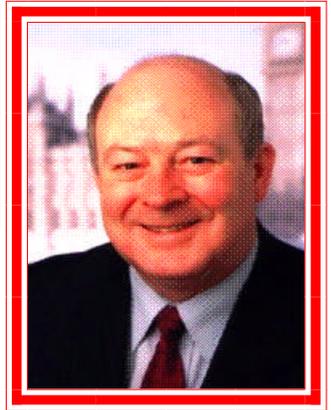


Gateshead Constituency Labour Party Parliamentary Report

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Not Flash - Just Gordon

In an excellent first speech to Conference as Leader, Gordon Brown pledged to create an aspirational society based on foundations of duty, respect and responsibility. He spelt out what he stood for in what was a very personal and sincere speech, showing that his conviction and moral compass grew out of his own experience and the values of his father's sermons. His speech was more of a steam-clean of New Labour policies - renewing what has worked so well and building on what has gone before, retaining Labour's core values and social democratic traditions - rather than a dramatic change of direction. So *let's get on with governing the UK to the benefit of our communities, according to Labour's principles.*

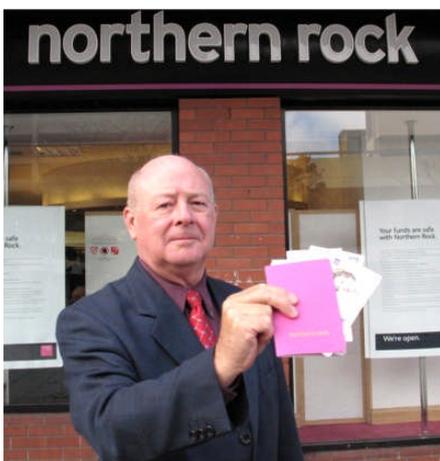


Gateshead Town Centre

Gateshead Council and Tesco have unveiled draft plans for the Town Centre and the council has published plans to develop the 5.5 acre site between the Baltic and the Sage. These two important projects promise a mix of modern shops, hotels, friendly pubs, restaurants and tourist attractions, a magnet to students and staff looking to chill after work at the new Gateshead College and the Baltic Business Quarter as well as tourists and music lovers bound for the Sage. There will now be a period of public consultation.



Looking at Town Centre plans with the Leader and Deputy Leader of Gateshead Council, Mick Henry and Ian Means



Northern Rock

The building society and bank has hit troubled times, largely as a result of the depression in the American housing market, and is now vulnerable to takeover. I've had an account there for more years than I care to remember and went along to show my support for the staff

and for the excellent charitable work carried out by the Northern Rock Foundation by putting in my cash as usual .

Landlords' Registration Scheme

To improve housing in the private sector, the Government has given councils powers to license private landlords. Gateshead is using these powers in the Sunderland road area as it has suffered from low demand and poor management of some properties, and I opened a conference, hosted by the Council, to launch the Selective Licensing Scheme

Comment

I have yet to find a 'normal' person who relished the prospect of a **General Election**. The whole thing was undoubtedly unfortunate to say the least. However, we have to get back to the job in hand. And those who criticised the decision not to go to the polls as 'putting the party's interests before the country's' completely miss the point - we believe the two are indivisible. It *is* in the country's best interests that a Labour Government continues to deliver an agenda that gives opportunities to all its citizens in education, in housing and in health care and in the running of the economy.

How can it not be in the best interests of the UK citizen to have a Government pledged to stop the waste of young people under-achieving in education by assigning a personal tutor to every secondary school child as the Prime Minister promised at **Conference**; annual health checks for everyone; the highest standards of cleanliness in hospitals - and where failure to meet those standards will result in the removal of the contract; new stop-and-search powers for police to use in the war against gun-wielding gangs; 10,000 handheld computers to be given to the police to cut paper-based bureaucracy; plans to strip licences from shops that persistently sell alcohol to the under-aged, proposals to fine parents who fail to supervise their children; support for teachers to exclude disruptive and bullying children...

Party Conferences are showcases for each party. Not surprisingly, just as Labour was high in the polls after our conference, the Tories were high after theirs. But events move on, polls are volatile and a week is a long time in politics.

Parliament

It was good to hear the Prime Minister's Statement on **Iraq** this week, setting out the detailed proposals for the political reconciliation and economic reconstruction in Iraq, for the security of the Iraqi people, the future configuration, equipment for and security of our own armed forces and about the local Iraqi staff who have supported us in our efforts. With the Iraqis already assuming greater responsibility for security, British troops will hopefully be reduced to around 2,500 in southern Iraq from next spring.

Of equal importance was the new Chancellor's **Pre-Budget Report and Comprehensive Spending Review**. While there are questions to be asked about the regional distribution of funding, nevertheless the Chancellor set out public spending and tax plans that would benefit ordinary working families. *And amidst all the rhetoric, that is the simple dividing line between Labour and the Tories - taxation, however raised by a Labour Government, goes back in investment in education, health services, children and pensioners. Tories see taxation as a way to help the rich get richer.*

Spending on the **NHS** will rise by 4%; **education spending** will rise by 2.8% a year up to 2010/11 with big jumps in spending on investment in science and business innovation; there will be additional help for families with £175 increase in **child tax credit** from next April, an additional £40 working credit to **lone parents**, and **pension credit** up by £5 a week from next April for a single person and £7.65 for a couple.

These are the important figures - the ways in which a Labour

government is helping to improve the lives of ordinary working people, not the headlines about changes in Inheritance Tax or Capital Gains Tax!

People have short memories but we should remember that it is only because we have had a strong and stable economy for 10 years that we can afford to increase the funding going to health, education and overseas aid. When the Tories were in power, inflation was nearly 10%, mortgages soared to 15% and we had 3 million people unemployed.



Constituency

In addition to the engagements mentioned on the front page, I have also attended the **North East Economic Forum**, addressed by the Minister for the North, at which I was able to raise - once again - the urgent need for investment in the region's road and transport infrastructure.

I met with representatives from the **North East Counselling Service** that offers emotional and psychological support to carers.

I have long been involved in pushing for changes to the **Carers' Allowance**. I was pleased to learn that the Minister has partly agreed to our lobbying and has increased the threshold for the Allowance, but the problem remains that earning even a penny over the threshold means carer's lose the entire allowance.

Earlier this summer, I was a judge in the regional **ITV 'Carer of the Year' Award** and last week I attended a reception at Downing Street for all the regional winners.