

Tyne Bridge Constituency Labour Party Parliamentary Report

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3 June 2005



General Election 2005



I joined fellow Labour prospective parliamentary candidates (*left*) at the launch of the Northern regional Manifesto, and (*below right*) the launch of the Party's manifesto for the cities.

But it was the workers who were key to the Tyne Bridge campaign. Without their sheer dedication and commitment, it would not have been possible to poll just over 61% of the votes cast.

(*left with some of the team*)



Geoff Hoon visits Rubb Buildings, Gateshead

I joined Defence Secretary Geoff Hoon on his visit during the election campaign to Rubb's on the Team Valley, an excellent firm that manufactures quickly erected, light-weight buildings.



Redheugh Boys Club



I met with Les Stokoe and Laurence Riley to talk about how best to develop the use of the Eslington Park sports facilities for use by the Redheugh club by some refurbishment and extending the facilities to also include social activities, open to both boys and girls, as well as the football.

Vaisakhi Celebration



I was delighted to join the Gateshead Ethnic Minorities Group at this year's Vaisakhi celebrations. As always, a colourful spectacle with delicious food - a treat during the election campaign!

Bensham Sight Service

I joined service users at the opening of the Gateshead Integrated Low Vision Service at Bensham Hospital. This is a pilot project between Gateshead Council, RNIB, the Gateshead Sight Service and Primary Care Trust which aims not to cure poor vision but to find ways to help improve the quality of life of those who suffer from vision defects



Election 2005

In Newcastle in particular, the general election campaign got off to a very good start with all three wards delivering a local newsletter just before the national campaign officially started. Once the general election campaign got going we were able to field a canvassing team every night, working in every ward in the constituency at least twice.

The decision to pay for the introductory leaflet to be delivered meant that members were freed up to canvass instead. We were able to knock on over 4000 doors, speaking directly to over 3000 households, and we sent out more than 3000 letters to voters in targeted mail-shots.

As the canvassing team will confirm, Iraq per se was not the main issue on the doorstep despite national media attempts to make it so. Far more serious was the creeping cynicism about politics and politicians in general national and local alike, asylum and refugee issues, and law and order.

In Tyne Bridge, the turnout was 49.3%, a 5% increase on 2001. The Labour vote represented 61% of the total cast compared to 36% nationally and 51% in the North East.

None of this could have been achieved without the commitment and sheer dedication of our members, many of whom turned out night after night to knock on doors, despite other demands on their time and for some, overcoming health problems too. I am very grateful to all those members who helped. As a result of their work, over the next few weeks we will now be able to write to those Labour voters identified with a view to recruiting new members to the Party.

Parliament



The central plank of our election manifesto was to provide opportunity and security for all, breaking down the barriers that stop people fulfilling their potential, extending opportunity to every corner of the UK, building strong and safe communities and doing more to combat poverty in the third world.

Bills echoing that theme were announced in the Queen's Speech at the opening of Parliament.

Picking out just a few, education remains the number one priority with the **Education and Child-care Bill** promising reforms to improve school standards and increase choice, giving parents a bigger say in their child's learning and how underperformance will be tackled.

The **Health Improvement and Protection Bill** will promote healthy lifestyles and help prevent ill-health at source. The **NHS Redress Bill** will help patients gain redress when they believe that mistakes have been made without recourse to costly legal actions.

The **Work and Families Bill** will extend maternity leave and pay, and increase parental choice in childcare provision. An **Incapacity Benefit Reform Bill** will simplify the benefit structure and offer new support to people returning to work. Housing Benefit will be reformed by the **Housing Benefit Bill**.

Back comes the **Incitement to Religious Hatred Bill** and the controversial **Identity Cards Bill**. The **Asylum and Immigration Bill** will aim to continue the fight against asylum abuse. A **Corporate Manslaughter Bill** will create a new offence of homicide when a management failure relating to health and safety causes death of an employee and the **Consumer Credit Bill** will bring new protection against loan sharks.

I spoke in the **Debate on the Address**, welcoming many of the measures, particularly the commitment to build more **affordable homes** but pointing out some of the pitfalls of shared ownership housing, and welcoming the **road safety measures** but hoping for legislation to insist that cars can only be sold with at least a nine month minimum MOT certificate. I also asked the Transport Secretary about the implications for Tyneside of the proposed free bus travel for pensioners.



Constituency

Since my last report, I have attended the **Gateshead Council Spring Flower Show** - spectacular as ever! Last month was mainly of course electioneering and I was involved in various events connected to the election campaign - the launch of the **Regional Manifesto**, for instance, a visit by **Geoff Hoon** to **Rubb Buildings** and, two days later, to St James' Park for a Labour Party rally with **Patricia Hewitt**.

I was able to be in the chamber to support newly-elected local MPs **Dave Anderson** (Blaydon) and **Sharon Hodgson** (Gateshead East and Washington West) in their maiden speeches.