



Diane's leadership bid gets ASLEF support

After meeting with all five of the Labour leadership hopeful's, ASLEF's Executive Committee chose Diane Abbott as their preferred candidate. Diane was the first black woman to be elected as an MP and the first person from an ethnic minority to stand in a Labour Leadership contest. Here Diane talks about her background and beliefs ...

A BELIEF in equality is one of the founding principles of the Labour movement. The trade unions were set up precisely to bring about fairness and more equality between workers and their bosses. The right to vote is one thing, but to have anything approaching genuine equality at the workplace, workers have to be able to organise collectively.

So I am proud to say that equality is at the heart of my campaign for the Labour leadership. In the workplace the Tory anti-trade union laws have turned the clock back in relation to equality between workers and bosses. I am the only candidate calling for amendments to the legislation to make them fairer in a range of ways including: putting an end to vexatious injunctions; stopping employers halting strikes because of unintentional breaches of the rules (which

would not have affected the ultimate result of the ballot; stopping employers from sacking workers who refuse to cross picket lines and generally creating a level playing field.

In the 1990s, I was an equalities officer for the ACTT, a film technicians' union which has since merged with BECTU. I worked, not just with lay equalities officers in my union but with equality officials in a range of other unions. By doing that job I learnt how crucial the role of trade unions is in ensuring equality in the workplace. Left to themselves employers will pay lip service to equality. Only by organising together can workers ensure the implementation of practical policies that will give workers genuine fairness and equality.

I am also a long-standing campaigner for more equality for women. The essence of the

equality for women that I believe in is that ordinary women should have choices. So I opposed New Labour when they cut benefit for single mothers. This was a move designed to force single mothers into work.

I am all for single mothers working if they wish to and I would give them every encouragement and support. I think affordable childcare is particularly important. I myself went back to work when my son was eight days old. But it is tough being a single mother. And I do not see why working class mums should be forced out to work stacking shelves whilst middle class mums are applauded for staying at home with their children. I also believe in a women's right to choose and lead an (ultimately unsuccessful) campaign in Parliament to extend abortion rights to Northern Ireland.

I think that public sector provision of some vital services helps to create a more equal society. Public provision means more equal access. For that reason I have opposed the increasing privatisation and "marketisation" of the Health Service. It is sad, at a time when the Americans are trying to move away from unrestrained free market medicine, we are seeing the Coalition government making it easy for American private providers to move into health care in Britain. It is because I believe that the market is not always the answer that I strongly support bringing the railways back into public ownership. This is the right policy but it's also a very popular policy. When polled, the majority of the public support it.

New Labour has many magnificent achievements to its credit. In my part of East London they built five new schools and poured millions into my local hospital. But under New Labour we saw the emergence of a political class which was increasingly cut off from ordinary people.

The expenses scandal emphasised the sense of a privileged elite. Before I stood in this contest all the candidates were part of a Westminster inner circle. They had all been policy advisors in the Blair years, all socialised together, played football together and had all been parachuted into safe seats. They are very nice and very talented. But I am standing to show that ordinary men and women from a range of backgrounds can dare to aspire to lead our party.

My parents were from rural Jamaica, They both left school at 14. They would be incredibly proud of the fact that I am a contestant for one of the highest positions in the land. But they would also be proud of the Labour movement that made it possible.

I am grateful to ASLEF for its support. And I intend to make the case for a more equal and just society throughout this election and beyond.

17TH BLACK WORKERS CONFERENCE 2010

23-25 APRIL 2010, LIVERPOOL

THIS year's conference was held in the BT Convention Centre in Liverpool. The theme for this year was Solidarity is our Strength. Attending conference was Brother Floyd Doyle, District 5, Brother Pat Blake, District 8 and Brother Paul Patmore, District 2. We were also joined by Simon Weller and Lee James from Head Office. There were a total of 30 unions present and 226 delegates.

The opening address to conference was made by Collette Cork-Hurst this year's Chair. She extended a warm welcome to all the delegates attending conference. She spoke of the influx of migrant workers into the UK, crime within our inner cities, gun and knife crime and the affect it is having on ethnic people in these communities. She also went on to speak on the forthcoming elections and to say it was down to us as trade unionists to encourage young black people to join their union and become more active.

The first guest speaker was Frances O'Grady, Deputy General Secretary of the TUC. She spoke on the exploitation of migrant workers both by the private sector and traffickers. She also called on the trade union movement to continue to battle against racism, homophobia and xenophobia. She hinted that she did not think judges should get involved in strike ballots, the affects unemployment is having on the black population and the lack of minorities in parliament, with only 15 black members.

Guest speaker Anita Coles from Liberty Human Rights Organisation spoke on the effects that the use of DNA, stop and search and ID cards have on people from the minorities. The law says that stop and search can only be done in a designated area, this covers all of London. DNA can be kept for 6 years even if the person is innocent.

Dougie Rooney, TUC President said we should continue the fight against discrimination on grounds of race, colour or sexual orientation. You can die for your country but don't ask for promotion if you are in the Armed Forces or the Police if you are from the minorities.

Brother Pat Blake supported motion 15 on membership of political parties, a conference motion from the FBU. He spoke about the reasons why and the hurdles ASLEF had to overcome to expel a member of the BNP from our union. He sent a clear message that we and all other unions should have the right to expel members of the BNP and all other fascist, racist organisations.

