

# Gateshead Constituency Labour Party Parliamentary Report

David Clelland MP

www.david-clelland.org.uk

13 November 2008



## *What a Week That Was!*

It has truly been a week of change.

First the fantastic result on America that saw **Barack Obama** elected to the Presidency of America. He ran an inspirational campaign - the millions of dollars he managed to raise in 5 and 10 dollar contributions is testimony to how he touched the hearts of America voters across the country, and the huge turn-out showed how strongly he motivated habitually un-engaged voters. And secondly, a

brilliant result in the **Glenrothes By-Election!** Again, a good turn-out for a by-election - 52%. Labour won very well, polling almost 20,000 votes and increasing our share of the vote, easily beating the SNP and pushing the Tories and Lib Dems so far down that they lost their deposits.



out for a by-election - 52%. Labour won very well, polling almost 20,000 votes and increasing our share of the vote, easily beating the SNP and pushing the Tories and Lib Dems so far down that they lost their deposits.

## *Presentation to Joan Dolan*

I have known Joan Dolan for more than 30 years, as an indefatigable worker and staunch supporter of the Party through thick and thin, and I was delighted to be able to join her when she received a well-deserved long service award at an excellent social evening organised by the Gateshead CLP Womens' Section



## *BAE Systems Newcastle Apprentice Awards 2008*

BAE Systems has re-introduced the apprenticeship scheme and I was delighted to attend, and

address, the first Newcastle Awards ceremony held to celebrate the contribution that apprentices provide to the Newcastle site. I presented awards to the apprentices who had shown the highest abilities in Operations and Engineering, Lee Smith and Michael Sutherland respectively. Both the company and the apprentices can gain from this experience. As an ex-engineering apprentice myself, I believe apprenticeships offer a unique opportunity to strengthen the skill base in the local area as well as providing excellent training.



(pictured above with Lee, Michael and Steve Deehan, General Manager at the Scotswood Road site.)

## *Portrait of a Nation*

Funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, this has been a year-long programme that has allowed young people to explore their heritage and identity. Alex Dobbing from Newcastle (pictured with me left) and her friends made a series of films based on their interviews with people from all walks of life from Newcastle and Gateshead - young and old, working and students - about what 'home' meant to them. The programme culminates in a final event in December in Liverpool but can also be viewed at [www.portraitofanation.net](http://www.portraitofanation.net)



## Comment

The election of **Barak Obama** to the Presidency of the USA, and the change in fortunes of the Labour Party in the **Glenrothes By-election** made it a momentous week. Cameron's attempt to capitalise on Obama's 'vote for change' slogan was seen off decisively, with the Tory candidate losing his deposit. Obama's election was truly a defining moment in history and has the potential to bring together countries and cultures in a way that has been hitherto difficult to do. It was a breath of fresh air to see the real face of America, too often characterised unfairly as self-centred and even racist. Obama's election has given the lie to that.

I was wryly amused by the *lack* of media coverage of the **Glenrothes** by-election at the weekend. Be assured there would have been acres of typeface if we had lost! It's a significant victory - the economy and Gordon Brown's handling of the current crisis was at the front of our campaign as well as an expose of the SNP's broken promises and Salmond's actual track record. Neither the Tories nor the Lib Dems posed any real threat in the end, polling and almost laughable number of votes and clearly illustrating that voters prefer Gordon's solid experience to airy-fairy rubbish to take us through the global economic mire. The **global financial crisis** has dominated parliamentary proceedings over the last month, with regular Statements from the Chancellor on the financial markets, interest rates and, of course, the **Banking Bill**. The Bill builds on the powers used to take over Northern Rock (and needs to be on the Statute Book when the Northern Rock Bill expires February 2009) and will protect and enhance the stability of the financial systems and public confidence, protect depositors and

public funds, sets up bridge banks and includes powers to modify the insolvency procedures and allow for temporary public ownership. Incidentally, Northern Rock has now repaid more than half of its £27 billion loan.

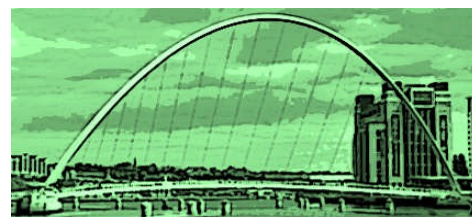


## Parliament

I spoke in the debate on the **Local Transport Bill**, and in a debate with the **Treasury Minister** in which I suggested that, if the Chancellor was thinking of capital works to stimulate the economy, much-needed improvements to the north east's major road network and local rail services would greatly benefit the economy of the region.

The House also gave final readings to the **Human Fertilisation and Embryology Bill** and the **Dormant Bank and Building Society Accounts Bill**. The latter enables the state to use funds that have lain dormant in unclaimed accounts. I argued that, as the dormant accounts most probably once belonged to elderly now deceased people, the money should be used to the benefit of the elderly. The **Political Parties and Elections Bill** was introduced. This Bill is badly in need of amendment as it currently proposes giving unreasonable powers to the Electoral Commission, completely ignoring the fact that most party workers - from all parties - are simply volunteers, doing their bit to help. I have welcomed to the House delegations from local **pensioners'** groups as well as the **Turks and Caicos Islands Premier**.

I have also met with representatives from **Responsible Retailers** campaign to help the survival of small shops, **Help the Aged, Big Lottery Fund** and **OFCOM** on the recasting of ITV local news coverage. I attended meetings of the PLP Transport  
S e l e c t C o m m i t t e e s .



## Constituency

I want to take this opportunity to clarify points about the **Metro re-energisation programme**. In July, Government committed over £320m to this programme, bringing total investment to over £400m for new ticket machines at every station (to take notes, debit cards), rebuilding of Haymarket station and refurbishment of Sunderland station's platforms, the refurbishment of the entire fleet of 90 Metros and major overhaul of all communications system, power lines, tunnels, bridges and track



To demonstrate best value is achieved, and with the full approval of the PTA, Nexus have decided to 'market test' the running of the trains and stations. Nexus is confident that it's 'in-house' bid will prevail but even if it lost Metro will still be publicly owned and managed by Nexus with any outside contractor merely providing a service under Nexus' direction. Ministers have been very clear in Parliamentary answers that the system will be best secured by retaining the capital infrastructure within public ownership and under the direct control of Nexus who will dictate fares, schedules, quality etc. *There is no secret privatisation deal.*

I attended the **Gateshead Remembrance Service** at the Cenotaph - it was good to see so many people there, honouring those who gave their lives in service of their country.