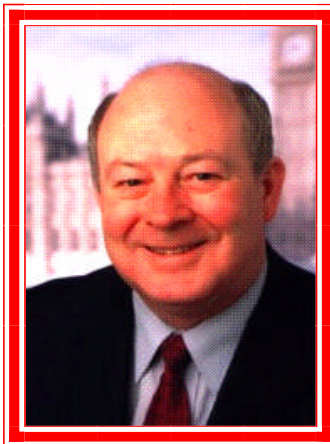


Gateshead Constituency Labour Party Parliamentary Report

David Clelland MP

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13 September 2007



Cllr Mick Henry CBE

I was delighted to be able to welcome Cllr Henry and his family to the House of Commons to celebrate the award he received from the Queen earlier that day. It's a richly-deserved award, in recognition both of Mick's unswerving commitment to the Gateshead community and to the interests of local government as a whole.

Roads Minister Visits the Region

The A1 Western Bypass' alternative role as car park may have become a sick joke, but shortcomings in the region's transport infrastructure are seriously hampering our economic development. As a member of the Transport Select Committee, I asked Roads Minister

Rosie Winterton to come and speak directly with representatives from businesses, MPs and local government about the situation and hear our proposals to rectify it - including our calls for a better public transport system.



Park Road Learning Centre

The fruit of a highly productive relationship between trades unions and Gateshead Council as employer, the Park Road centre is an excellent newly equipped training centre offering learning opportunities to adult workers. Much more than just 'up-skilling', the centre also ensures that the experience and the knowledge of skilled workers is passed on to newer employees.



Above, with Roads Minister Rosie Winterton and Nick Brown, Minister for the North East



New Community Legal Advice Centre

It was good to be able to join Legal Advice Centre (CLAC) chair, Ken Childs (above), in welcoming Legal Affairs Minister Lord Hunt to the Gateshead centre on Regent Terrace. Funded by the Legal Services Commission and Gateshead Council, and the only one in the UK, the centre provides a one-stop-shop giving specialist advice and help to people who have legal problems such as debt, domestic violence etc., as well as welfare advice.



Mayor's Garden Party

I attended the Mayor's annual civic garden party in Saltwell Park, and was delighted to be able to share in a ceremonial presentation to representatives from the Argyll Estate's Residents Association. Members of the Association, frustrated by the lack of safe play opportunities for children and youngsters, raised a fantastic amount of money to create, more or less out of thin air, a play area for young children and a kick-about area for older children. (pictured left with Residents' Association members, the Mayor and Mayoress and cllrs John Eagle, Angela Armstrong and Bob Goldsworthy.)

Comment

You know there's a shortage of real news when the lead item on all channels is the Chancellor's cat. Honeymoons never last but, generally speaking, 10 points for the start for Gordon Brown's premiership. The summer has shown him responding swiftly and effectively to the failed terrorist attacks in London and Glasgow, the worst floods since 1946, what has turned out to be two outbreaks of foot and mouth, and the effects of what appears to be an American financial trough. The new PM pulled up Labour's lead in the polls over the summer for the first time in many months. Nil points for David Cameron who, trying to steal a march on Brown's global poverty credentials, scored a massive own goal with a trip to Africa (ouch, those air miles) when his own constituency was knee-deep in flood water. Not good for a man whose party had just suffered 2 by-election defeats - Labour's **victory in Sedgfield** was probably predictable, but Tories should have done better in **Ealing**, given their hand-picked candidate and a glitzy campaign.

Since then, of course, the polls have been a roller-coaster but, generally, the public seem to have warmed to Gordon's solid, trustworthy manner and 'traditional values' - there's been a general welcome to his decision to ditch super-casinos, the review of 24 hour drinking, the re-classification of cannabis, and the announcement that he wants honours to go to those who serve their communities, all of which gives a new tenor to government.

I'm slightly more dubious about 'inclusive politics' - the Tories and Liberal Democrats who have suddenly seen the Socialist light, and 'citizens juries'- but time will tell whether these approaches lead to better lives for our citizens. The same is true of Gordon's plans for a

Party more responsive to its members' thoughts - I spend a lot of time hearing members express their frustration and disappointment that policies are developed without any real input from grass-roots members.



Parliament

However, it might well be that 'ordinary members' and other members of the community will be able to have a real say in legislation, with the announcement of a draft legislative programme just before the House rose for the summer recess.

For more than a century and a half, the Queen's Speech has been drafted inside government well away from the public arena. But this summer the Prime Minister gave a list of proposed legislative measures, and invited debate on them in both Houses as well as making provision for region-by-region deliberation and response.

Key measures include a proposal to compel youngsters to stay in **education or training until age 18**, a new **Pensions Bill** to ensure that all working people have the right to a workplace pension with a duty on employers to contribute towards it, a new **Housing Bill** to support initiatives by local authorities and other agencies to raise the annual house-building target, and a **Planning Reform Bill** to aid that process. There are also proposals for a new regime to help mortgage lenders finance more affordable mortgages. There is legislation to improve the opportunities for children in care, a Bill reforming **Child Maintenance**, a **Health Bill** that will set up **Ofcare**, a new regulator for health and adult social care, a **Climate Change Bill** which will set up a Committee on Climate Change to monitor progress and advise the government on meeting its targets; the **Criminal Justice**

and Immigration Bill, carried over from the last parliamentary session, gives police more powers to help tackle anti-social behaviour and a **Local Transport Bill** to tackle congestion, and bring in better bus services.



Constituency

Congratulations to **Sharon Hodgson** who won the Labour Party nomination for the newly created constituency of **Washington and Sunderland West**.

Whilst I doubt we will fight a general election this year, it is important that the new constituency knits together in time to be well prepared whenever it does come. I have attended some **ward party meetings** over the summer. These are valuable opportunities to get to know what members are thinking, and I shall be passing members' views on to the Party leadership. I hope to attend all Branches by the year end.

In addition to the items on the front page, I was asked by Tyne Tees TV to be a judge in the regional heats of **ITV Carer of the Year** and I officially opened a new design-to-print service, **Kall Kwick**, in Newcastle. I have met with the new **Regional Labour Party Director, Fiona Stanton** and **David Laws** and **Graeme Mason**, Chief Operating Officer and Head of Planning and Corporate Affairs at **Newcastle Airport**. I attended the **Durham Miner's Gala**, the celebrations to mark the fifth anniversary of **Baltic's opening**, the opening of new extension to the **Theater Royal** and the launch of the **Emirates Airline's** new route from Newcastle to Dubai, which virtually opens up the North East to destinations all over the world.