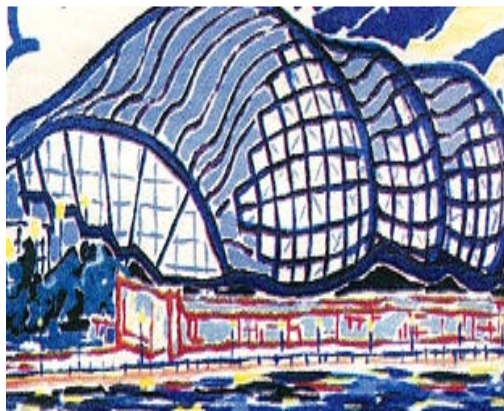


# Tyne Bridge Constituency Labour Party Parliamentary Report

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## Spring Conference

It was designed to put a spring in our step, and that's exactly what the conference at The Sage Gateshead did for Party members with good speeches from the Party leadership, and sound contributions from members. No date for the election is yet set - but there is that feeling that just maybe... The overwhelming feeling I came away with was pride - pride in the spectacular venue, pride in Tyneside and pride in Gateshead Council for fantastic organisation. The achievements of our Labour council were praised by all who attended and I have had complementary comments from cabinet ministers, journalists and grass roots delegates from across the country.



## Face the students

I appeared on the BBC Politics Show Northern slot to talk about the actual work of a Member of Parliament, and respond to questions from a group of Teesside students.

A group of sharp young people that clearly also included some budding politicians ...or journalists.



## Gordon Brown at the Centre for Life

I was delighted when Chancellor Gordon Brown accepted my invitation to visit the Centre for Life, whilst in Tyne Bridge for the Conference, to see for himself some of the incredible work that is now being carried out in the Centre's research laboratories. This is cutting-edge cell research that

may one day mean a cure for genetic diseases such as cystic fibrosis, muscular dystrophy, multiple sclerosis.

The work has been made possible by government investment, and the designation of Newcastle as 'Science City', and is being carried out by a team of young scientists from all over Europe



## Comment

The Middle East is once again hogging the headlines - but this time, for good reason as a result of the very positive conference in London, where there was just a glimmer of hope that we may, finally, be creeping towards a resolution of the Palestinian/Israeli problem and signs of slow movement towards democracy in a region where it has previously not been part of the culture.

As background to the conference, the Lebanese people have brought down the pro-Syrian puppet government; Egypt promises multi-candidate presidential elections; there are similar moves in both Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. And in Palestine, the election of the new president plus the Israeli realisation that retention of Palestinian lands is no longer sustainable, has opened up the best window for peace for decades.

Meanwhile in Iraq, over 130 people, ordinary working men and women - not occupying forces - died as a result of a car bomb. Some were queuing for a medical examination so that they could join Iraq's police and civil service, some were women and children shopping in a local market. These were people wanting to help to rebuild their country, killed by terrorists wanting nothing other than anarchy.



## Parliament

In keeping with the *'Your Family Better Off'* pledge, Trade and Industry Secretary Patricia Hewitt announced an increase in the National Minimum Wage from £4.85 to £5.05 for adults with effect from October 2005, with a further increase to £5.35 to follow in October 2006.

Predictably, some heralded this as the beginning of the economic end - just what they said when Labour brought in the Minimum Wage.

The Government also announced a major shift towards **vocational education** with the publication of a White Paper on 14-19 Education. I hope that the proposals will substantially increase participation in education/training beyond 16. This is key to Labour's goal of increasing social mobility, better economic performance and better life prospects by giving young people far more options on what to learn and where to learn - a truly comprehensive education system.

Bills considered in the House included the **Serious Organised Crime and Police Bill**, the **European Union Bill**, the **Constitutional Reform Bill**, the **Identity Cards Bill**, the **Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Bill**, the **Drugs Bill** and the **Prevention of Terrorism Bill**.

The latter is particularly contentious. I fully understand - and support - measures designed to thwart the activities of those bent on destroying our society and our values, and killing and injuring as many people as possible whilst doing so. But I was uneasy about the absence of a judicial review of the control orders that are at the heart of this Bill, and I was glad to hear the Home Secretary acknowledge this principle as the Bill went to the Lords - for further review.

I have attended the usual meetings of the PLP and the Northern Group, as well as meetings with representatives from ONE North East



## Constituency

I have held the usual surgeries with nothing in particular to report. The number of asylum seeker cases is, however, noticeably declining.

Regrettably, bad weather prevented me travelling up from London to launch the Community Radio Station at Kingsmeadow School in Gateshead as planned.

I met with the Leader, and Chief Executive of Gateshead council for a general discussion on current issues facing the council and future plans for the borough.