

‘Co-operative difference’ was the repeated theme – *‘build a better politics with co-operative values at its heart’*. This was echoed in all areas throughout the weekend.

Gareth Thomas MP, who has chaired the party since 2000 introduced the conference by stating that *‘we’ve had a very difficult period as co-operators...’* He reminded us that the focus, should a Labour government be returned in 2015, will be to raise the minimum wage, reverse tide of privatisation and address housing crisis. Our co-operative difference emphasising the need to place users, communities and patients back into the heart of our public services.

The following Keynote speakers addressed us and answered questions:-

Ed Balls [Shadow Chancellor] – wants to build an economy that *‘..works for all, not just the few..’*. He is working with Labour Party to ensure co-operative principles underpin proposals on health care, banking and energy reforms stressing that values and solidarity are crucial to building trust and an innovative economy, *‘we want more diversity, choice, a stronger role form mutuals...’*. Free Schools programme would be halted – school places need to be planned. Can only succeed in international market but need EU reform, to cut waste of EU parliaments and reform immigration. Conservatives have no idea of what constitutes ‘National interest..’

At present 16 shadow ministers with 11 additional candidates for 2015 + 1 Police Commissioner

Tom Rake spoke on Energy – as a prelude to Policy Paper 2

Angela Eagle MP – was optimistic of the political commitment to apply co-operative values to society. We need to publically demonstrate collective responsibility, empathy, solidarity – for the good of all.

Dame Pauline Green – 250m coops worldwide, 12% within G20, largest 330 have turnover of US\$ 2.2 trillion. 5 elements of Blueprint to Co-operative decade – Identity – participation, legal framework, access to capital, sustainability. By 2050 we will need to feed 9 – 10 billion, must build agriculture in Africa to prevent acquisition by predatory states. Coop marquee now approved for use in 82 countries

We also received reports and had the opportunity to question the following:-

Scottish Report **Johann Lamont** [leader SLP] – spoke of the importance of unity and the recent referendum. Also the need to ensure that things do move forward to ensure a united Scotland as well as a United Kingdom

Parliamentary Report **Gavin Shuker** MP gave an update on Co-operative Party Parliamentary Group – currently 16 shadow ministers

Youth Report **Kat Corrigan** growing active branch, recent Scottish debate had engaged with the young – how do we ensure this engagement and enthusiasm is maintained and developed?

Welsh Report – **Mick Antoniw** AM - £1.8m cuts to Welsh Assembly budget, will focus on 4 challenges to reflect coop V&P’s – Procurement, progress [duty to promote social enterprise], Wales Rail [not for dividend solution], devolution debate [fair funding]

Co-operative Party Ltd AGM - 2014 funding crisis, membership – we must have realistic but challenging targets, 4000 responses to the ‘listening exercise. Geoff asked 4 questions on the accounts. 6 Rule changes were agreed. 300 had replied to membership fee consultation. There was a card vote which passed standard annual rate of £36 [£33 if paid by 31/3/15], reduced rate £20pa, young members £10 pa

We each attended 2 Fringe meetings

Geoff - Renewing our Energy Market & Case for Land Tax

Paul - Can co-operative principles improve public services &

Mike –

Marlene - Putting Rail passengers and employees first & Co-operative Localism

Two Emergency Motions, TTIP Legislation and MP voting in HoC following changing of powers of Scottish Parliament and were submitted. Mike Goff proposed and organised the TTIP Motion. However, neither were discussed because of lack of time and will be taken forward by NEC for consideration.

The conference debated six policy papers which were sent to delegates and are available for you to view on-line. All the policy papers were richly debated and challenged by delegates from all regions. It was encouraging to see how our young delegates, many of whom are prospective candidates for 2015, are so knowledgeable and involved. The policy papers will be reviewed by NEC, following discussion at conference, and will then form the basis of the manifestos for next General, Scottish, Welsh and local government elections.

- Local Government and Communities – 12 participants – coop councils demonstrate cutting-edge of best practice, cost effectiveness and empowerment
- Energy and Environment - 15 participants including **Geoff Freeman** – support for local solutions, encourage personal responsibility, publically owned grid
- Co-operative Development and Consumer Affairs – introduced by Chris Herries and presented by Stella Creasy MP - 13 participants – different ideas of co-operation? Schools have learnt to share ‘best practice’, transparency of and access to information, clear statement of role of Ombudsman would empower
- Women and Equalities – 10 participants – including **Jenny Barnes** and **Flyffe** - domestic, sex and child abuse is a national scandal. In general there was a feeling that the paper had not addressed the issues, no mention of rape as a weapon of war, 10% of population who are disabled but suffering benefit cuts, no mention of mental health. The Committee accepted that there needs to be considerable work on this paper to address conference concerns.
- International Development – 8 participants – world conflict, 0.7% GDP to aid, paper says nothing sustainability, support and extension of good practice needs encouraging, labour rights, Trident £100m
- Health – 12 participants – NHS now a conglomerate, at variance with V&P’s. £b’s going into private sector. Sharing of best practice/resources, clusters of hospitals will enable engagement and greater knowledge. Devastation of top-down – not patient centred care. Break the insidious class/health link. Promote cooperative solutions, health and wellbeing clinics, value our staff. Community bodies should be required to consider cooperative solutions.

Mike Goff [Wilts&Dorset AC Delegate]

Paul Kimber [SW RB Delegate]

Geoff Freeman [Dorset Branch Delegate]

Marlene Corbey [Bath & West Branch Delegate] Party