

# Tyne Bridge Constituency Labour Party Parliamentary Report

David Clelland MP

[www.david-clelland.org](http://www.david-clelland.org)

4 November 2004



## Myson Radiators



After a slightly dodgy moment with a champagne bottle, I was delighted to formally open Myson Radiators' new production line. Together with the Mayor, I was able to see how efficiently and effectively this multi-million pound investment, by Myson and the government, turned sheets of pressed steel into radiators.



## Yes 4 the North



With only hours to go, the decision as to whether or not the Northern region has a regionally elected assembly hangs in the balance. John Prescott has been a strong supporter of regional governance for many years and he, Ian McCartney, Rhodri Morgan and others have spent a considerable amount of time in the region trying to get the message across to the voters. This month, I joined Rhodri Morgan in Gateshead at the Bus Interchange, and John Prescott on the metro from Central Station to Haymarket and

a walk in Newcastle ending in a mini-rally with voters at the bottom of Northumberland Street.

## Pathfinder Projects

I met with Jo Boaden, the Chief Executive of the Newcastle and Gateshead Pathfinder Project. Broadly, the project is now halfway through the first part of its programme and, although many of the projects undertaken so far have been small scale and low key, Pathfinder has been also to create a sound and substantial platform upon which to develop future, bigger, projects. Much of the funding so far has already had an impact upon people's lives - street warden schemes might not be big news but they help calm local tensions; property conversions in both Gateshead and Newcastle help local people move into affordable housing.



## General

With just hours to go before the results are announced, the turnout in the **Regional Assembly campaign** has been respectable if not as high as we would have hoped. I have joined in many events and delivered personalised letters around the constituency. But now that the dust has almost settled on one campaign, we must turn our attention to the next!

There will be a **General Election** next year but, as it is impossible to say when, we must begin preparations straight away. It will be a conventional poll not the popular 'all postal vote' we have become used to so it is vital that we start work now to maximise the postal vote in Tyne Bridge to ensure that all those who want to can have a postal vote.

I shall be, as always, trying to attend as many community events in the constituency as possible - including ward part meetings when Parliamentary business allows - and I hope that members will continue to keep me informed of events in their wards.

This is not going to be an easy campaign - there are issues that will be used to cloud the record of Labour's achievements, so we have got to focus on the positive.

**Iraq**, for instance, remains at the forefront of the political agenda, with the kidnap of aid worker **Margaret Hassan** and graphic illustrations of the brutality of those who hold her. And the murders of Baghdad politicians, shows what would happen to a fledgling democracy were allied troops withdrawn too soon. Whatever our views about the war we must help the Iraqis build a healthy democracy.

**America has voted** and the Bush regime goes on. I hope that Tony Blair's close relationship with President Bush can bring some new movement on the Middle East and Global Warming.



## Parliament

I have received a considerable amount of correspondence this month on three big issues before Parliament. The **Mental Capacity Bill**, the **Gambling Bill**, and the **Children Bill**.

For many, the **Mental Capacity Bill** has appeared to be the thin end of the wedge of euthanasia. Nothing could be further from the truth. This Bill specifically requires those responsible to *always* act in the patient's best interests. It allows people to refuse, in advance, certain treatments *if that is what they wish* rather than leaving it to doctors. Nothing in the Bill affects any current law relating to murder, manslaughter or suicide.

The **Children Bill** seeks to protect children from violence and abuse but the headline grabber was the clause that restricted the circumstances in which parents could use the defence of 'reasonable chastisement'. In practice, this means that parents are not allowed to harm their children but can administer a gentle smack. Whilst I understand the argument for a total ban on smacking this would criminalise parents - as well as being well nigh impossible to police.

For many, the **Gambling Bill** represented an attack on seaside amusements. Banning the 'penny arcade' when children can access gratuitous violence via computer games was a wrong headed approach and I am pleased ministers have now confirmed this will not be the case.

Whilst I have reservations about making it easier for big casino operators to set up in the UK, I applaud other principles behind the Bill - to keep gambling crime-free, protect the young and vulnerable, particularly with regard to internet gambling and ensure that the customer gets a fair deal.

Other legislation has included the **Civil Partnerships Bill** and the **School Transport Bill**.

Statements have included one about the **Tomlinson Report** - which dealt with the reform of education and training for 14-19 year olds and proposes the introduction of core skills in literacy, numeracy, communication and ICT for all 14-19 year olds, direct employer engagement in the development of vocational programmes, the introduction of extended project to replace coursework and a more academically stretching system of assessment. There will be more on this in the months ahead.

The Defence Secretary made Statements about the **redeployment of troops in Iraq**.



## Constituency

I have held the usual surgeries with nothing in particular to report.

I was glad to be asked to open the new production line at **Myson Radiators** on the Team Valley in Gateshead. The line represents a huge investment in the region not only on the part of the company, but the government too via a DTI grant - especially so since other countries were also considered as alternatives for this investment.

I was delighted, if exhausted, to join in the wonderful night at the Irish Centre that started the annual **Tyneside Irish Festival**.

I have also had meetings with **Jo Boaden**, the chief executive of the local **Pathfinder** project and with **Mike Parker**, **Director General of Nexus**, the public transport executive. Issues discussed included the recent changes to the bus services which have had such a detrimental impact on western Gateshead in particular.