

# Gateshead Constituency Labour Party Parliamentary Report

David Clelland MP

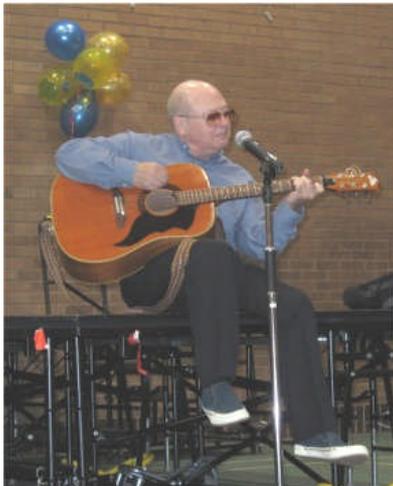
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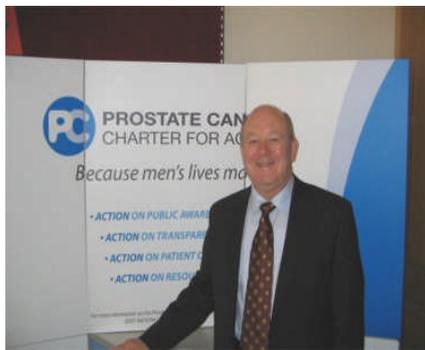


## *CAB 50th Anniversary*

The nature of the workload may have changed over the last 50 years but the importance of the advice and information offered by the network of Citizens Advice Bureaux across the UK has not. I joined Northumbrian Pipers, Indian dancers, line dancers, Gateshead College musicians, face-painters, conjurers and jugglers in a day-long entertainment to mark the 50 anniversary of the Gateshead CAB.



## *Health Matters*



## *Labour Deputy Leadership Contest*

Gordon Brown made a most inspirational speech at the weekend's Hustings in Newcastle (more overleaf), followed by all six candidates for the Party's Deputy Leadership explaining why they want the job. They are all excellent candidates, and the outcome is by no means predictable.

I have taken part in two health-promotion initiatives - the campaign to raise awareness of Prostate Cancer, a deadly killer but one which can be cured if caught early enough, and which can be spotted by a simple blood test - the PSA test - and the campaign to alert people to the danger of Peripheral Arterial Disease (PAD), another killer which affects many people in the region

(Below-taking the PAD test)

## *Who Cares for the Carers?*

I met former Miss Great Britain, Preeti Desai - herself a young carer for her mother some years ago - at the launch of the campaign drawing attention to problems faced by the UK's six million people caring for frail, ill or disabled family members or friends. A caring responsibility can have an immense impact on the carer's health, finances, career and relationships but this week highlights the support and services available to help ease the burden of caring.



## *Free Cash Machines*

I joined Finance Minister Ed Balls, and John McFall MP, ATM Working Group chair, at the launch of the deal with banks to introduce 600 non-charging cash machines in High Streets in low income areas. Let me know if you can suggest a location in Gateshead for one of these 'free cash' machines.





(Gateshead colleagues with Gordon Brown at the Newcastle Hustings)

## Comment

The Blair years, undoubtedly, have brought about improvements to the lives and living standards of the majority of our citizens and moved on the international agenda in terms of third world poverty and climate change.

**Gordon Brown** should carry on the work – but in a different way.

Yes, continue to improve and invest in the NHS, but avoiding the impression of creeping privatisation. Yes, maintain the drive to improve efficiency and effectiveness in education, but by reducing class sizes rather than the number of schools. Yes, move the devolution agenda forward, but by giving real independence to councillors to develop their own governance and management systems. Yes, tackle the housing crisis, but by returning to a council-house building programme rather than the failed free market solutions. And, work with the EU and the UN to make renewed and meaningful inroads into global problems.

People too easily forget the pre 1997 years. The millions out of work and living in poverty; over-centralised government; long hospital waiting lists and Victorian conditions; no minimum wage; no maternity or paternity leave; no pension guarantees, winter fuel allowance, free travel and TV licences for pensioners; lower educational

achievements and crumbling schools:- the list goes on...

We have much to be grateful to the Blair years for – but much more remains to be done, beginning with the rebuilding of the morale of Labour Party members and the trust of the electorate, so badly damaged by the Iraq conflict and the so called ‘cash-for-peerages’ row. It will not be easy. We have a very hostile, right-wing press determined to distort and lie not only to damage Labour but to generally undermine the confidence of the people in their system of governance.

The election of a new Leader and Prime Minister will present a window of opportunity to combat this negativism. I know that Gordon Brown will grasp the opportunity.

## Deputy Leadership Elections



After long consideration, I decided to support **Hazel Blears**. All six are good candidates but I like Hazel’s ideas to revitalise the Party and fight elections - local and general - rather than wanting to be Deputy Prime Minister. Also, like me, Hazel is opposed to PR and an elected House of Lords

As we have seen in Scotland and Wales, PR leads to governance by the minority, the tale wagging the dog and is not about ‘fair votes’ but unfair influence by minority Parties. Only Hazel and Harriet Harman have expressed opposition to PR. I also believe that a woman deputy leader would be good for the Party - always providing it is

the right woman of course. So my first vote went to Hazel and my second to Harriet Harman.

## Parliament

I took part in the Debate on the **Concessionary Bus Travel Bill** and moved amendments to the Bill in committee to address the financial shortfall it created for the Tyne and Wear transport authority. I did not push my amendments to a vote pending further discussions with ministers.

Other legislation of interest to members this month will include the Secretary of State’s revision to **Home Information Packs (HIPs)** which will now be phased in, starting with 4 bedroomed houses in August. The House also debated the **Serious Crime Bill**, the **Legal Services Bill**, the **Further Education and Training Bill** and heard a Statement from the Prime Minister on the **G8 Summit**. As always, detailed information can be obtained from my office.



## Constituency

It is with great sadness that I have to record the deaths of Party members **Steve Grant** and Councillor **Maureen Clelland**. Steve and Maureen, active Party members for many years, did their best to represent the Party’s interests and will be sadly missed.

This means another **by-election** in less than 8 months in the Dunston and Teams ward. The election will be on 5th July and the Labour candidate is **Gary Haley** who faces Conservative, Liberal Democrat and BNP contestants.

Information about the campaign can be obtained from 0191 4200300