

Tyne Bridge Constituency Labour Party Parliamentary Report

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July 2006



Minister Delivered to Region

As part of the Going for Jobs Campaign, I promised to bring the Transport Minister to the region to show him exactly why and how our roads and transport system is hampering the region's economic development. I was able to deliver on that promise when Roads Minister Stephen Ladyman spent a worthwhile day with me in Newcastle and Gateshead, firstly opening the Scotswood Road improvements and upgrading, then addressing a seminar on congestion control and finally hearing the views of key regional stakeholders in a meeting I chaired at Gateshead civic centre.

Honour for Hari Shukla



I was delighted to chair the Gateshead Visible Ethnic Minorities Group event to honour Hari Shukla, recently made a Freeman of the City of Newcastle. Hari Shukla has worked tirelessly to further racial harmony in Gateshead and Newcastle and across the North East for many years and is a worthy recipient of the honour.

Benwell Hill Cricket Club



I joined Cllr Hazel Stephenson at the opening of the Cricket Club's new artificial practice facilities, funded by Sports England's Community Club Development Programme. (Club President Norman Green wielding the bat above)



SureStart Open Day

If I had to name one achievement for our Labour Government, it would be the SureStart programme that has been welcomed by all concerned. So I was impressed by the way in which the new Colby Court Fire station threw open its doors to help celebrate SureStart month by successfully hosting a Family Day for the local Westgate SureStart project, attended by about 400 people from the local community



(top left kids having fun; left with Station Manager Ged Bell)

Warm Zone Balloon Launch

We released 15,000 black balloons from the Gateshead Millennium Bridge to symbolise the carbon emissions saved by Warm Zone's insulation and energy efficiency measures in homes across Newcastle and Gateshead. (left with Mayors and Cabinet members from Gateshead and Newcastle)



Comment



Parliament

The **new shadow constituency parties** will soon be up and running. I know that many members view the re-organisation with some trepidation but it could well present us with a great opportunity to revitalise and regenerate our local parties. And Let's face it, we need it!

National polls have put the Tories ahead for the last 3 months, ostensibly as a result of Cameron's sudden rash of policies. Wrong! *We* have put the Tories ahead, and *we* have to regain the lost ground nationally and here at home.

We can turn this round. The creation of the new constituency parties offers us a great opportunity to kick start campaigning; to re-connect with our voters and to win back some of the support we've lost, frankly a far better way for party members to spend their time rather than sniping at the leadership in coded - and some pretty un-coded - attacks.

It sometimes seems to me that we, party members theoretically signed up to support for a Labour government, spend as much time as our political enemies in attacking our government which, lets face it, took 18 years to achieve!

We all sign up to the concept that social justice is completely and entirely compatible with economic efficiency, and that will remain Labour's underlying tune no matter who is singing it.

Having said all that I am sure that I can't be the only foot soldier who is getting sick of arguments amongst the generals as to who the singer should be. That particular debate has proved to be as successful in deflecting us from our plan for social justice as anything that our political opponents can come up with. Hopefully it will soon come to a conclusion and we can move on.

Fairly straightforward pieces of legislation this past month - I have some correspondence from constituents expressing alarm about the provisions of the **NHS Redress Bill**, but I was able to secure reassurances from the Minister. Constituents similarly lobbied me about the **Company Law Reform Bill**, seeking extensions to the Bill's provisions to ensure that companies act responsibly in both an environmental and social sense when they run operations in developing or third world countries. I have considerable sympathy with this view - no-one, with any social conscience, could wish to be associated with, for instance, the ways in which obsolete electronic gear is 'recycled' overseas, polluting the environment and damaging workers' health. However this Bill, which sought simply to modernise company law de-bureaucratise business, and small businesses especially, was not the appropriate vehicle. But the exploitation of desperately poor workers remains something that we must stamp out.

Other legislation included the **Compensation Bill**, the **Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Bill**, the **Children and Adoption Bill**, the **Work and Families Bill**, the **Electoral Administration Bill** and the **Charity Commission Bill**. *Please contact my office for detailed briefings on any of these Bills.*

I made several speeches in parliament this month, in particular during a debate on Local Transport Plans - an occasion that I used *again* to raise the financial shortfall in Tyne and Wear that leaves youngsters in education without subsidised travel. I also spoke in a debate on the continuing need for reform of the House of Lords. I spoke on bus de-regulation in the Transport Select Committee and I hope that the eventual report will

recommend more local control over bus services.



Constituency

In addition to the events on the front page, I have also attended the Open Day at **Bensham Grove** and met with representatives from the region's **North East digital technology industry** to discuss ways in which we can foster and nurture this growing area of the economy and to help new businesses to flourish.

At the time of writing, I am hopeful of a solution to the **Teen Travel** card problem - the transport authority had to axe subsidised travel for our youngsters to cover the costs of concessionary pensioner travel, but I have had talks with Nexus, the local government Minister and the education Minister and I *think* we might be on the brink of a deal that will enable this important service to continue.

I also met with the **Cyrenians**, and visited **Colby Court Fire Station**. I was also delighted to be able to join the **Gateshead Visible Ethnic Minorities** in a ceremony to honour **Hari Shukla**, recently made a Freeman of the City of Newcastle,

I also arranged for **Bahal Singh** and **Fahim Manzur**, from the Visible Ethnic Minorities group, to come to London to join **Keith Vaz MP** in a discussion about revitalising the Party amongst the ethnic minority communities in particular. How we laughed at their jokes about the unpunctuality of Indian and Pakistani trains - this was just before our train had to terminate at Doncaster, where we were then supposed to catch another train to Peterborough and then get a coach to yet another station where we were supposed to get a train to London along with another 800 weary passengers ...