Suggested Rule Change

Reform to the selection procedure for Westminster Parliamentary Candidates

The Labour Party Rule Book 2017 Chapter 5: Selections, rights and responsibilities of candidates for elected public office; Clause IV Selection of Westminster parliamentary candidates; subclauses 5 and 6 read as follows:

"5. If a CLP is represented in Parliament by a member of the PLP:

A. If the sitting MP wishes to stand for re-election, a trigger ballot will be carried out through Party units and affiliates according to NEC guidelines. If the MP wins the trigger ballot he/ she will, subject to NEC endorsement, be selected as the CLP's prospective parliamentary candidate.

B. If the MP fails to win the trigger ballot, he/ she shall be eligible for nomination for selection as the prospective parliamentary candidate, and s/he shall be included in the shortlist of candidates from whom the selection shall be made.

C. If the said MP is not selected as the prospective parliamentary candidate s/he shall have the right of appeal to the NEC. The appeal can only be made on the grounds that the procedures laid down in the rules and the general provisions of the constitution, rules and standing orders have not been properly carried out. The appeal must be received by the NEC by the date on which they consider endorsement of the parliamentary candidate for the constituency.

D. When there is a formal announcement of a royal proclamation to dissolve Parliament before the trigger ballot or the constituency selection meeting(s) have been held, the provisions of this clause (other than this paragraph) shall be suspended and the said MP shall be reselected as the prospective parliamentary candidate, subject to NEC endorsement.

E. If the MP has intimated her or his intention to retire, the provisions of this clause shall not apply.

6. In all circumstances (i.e. where there is no MP, where the MP has announced s/he is retiring or where the MP is putting themselves forward for re-selection but has failed to win the trigger ballot) the CLP Shortlisting Committee shall draw up a shortlist of interested candidates to present to all members of the CLP who are eligible to vote in accordance with Clause I.1.A above."

Closing date for constitutional amendments: 7 July 2017

Amendment

Replace Clause IV.5 and IV.6 with the following:

> *"5. Following an election for a Parliamentary constituency the procedure for selection of Westminster Parliamentary Candidates shall be as follows:*
>
> *A. If the CLP is not represented in Parliament by a member of the PLP, a timetable for selecting the next Westminster Parliamentary Candidate shall commence no sooner than six weeks after the election and complete no later than 12 months after the election.*
>
> *B. If a CLP is represented in Parliament by a member of the PLP, then a timetable for selecting the next Westminster Parliamentary Candidate shall commence no sooner than 36 months and complete no later than 48 months after the election. The sitting Member of Parliament shall be automatically included on the shortlist of candidates, unless they request to retire or resign from the PLP.*
>
> *6. The CLP Shortlisting Committee shall draw up a shortlist of interested candidates to present to all members of the CLP who are eligible to vote in accordance with Clause I.1.A above."*

Consequential amendments to be made elsewhere in the Rule Book where the 'trigger ballot' is mentioned.

Proposed: Frederick Gent

Seconded: Jonathan Clyne

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Supporting argument

5.A:

We need to ensure candidates are in place in case of by-elections or snap elections, and to allow the candidate time to spend getting to know the CLP, the local issues and joining local campaigns. The timetable should be sufficiently flexible to ensure adequate time for political reflection following a defeat in the constituency, while responsive enough to get the campaign up and running early.

5.B:

a) Most members interact with the broader electorate daily. It consists of their family, neighbours, and workmates. Members know what they think and can reach them with convincing arguments. Many in leading positions acknowledged after the 2017 General Election that they were out of touch, and this must be respected. Mandatory reselection will prevent future mistakes, and the internecine strife these mistakes resulted in. Necessary differences of opinion can be discussed freely, without being institutionalised in inflexible unrepresentative structures. Our Party can unite in a common struggle to improve society.

b) Being an MP was never a job. It is about democratically representing the electorate, and leaving when one no longer does that. The general election in 2015 showed there are no safe Labour seats (see Scotland), the 2017 election that there are no safe Conservative seats (Kensington and Canterbury). The Labour party can no longer afford to have any MPs, who drift away from being representatives. Mandatory reselection is the most effective way of ensuring that.

c) Mandatory reselection reduces the perception that reselection is motivated by hostility towards a sitting MP. By normalising the practice for all, including the most popular MPs, reselection is an opportunity for candidates to defend their record, outline their vision and debate alternatives with their membership. Most sitting MPs should easily win reselection, strengthen their position and increase their support within the CLP. It is an opportunity for the CLP to discuss policy and priorities and to develop a local strategy on which to campaign.

d) The weakness of the present reselection procedure is that it exhausts members, who can only contribute to election campaigning in their spare time. It shifts the balance of power to those who can use their work-time to campaign. It is as if one would first have a referendum (without universal individual suffrage) to see if a majority wants a general election. If anybody attempted to introduce such a system, it would be understood this puts a ball-and-chain on democracy. Mandatory resection would remove this hindrance to full democracy within the Labour party, and thereby in society as a whole.

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