

Gateshead Constituency Labour Party Parliamentary Report

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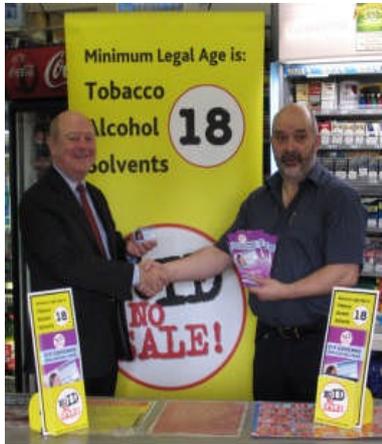
Pictured above with Omega CEO Dave Crone and 'the bottle'

Lifesaver Water Bottle

I was intrigued to hear about a plastic water bottle that will remove bacteria, viruses, cysts - indeed, *all* waterborne pathogens to instantly create safe drinking water - without the aid of chemicals - and delighted that it is produced on Team Valley by Omega Plastics. This brilliant British invention has the potential to save thousands of lives in areas lacking safe drinking water such as the aftermath of floods, hurricanes or tsunami, and will have a significant impact on humanitarian and disaster-relief operations. It is also being used by British armed forces. What is more it promises a huge expansion in operations and employment - a real win-win situation.

NO ID NO SALE

...the sign reads in the local shop on Gateshead's Chandless Estate. Part of the retail industry's campaign to help avoid illegal selling of restricted products to under 18's, the cards are widely recognised and can be obtained free for my constituents or for a charge of £9 at www.citizencard.com



Thanks Albert

Dunston Branch Labour Party organised a function to thank Honorary Alderman Albert Brooks for his many years as a councillor and all his work for the community. As his friend and colleague I was proud to be asked to make a presentation to Albert and Winnie on behalf of the branch members.



Retailers' Conference at the Sage

I was very impressed by the added conference facilities afforded to the UK Retailers conference held in the Sage Gateshead. This really showed the potential of Tyneside as a major conference venue. The 3,000 delegates were delighted with the arrangements and the venue and were part of our biggest yet national conference here on the Tyne. The opening event was attended by Sir John Hall, Alan Shearer, Jonathan Edwards and my old friend Brendan Foster.



R-L with Clrs David Bolland and John Eagle, NGI Director Andrew Dixon, Brendan Foster and conference president John Bullough



Always a moving event, this year's Thomas Hepburn memorial service was preceded on the evening before by the first annual Thomas Hepburn lecture in Gateshead Old Town Hall.

Law Centre AGM

I attended the AGM of Gateshead Law Centre along with Gateshead Mayor Cllr David Lynn and Centre Chair Cllr David Napier



Youth Parliament

And I also joined in the Gateshead Youth Parliament event held in Gateshead Civic Centre - always a well attended and lively event.



Parliament

Some pieces of legislation required finalisation before the Queen opened the new Parliamentary session - the remaining stages of the **Serious Crime Bill**, the **Legal Services Bill** and the **UK Borders Bill** for instance.

But broadly, this week's **Queen's Speech** dominated the last month, either because of the anticipation of the first Cameron challenge to Gordon Brown at the opening of Parliament or because of its content.

In the end, the Cameron challenge didn't amount to much - all the sneering insouciance and swagger that Eton can buy versus the seriousness of a Prime Minister who has put the chaos of the election-that-never-was behind him, and is now getting on with the weighty business of governing the country.

In an sense, the legislative programme set out in the speech was predictable - particularly as an outline of forthcoming Bills had deliberately been published earlier in the summer, and many of the issues - climate change for instance - are continuation of themes from the Blair government. But the tone was Gordon Brown's, with a voice for the aspirations of ordinary working people - housing and education, the NHS and security and based on his belief that the levers of government can, and should be used to engineer a more socially just society.

Gordon called it a programme for change, built upon the foundation of a strong and stable economy, with low inflation, sound public finances, high levels of employment and low interest rates. There will be legislation to better support families who work hard, and to help with the pressures all parents are under by extending **the right to flexible working**.

The **Education and Skills Bill** will give every young person the chance to stay on in education, training or work-based training until the age of 18 (I'm personally very much in support of a return to the apprentice system that used to work so well), and the **Children and Young People Bill** will bring in changes to help all children get the best possible start in life with measures to improve services for vulnerable children, and improve youth and community facilities.

The **Housing and Regeneration Bill** will help put affordable housing within the reach of the many, not just the few, and the **Health and Social Care Bill** will make changes so that the NHS meets the individual needs of patients.

The **Climate Change Bill** will make the changes needed to protect the environment by making the UK the first country to set a legally binding target to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

The **Counter-Terrorism Bill** will ensure that the police have the powers they need to protect the public against terrorism, whilst preserving essential rights and liberties, whilst the **Criminal Justice and Immigration Bill** will tackle anti-social behaviour, aim to further cut crime, strengthen our immigration laws and ensure that the criminal justice system works for the law-abiding public.

The **Constitutional Reform Bill** will change the way we do politics, with more power shared across our society and not concentrated in Westminster. We await with bated breath the real implications of this legislation. And the promised **Local Transport Bill** will return power to local authorities to give them control over local bus services and make a real contribution to improving mobility and reducing congestion.



Constituency

Picking up on just some of my engagements listed overleaf. I was delighted to be present when members of the Dunston Branch Labour Party made a presentation to **Albert Brooks**, truly a stalwart of the Labour Party and a popular spokesman for his community.

I was also glad to be able to see for myself a new British invention that is already revolutionising the way in which the armed forces supplies its front line with water - the **magic plastic water bottle**, developed and produced here in Gateshead. This could also revolutionise the way in which the world responds to disasters like the tsunami or the New Orleans' flooding, which leave people at risk from the lack of clean drinking water.

I have also attended the AGM of the **Gateshead Youth Parliament** - great to see so many young people taking democracy and citizenship seriously - and the AGM of the **Gateshead Law Centre**. I have been able to participate in the campaign to promote the **CitizenCard**, a card available to anyone, young and old alike, who needs to prove their age.

I was also able to meet **Transport Minister Tom Harris** when he visited the region, telling him once again of the absolute need to bring the Metro system up to modern standards, the need to deal promptly with the traffic congestion caused by the perpetual bottleneck of the A1 Western Bypass, and expressing my support for a scheme that would allow region-wide subsidised bus travel for young people aged 16-18yrs in full time education or training.