ASLEF's motion to conference 'When I am older I want to be' was presented to conference



'ASLEF delegation with Leroy Rosenoir from Show Racism the Red Card'

by Brother Floyd Doyle. Members of the BME community have been very successful in the areas of sport and music but when it comes to media, politics, law and even trade unions high profile BME faces are few and far between. He called on the General Council to launch a campaign in schools and colleges highlighting high profile BME achievers in the fields of politics, law, media and business to show student opportunities do exist.

Conference also held a workshop session where delegates could split and debate one of four topics; financial inclusion, pensions and the black community, the Equality Act 2010 and Show Racism the Red Card. Delegates from ASLEF were given a frank and interesting presentation from ex-football player Leroy Rosenior. He spoke about his early career and the amount of abuse that he and fellow black players received from the terraces.

An emergency motion on Haiti by the FBU which was fully supported by conference called on the Race Relations Committee to develop and sustain a productive relationship with the Haitian trade unions through international links and commit to secure resources for the aid effort.

Congratulations should be given to Brother Floyd Doyle on being re-elected to the TUC Race Relations Committee.

The conference evening social took place on the Saturday night and was organised by the FBU. It was a lively karaoke night with all of the unions being required to take part.

Paul Patmore, BME Representative Committee National Secretary, District 2

Pat Blake, BME Representative Committee Member, District 8



Floyd Doyle taking the mic at the conference social

Tolpuddle: a good day had by all

THAT'S what everyone seemed to be having on July 18th. This was the first time I had attended the Tolpuddle Martyrs event near Dorchester and I really enjoyed it.

It's a family day with a strong presence from all of the unions, ASLEF were there with support from my own branch Northam, along with Bristol, Brighton, Kings Cross and Weymouth branches.

I also met up with National Organiser, Simon Weller, District Organiser for District 1, Graham Morris and EC Member for District 1, Marz Colombini.

There was music, entertainment for the kids (including my two) food, drink and informative stalls from other unions with wide ranging subjects from transport, teachers, retired, and Unite Against Fascism, too many to mention.

Due to a fault with the B.E.M. banner I was unable to take it on the 1/2 mile parade but I did manage to help Kings Cross with theirs so made up for it!

A good friendly mix of people from all industries, backgrounds and societies attended and I'm sure I will be there again next year. A definite date for the diary.

Ed D'Bell, BEM Representative Committee Member



ORGAN DONATION IN ETHNIC MINORITIES

In February the Blood and Transplant section of the NHS launched a major new campaign to raise awareness of the need for more South Asian and Black people to register to become organ donors.

In the UK black and Asian people are three times more likely to develop diabetes, kidney or heart disease and require an organ transplant.

Unfortunately even though the need for organs is higher than the general population these communities actually only make up 1% of those registered on the donor list. This means that people from these ethnic groups wait on average twice as long as anyone else for their life saving treatment. Time is of the essence as 3 people who need a transplant die every day in the UK and currently there are 1500 South Asian and 760 black people waiting for a donor organ.

This campaign aims to raise awareness of this situation. The NHS is doing this with community forums, faith road shows, celebrity supports and by highlighting real life stories.

By becoming a donor you could save or enhance as many as nine lives. To register simply tell your family of your wishes and then:

Visit www.organdonation.nhs.uk
Call 0300 123 23 23 Text SAVE to 84118

ETHNIC MINORITIES TO MAKE UP 20% OF UK POPULATION BY 2051

A study by the University of Leeds has predicted that ethnic minorities will make up a fifth of the UK population within 40 years. It says that the proportion of black, Asian and other ethnic minorities will rise from 8% which was recorded in the 2001 census to 20% by 2051.

The study also suggested that the population will become more racially diverse with the numbers of people identifying themselves as mixed race increasing from 1.2% to 4.2%.

To make these predictions the study examined ethnic population trends on a local scale in the UK and then used a computer model to project those trends under a variety of scenarios in the future.



BEM REPRESENTATIVE COMMITTEE CELEBRATE BLACK HISTORY MONTH

EVERY year in Britain during the month of October there are thousands of events held to celebrate Black History Month. The first UK Black History Month was in 1987 and was an initiative of the Greater London Council, although it had been celebrated in the USA for some years already.

The aims of the month are to:

- Promote knowledge of black history, culture and heritage

- Disseminate information on positive Black contributions to British Society
- Heighten Black people's confidence and awareness of their cultural heritage

In Britain the celebration of this month has continued to grow with schools taking a particularly active role.

The BEM Representative Committee are holding an event to raise awareness of this month and would like to invite all members

to attend to celebrate with them.

Speakers include Reg Davies who studied at York University and will be presenting on the history of BME workers in British Railways. There will also be a showing of a short film called 'Tracks back to the past' which has been made by BEM Representative Committee member Aaron Clapp. The film is an archive of interviews with retired railway workers with the aim of preserving history.

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**Black History Month
Reception** hosted by the ASLEF
BEM Committee

**Friday 22nd Oct
at ASLEF HQ
from 1.30pm**

**Speakers include:
Show Racism the
Red Card
Reg Davies - ethnic
minorities on
the footplate**

Showing of Aaron
Clapp's film
'tracks back to the past'

**Food and drink provided
All members welcome**

If you wish to attend please contact Head Office