

# News from South Western (CG) - SOMERSET BRANCH Co-operative Party

the co-operative party

## National news

At a reception at 10 Downing Street earlier this month, the Co-operative Party launched a new group for Labour Parliamentarians who support co-operative ideas and are members of the Party. The Friends of the Co-operative Party was launched by Ed Miliband MP and was attended by dozens of MPs and peers as well as representatives of co-operative societies.

As outlined in the Guardian, the Prime Minister has asked Ed Miliband as manifesto coordinator to work with the Co-operative Party and put co-operative ideas at the heart of Labour's policies for the next term. The Co-operative Party manifesto, published in September, is serving us well as we work to get support for co-operatives and mutuals.

The Co-operative Party continues to select great new Labour & Co-operative candidates for the coming election. Cathy Jamieson MSP will fight Kilmarnock & Loudon and Luciana Berger, vice chair of the Party's National Youth Committee, has been selected for Liverpool Wavertree. Gavin Shuker and Cllr Sharon Taylor were selected for Luton South and Stevenage respectively in late 2009. Our Parliamentary Group should be strengthened with people with a wide range of experiences and political backgrounds to take forward our agenda.

APRIL 2010



## Weekend School Brunel Manor Torquay 23<sup>rd</sup>/24<sup>th</sup> January 2010

Another successful weekend school with latest Party campaign theme was organised by Southwest Co-operative Party, the weather was kind, usual great venue, good attendance, chaired expertly by both Saxon Spence and Richard Tomlinson four excellent speakers over two days including Andy Love MP, Michael Stephenson (General Secretary) Doug Naysmith MP and Mark Lyonette (Assoc of Credit Unions) with much opportunity for interaction with Q&A sessions and Workshop discussion groups after each Speaker with each group report back to a plenary, a full report by delegate and Branch secretary Ian Grady, will follow soon.

### 2010 Member Subs Due

Officers will be contacting members if they have not already done so, to collect member's subscriptions that do not pay by Direct Debit. The Party Council has at recent A.G.M retained reduced rate of £10 for unwaged members and £15 full rate for members of the *South Western (CG) Co-operative Party* Branches. Other news on membership front is that due to Head Office mailing, we extend a warm welcome back to former member Brenda Henson who has rejoined.

The Co-operative Party stands for:

#### Enterprise

A sustainable economy and society

#### Empowerment

a culture of citizenship

#### Accountability

socially responsible business

## National news

Lambeth Council has announced it is to be the UK's first 'co-operative council' if Labour are returned to power at the May elections. Building on the work of many Labour & Co-operative councillors around the country over many years, Lambeth's Labour Leader, Cllr Steve Reed, has pledged to look at ideas such as an "active citizens' dividend" for those who get involved in community mutuals; tenant co-ops; mutuals for Sure Start and youth centres; micro-mutuals for care service users; and the transformation of a former school into a community hub to support this. This welcome model, already being adopted by other Labour groups, is in stark contrast with Conservative plans to slash services, hike up costs, and hand services to narrow groups, not the wider community.

The Co-operative Party is bidding farewell to three stalwarts of the Parliamentary Group at the General Election who have recently announced their retirement. Labour & Co-operative MPs John McFall (Chairman of the Treasury Select Committee), Don Touhig (Chair of our Parliamentary Group) and Tommy McAvoy (Deputy Chief Whip since 1997) will retire after a combined service of 61 years. They join David Lepper, Doug Naysmith and Ken Purchase also stepping down at the coming election.

## A co-operative agenda for local government

**With the council elections this May, the Co-operative Party has a real opportunity to increase its representation on local councils and to deliver co-operative policies at local level.**

Councillors are responsible for many areas where co-operative values can make a difference. From supporting credit unions and Fairtrade through to helping co-ops of staff and users take over services, there is much that Councils can do. Co-operative Trust Schools, energy co-ops and mutual housing schemes are all areas where councillors can make a difference.

The Co-operative Party is producing a national manifesto for local government. Locally we need to find the policies and pledges relevant to our needs.

Or visit [www.party.coop](http://www.party.coop) for more information and case studies.

**Your Officers would like to extend apologies to members for not being able to re-arrange a branch meeting due to circumstances beyond their control **Please see below****

### A.G.M and General Election

At a recent meeting your officers decided that due to pressure of time etc, that we postpone our next meeting which will be our Annual General Meeting till after General Election, subject to confirmation of venue it should take place on Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> May.

If any one would like to help in any way our branch members who are PPC's with there campaigns nearest one of course is our chair Martin Jevon details at foot of page and Andy Merryfield at Wells contact [andy.m@phonecoop.coop](mailto:andy.m@phonecoop.coop) also Kathy Pearce Bridgwater contact telephone 07732 736999 or e-mail : [bridgwaterlabourweb@live.com](mailto:bridgwaterlabourweb@live.com) or maybe help a sitting MP Ben Bradshaw at Exeter contact Eddie Lopez on 01392 424420 e-mail [eddie-labour@btconnect.com](mailto:eddie-labour@btconnect.com)