

# Gateshead Constituency Labour Party Parliamentary Report

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## Gateshead Constituency Dinner

I was very pleased indeed to be able to welcome the Home Secretary, Rt Hon Alan Johnson MP, to the civic centre for the constituency dinner last month. He made an excellent speech, his affable and easy manner made him a success amongst all guests and - along with the magician and very good food - contributed to a very enjoyable evening. Well done to all concerned!

*(left, with Cllr Henry, Gateshead Council Leader)*



## Gateshead Carers' AGM

I joined the Mayor at the Carers' AGM, where we celebrated the vital role played in our community by carers as well as dealt with the mechanics of running the group which provides information, advice and support to carers and those for whom they care

*(right with the Mayor, Carers' Chair Jimmy Miller, vice chair Elsie Johnson and association trustee Pat Bolton)*



## Olympic Games 2012

I met with the London 2012 Organising Committee to discuss how Gateshead and business in the North East can benefit from the Games - members will recall I have been sceptical in the past - but I was pleased to learn that many local firms have already won contracts. I was also pleased to hear that more than 1000 volunteers will be trained to assist in the Games, and we're hoping that more than 200 will then be involved in the Games themselves. *(above with Olympic Gold medallist Jonathan Edwards)*

## Prince's Trust - Action for Children



Time and time again, I am so proud of Gateshead's young people and their commitment to our community. This group of young adults, sponsored by the Prince's Trust, have devoted their time and energy to raising funds for Action for Children by running a Fun Day for local children

*(left with the Mayor and members of the Prince's Trust)*

## White Ribbon Day

I was one of the Labour MPs who supported the UN international campaign to end violence against women, and demonstrated our support by wearing a white ribbon. Violence against women and girls is an obscenity, with no place in a fair and responsible Britain. We shall continue to protect and support victims and prosecute offenders.



## Driving Standards Agency Visit

As a member of the Transport Select Committee and a road user, I have long been concerned by the casualty rate amongst young motor cyclists so was very interested to see for myself the rigorous testing process operated by the DSA *(left with DSA Chief Executive Rosemary Thew and examiner Brian Brett on the Gateshead test area)*



## Comment

We are in recession - although with some signs of recovery - unemployment is up and public spending cuts to some services are certain; politics has been dominated by MP's expenses, British troops are involved - and some are dying - in a difficult and protracted war in Afghanistan, and media opinion is determined to bring the Labour government down.

Despite that, latest polls show the Tory lead dropping back. Why? Because voters' mortgages are low, there are signs of economic recovery, unemployment is not as high as everyone feared, and disenchantment with Gordon Brown doesn't necessarily translate into admiration for David Cameron.

More importantly, voters can assess very clearly exactly what Cameron and Osborne mean when they spoke about the need for drastic spending cuts and a public sector pay freeze at their party conference. Add to this, their pledge to raise the inheritance tax threshold to £1m (yet keeping the 50p tax band) so benefiting only the very well off, attacking bankers' bonuses but scrapping the main City regulator and knowing that the Tories' laissez-faire capitalism would have let British banks go to the wall in the credit crunch, with all the consequential chaos for ordinary working families many of whom are public sector workers, and use or need the NHS. Those ordinary working families who contemplate voting Tory would be turkeys voting for Christmas. There is so much at stake but, as expressed at recent ward party meetings, it is as important to emphasise what Labour will do in the future as it is to say what Labour has achieved in the past.

Which is where the Queen's Speech comes in.



## Parliament

The Speech made by the Queen to mark the start of a new Parliamentary year has been criticised by the Tories for being 'too political'. Duh, as my granddaughter would say. It would be a pretty dumb government that produced a Queen's Speech that did not have the pending general election in mind. Nevertheless it is a responsible programme aimed at continuing progress under Labour. Starting from the premise, unique to the Labour Party, that governance is a force for good, a tool by which to change and mould society and create opportunities for those who currently cannot access pathways open to others, the Queen's Speech set out a fundamentally optimistic vision for Britain.

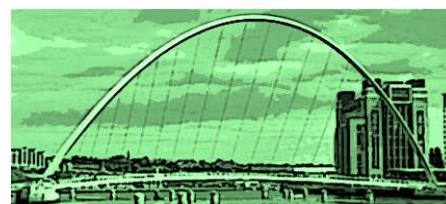
The next election will not only be about what is at stake if the Tories win, it will also be about the change we want for Britain - Labour offers opportunities for the mainstream, the people at the bottom and the middle of the spectrum whilst the Tories are offering opportunities only to the privileged few. A Tory victory is a price the rest of us simply can't afford.

So firstly, through the **Financial Services Bill**, Labour will transform the way the financial sector is policed to ensure that the banking crisis that crippled our economy will not happen again. Then, to ensure national debt returns to an equitable level, Labour will enshrine in law the Budget plan to halve the deficit in four years - the **Fiscal Responsibility Bill**. The **Digital Economy Bill** will promote targeted investment to create jobs and build a modern green infrastructure for the digital age. The **Child Poverty Bill** will enshrine the commitment to eradicate child poverty by 2020; the **Children Schools and**

**Families Bill** will further raise school standards and the **Social Care Bill** will give free personal care in their own homes to those with the highest need.

This week's **Pre-Budget Report** continued this theme while setting out measures to tackle the consequences of the world-wide economic downturn with further measures to help young people into work, and help to those struggling with mortgage payments. A tax on 'bumper' bonuses, freeze on inheritance tax, 0.5% increase in NI payments are some of the measures to raise revenue. It will also involve a tightening up on pay settlements which will undoubtedly be subject to much debate. But the upside is continued investment in NHS, Sure Start, Schools and Police.

The Tories have no credible plans and seem hellbent on looking after the wealthy as usual.



## Constituency

I was delighted to be able to attend the Gateshead Council Annual Aldermen's Dinner (*below with Leader Mick Henry and former Leader George Gill*)



It is disappointing that the Metro in-house bid did not secure the operating contract. I understand a very good deal has been struck for workers though and we can look forward to modernisation and improvement to the system.