

Gordon Nardell's Report to TGWU ACTS 1/1148 Branch from Dulwich & West Norwood CLP and Southwark Council - 13 March 2007

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DaWN AGM 15 February 2007

Many thanks to the Branch for nominating me as DaWN's Party Conference delegate. I'm afraid I lost to a member of one of the Lambeth branches by a 21 votes to a respectable 15. I'll do my bit between now and Conference to ensure the delegate is mandated to support policies that coincide with those of the TGWU.

There were two items of business immediately after the AGM:

- *Trigger ballot for Labour candidates for London Mayor and Assembly elections.*
Above local council level, the Labour Party's selection procedures involve a "trigger ballot" that favours the incumbent. Members decide whether to rubber-stamp the office-holder or hold an open selection process. This makes it very difficult to win an open selection, because the argument is always that if we don't rubber-stamp the incumbent it'll look like a vote of no confidence. The incumbents on this occasion were Ken Livingstone, Southwark/Lambeth Assembly member Val Shawcross, and three Labour list Assembly members. I always vote for open selections as a matter of principle—even for Ken Livingstone, the incumbent Labour Mayor. But the "it'll look like a vote of no confidence" argument won the day. So there will be a selection process only for the non-Labour held Assembly seats.

The Labour Party rules desperately need changing so open selections become the norm not the exception. That would enable us to achieve greater diversity, especially at Parliamentary level. The 5 MPs for Southwark and Lambeth (4 of them Labour) are all white professionals. Under the present rules, there is no hope of changing that until someone steps down. The merged union will have considerable weight in the Labour Party and should throw it behind a rule change.

- *Motions* - the GC passed by majority a motion opposing Lambeth Council's funding decisions, esp. to charge for adult social care. It also overwhelmingly passed a motion, moved by Maria Exall of CWU and seconded by me, supporting the Agency Workers Bill and and Trade Union Freedom Bill. Both Bills fell on 2 March when they were talked out by Minister Jim Fitzpatrick, a former FBU NEC member.

Southwark Council

- **Peckham murders:** the fallout continues. My Labour colleagues and I are trying to deal with a residue of fear in the community and help local people find a way forward. Like Lee Jasper and others, I don't see the John Reid line of lowering the age at which mandatory prison sentences for firearms offences bite as the solution. The challenge is to keep children out of gang culture and criminal activity in the first place. Life chances for young people in Peckham are poor, as are youth facilities. We're arguing for serious investment in education, jobs and recreation/leisure provision in the area. The Council budget, set by the LibDem/Tory majority last month, makes little contribution to these things.
- **Policy on local economy and regeneration** I'm a member of a working group set up by the Labour Group to develop local policy on economic activity, esp. how we use

the Council's procurement powers to benefit small, and in particular BME-owned businesses in the Borough. At the moment, a disproportionate amount of supplies of goods, works and services are undertaken by large, non-local companies. We're inviting the TUs to participate. The branch is welcome to contribute any thoughts it has.