

Tyne Bridge Constituency Labour Party **Parliamentary Report**

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Tyne View Primary School

I visited the school, and saw for myself the dedication, commitment and enthusiasm of teaching staff, all determined to enable each child to achieve his or her full potential. *(left with head teacher and students)*

Tic Toc Nursery



Delaval Community Primary School



Congratulations to Delaval Community Primary School (above and below) on a wonderful achievement - the school has come top in league tables showing the added value in education delivered in the country's schools. It's a triumph for the dedicated, committed staff, who have worked



so hard for so long to ensure that every child, whatever the background and whatever the difficulties, has the opportunity to succeed. A triumph for the children too, who have been so eager to learn and a triumph for such supportive parents.



Lloyds TSB Call Centre

We were all shocked to hear that the Newcastle call centre would close, and 1000 jobs would be transferred to India. I met with union officials and visited UNIFI office, to discuss their plans; I have also tabled a Motion condemning the move and asked Questions in the House.

Pensioners Forum

Jim Cousins, Joyce Quin and I met the North East Pensioners' Association in a frustrating meeting - most of the time was taken up by speeches from the secretary that MPs then had to respond to. No surprise that some present felt that they had no time to make their own points!





Parliament

Last week's **Queen's Speech** defined the battlefield on which Tony Blair seeks to win a third term by giving substance to the kind of government Labour plans to offer the electorate.

It contained 23 proposals, some uncontroversial - such as the bill that provides a safety net for members of **company pension schemes** whose employers go bust, the bill creating a new offence of **corporate manslaughter**, the **child trust fund bill**, and the **civil partnerships bill**. But many - the **higher education bill**, the bills to get rid of the final 92 **hereditary peers**, **abolish the Lord Chancellor's office** and remove the **law lords** from the upper House; **id cards**, the paving bill on the **Euro referendum**, tougher measures on **asylum seekers**, a **civil contingencies bill** that widens the government's emergency powers - are to varying degrees more controversial.

None of these are promised an easy ride in the Commons - some from the Opposition, who still have little of coherent to offer by way of serious alternatives, and others from the government's own backbenchers.

The **asylum and immigration bill** picks up on the Prime Minister's pledge to Conference to 'derail the legal aid gravy train' by setting new limits in asylum cases. More controversially, it proposes that the children of asylum seekers - whose applications have failed, whose state support has therefore ceased and who are therefore homeless and destitute - can be taken into care. It also gives the immigration services commissioner powers to investigate unqualified asylum advisers. There will also be measures to speed up the supply of **affordable homes** and the introduction of new restrictions on council house

sales. The long awaited and welcome proposal for **registration of private landlords** may help to overcome problems of anti social behaviour and deteriorating properties. There will also be '**home information packs**' in which sellers will be obliged to give vital information about the property for sale.

Proposals to introduce new **Tuition fees** for HE is controversial and many questions remain to be answered. Undoubtedly universities need more money; we accept better productivity and standards of living depend on educating more people to higher standards. Under current proposals, students would pay nothing back until they earn over £15,000 and then on a sliding scale according to salary; universities charging the full £3000 will have to provide bursaries for the poorest 40% of students. But will the £3000 scare off the poorest students, pushing them into cheaper local ex-polys? And why should the teacher or social worker pay the same debt as the merchant banker? Should we fund universities from general taxation? But then, why should the 85% of the population who haven't gone to university and won't ever, pay for the higher earning potential of those who do?

General

This last week also saw the launch of the government's 'Big Conversation' with the nation. It is a mega-consultation exercise and comes at a pivotal moment for the government - Iraq has put the Prime Minister's trustworthiness on probation for a significant portion of both our party and the people.

It might also offer the forum to ask questions about the transfer of jobs from the UK to call centres abroad - I asked the Leader of the House for an **early Debate** on the loss of 1000 jobs **LloydsTSB call**

centre in Newcastle. I also raised the question of the **local government financial settlement** and the myth that the North East has benefited from a transfer of funds from the South East. As chair of our inquiry into **coalfield communities** I visited Durham and Yorkshire communities with select committee colleagues.

This month I have attended lobbies and meetings on **tuition fees**, as well as a meetings of the **Greyhound Group**, the **Working Men's Clubs Group**, **B&Q**, **Asda**, and **Alvis Vickers**. I also chaired the **Northern Group** of Labour MPs' meeting with the **North East Assembly**.



Constituency

I visited **Gateshead's Tyne View** and **Newcastle's Delaval primary schools**, both have dedicated and committed staff and are making great strides. I was delighted to hear that the staff, the often unsung heroes of our community, for once had their achievements recognised when **Delaval school** came out top, *in the whole country*, in added value tables for primary education. I'd give an award to **Tyne View** too! Staff were equally enthusiastic and determined to do their best for the children.

And all the children were both courteous and enthusiastic.

Joyce Quin and I joined the Mayor and Mayoress of Gateshead to dig the foundations for the new **Tic Toc nursery** in the Old Fold, and to bury a time capsule made by the children themselves. The nursery is part of the council's regeneration of the area and will offer childcare as well as the chance of training.

Finally, Best Wishes to all for the coming season.

