declared Labour candidate for Mayor in 2016. Christian is a well known transport journalist, and this should be an interesting meeting. The venue will be confirmed nearer the time.

We welcome back a (not too) old friend on Friday July 4th when **Dr. Carole Tongue** will return for another visit. The topic will be “Our Europe not theirs” which is the title of a recent book, and no doubt we will have a chance to review the lessons of the European Elections. The venue will be confirmed nearer the time.



The Society is looking to organise another fundraising dinner, after the elections are over. Please contact David Marshall if interested.

If you go to the Bekash mention you are a Havering Fabian and get 10% discount off your food bill.

Co-Op – in need of our support

We received the following via e-mail from our friends in the Co-Op.

Dear David Marshall,

*I am writing to you as a member of Labour's sister party: the Co-operative Party. I don't know how much Havering Fabians have heard **about The Co-operative Group's new [Have Your Say](#) survey**, but I am writing to you because it **poses a real threat to the Co-operative Party's future existence**. The Guardian has reported that “it appears as if a secondary objective of the survey is to prepare the ground for the Co-op Group – made up of the bank, the stores and other businesses such as pharmacies and farms – to abandon the historic link with the Co-operative Party”. Another piece in **The Guardian described this survey as “an ill-designed attempt to destroy the Labour-affiliated Cooperative Party”** Source: ‘The Guardian’ Tuesday 18 February 2014 and Monday 17 February 2014.*

As you know, the Labour and Co-operative Parties have been standing candidates together under the Labour and Co-operative label since 1927 and anything that poses such a threat to the Co-operative Party, will not be good for Labour Party candidates who are also receiving Co-operative Party support as Co-operative Party candidates. At the Half Yearly Meeting of the Co-operative Group in October, the democratically elected Co-operative Group Board members voted by an [overwhelming majority](#) to continue to maintain political engagement and support for the Party. When discussing the survey with [The Independent](#) the Co-operative Group's Chief Executive stated that “If we get an overwhelming response that says customers don't see the

*link between funding a political party, it will be impossible for us not to take action and ignore it". **The aim of this campaign is to ensure that those who believe in the Co-operative Party get a chance to make their voices heard and vote to save the Party.***

If you want to get involved then all you need to do is one or all of the following things:

1. Go to <http://www.haveyoursay.coop/> and vote to encourage the Co-operative Group to keep funding the Co-operative Party, if you experience any technical difficulties you can ring the Co-operative Group on 0800 023 4708 for help.

2. Email/Tweet/Facebook anyone you know who you think might be interested in this campaign, especially members of Havering Fabians, asking them to vote to save the Co-op Party and send them either this link to the flier it: <http://www.scribd.com/doc/209454496/Co-op-Group-Survey-Flier-Short> or a PDF of the flier (available for download from that link).

There are a few times in history when what you do now can be something that impacts politics for a long time to come, I hope you'll join me in this campaign to ensure that this is a moment we can be proud of.

Yours in co-operation,

Kat Rose



We value your input!

The Society invites speakers on a range of subjects; if you would like us to invite speakers on a particular subject let us know and we will try to oblige.

The Society has a policy of rotating meetings around the Borough; if you need or can offer a lift or if you know of any suitable venues we could use, contact David Marshall.

Local Fabian Society Contacts

Chair Councillor Keith Darvill	Secretary David Marshall	Contact David Marshall
Membership Secretary		31 Vicarage Road Hornchurch RM12 4AS 01708 441189 david.c.marshall@talk21.com
Vice Chair Mike Flynn	Treasurer Dave Baldock	
Committee Members		
Cecile Duerinckx	Ed Glasson	Sanchia Alesha
Wilf Mills	Ian Carnochan	

Future Editions

The next edition will be published in April and focus on the Borough and European elections.

Jennette Arnold has promised an article on the effect of the government reductions on the BME community, Sanchia will update us on the European campaign, and there will be a focus on the Labour Party proposals for the elections in Havering

Contributions to the newsletter are always welcome. The Fabian Society exists to promote progressive ideas from within and outside of the Labour movement.

As such we are happy to publish articles in keeping with this broad ethos, but reserve the right not to include all or part of any material which falls outside of this parameter.

Links

The following links should be useful in keeping up with the debate in the Labour movement

National Fabian Society www.fabian-society.org.uk

The Labour Party www.labour.org.uk

Jon Cruddas MP for Dagenham www.joncruddas.org.uk
Twitter @joncrudasmp

Barking Labour Party www.barkinglabour.org.uk/
Twitter @barkinglabour

Romford Labour Party www.romford-labour-party.org.uk/
Twitter @romforlabour

Hornchurch and Upminster Labour Party
Website <http://hornchurchandupminsterlabour.org.uk/>
Facebook Hornchurch-Upminster-Constituency-Labour-Party
Twitter @HULabour

Tribune www.tribunemagazine.org
Twitter @Tribunemagazine

Hope not Hate www.hopenothate.org.uk
Twitter @hopenothate

Thames Chase Community Forest
Twitter @Thames_Chase
<http://www.forestry.gov.uk/website/recreation.nsf/LUWebDocsByKey/EnglandEssexNoForestsThamesChaseCommunityForestTheThamesChaseForestCentre>

John Biggs GLA Member for City and East London
john.biggs@london.gov.uk or join his mailing list
biggsnews@london.gov.uk
His website is www.johnbiggs.org.uk
Twitter @JohnBiggsAM

Havering Fabian Society is affiliated to

- National Fabian Society
- Dagenham and Rainham Labour Party
- Romford Labour Party
- Upminster and Hornchurch Labour Party
- Barking Labour Party



Havering Fabian Membership

To join Havering Fabian Society, please complete the following and send to David Marshall. You can also join the Society nationally, David has more details. You do not have to be a member of the Labour Party to join Havering Fabians, but you will need to be a Labour Party member to take part in Labour Party selections and elections.



This is the 16th edition of the newsletter. Previous editions are available, please get on touch if you want a copy; all are available via e-mail.

Havering Fabian Society

Founded in 1974, the Society promotes progressive political thought in Havering and beyond. Membership of the Society is not necessary to attend meetings, and neither is membership of the Labour Party.

However, to participate in nominations to the Local Labour Parties or in selection conferences, membership of both is required. The Society meets regularly throughout the year, apart from the summer and during election campaigns. Local Membership is currently £10 waged, £5 unwaged.

I\ we wish to join Havering Fabians

Name

Address

.....

.....

.....**postcode**.....

E-mail.....

Phone number

Waged (£10) unwaged £5