

Science Matters

Science Matters

No. 32

AGM 2007

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Look out for the special
Conference edition of
Science Matters:

Scientists for Labour,
Stephen Keevil,
Imaging Sciences
King's College London
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www.scientists-for-labour.org.uk

Honorary Patrons

Sir Tom Blundell
Mrs. Anne Campbell
Dr Ian Gibson, MP
Sir Paul Nurse
Lord Martin Rees
Lord David Sainsbury

Scientists for Labour



SfL AGM

The 2007 Annual General Meeting of Scientists for Labour

Science and Europe

Tuesday 10th July, 2.00 pm

Committee Room 21 the Houses of Parliament London SW1A 0AA

Keynote speaker:

Malcolm Wicks
Minister for Science
and Innovation

“Science has never been
more important to the
future of our country”

<http://www.dti.gov.uk/about/dti-ministerial-team/page8411.html>



Also speaking: DR Martin Yuille
Director UK DNA Banking Network at the The Centre for Integrated
Genomic Medical Research, University of Manchester.

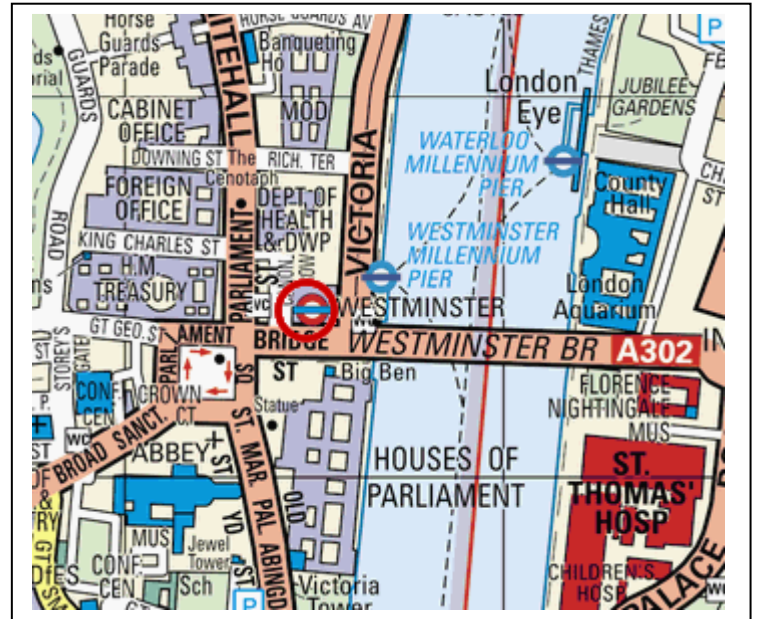
<http://www.medicine.manchester.ac.uk/cigmr/>

If you have nominations for the Executive Committee please contact
the Secretary, Stephen Keevil. Contacts page 4.

How to get to the Houses of Parliament

Nearest Underground: Westminster
Please use the public entrance.
Be prepared to go through security checks.
It is possible that a different committee room will be made available on the day.

Conference room 21 has been booked by
Martyn Jones MP for Clwyd South
You may need to quote this information at the
security check at the front entrance.



Chair's report

This year ends with change taking place imminently at the top of the Labour Party, and for the first time Scientist for Labour membership is taking part in an election. So many thanks to our secretary, Stephen Keevil, for looking after these arrangements. In fact much of our effort this year has been made easier as a result of SfL being part of the group of affiliated Socialist Societies. We are kept well informed of opportunities via Diane Hayter, the Labour Party Socialist Societies Executive's secretary, Simon Wright, and our representative, David Caplin. So I would like to start by thanking those responsible for gaining SfL affiliated status a few years ago, as I see us getting real benefit from this. It's also worth noting that our opponents would dearly like to have such a network of voluntary think-tanks embedded in their party structures.

There has been change too in Science Minister with Lord Sainsbury retiring November last year after an unprecedented period of stability for this office and an impressive performance successfully promoting science within our Government. As an organization I think we should recognize his contributions here. The role that science plays in the Labour Party and the support science receives in Government has moved forward a long way since 1997. Nowhere was this more in evidence than at the 2006 Conference, which I attended as SfL delegate.

I last went to Conference a decade ago: then you jumped up in amazement at the one occasion you heard the word "science," now the word (but probably not yet the meaning) flows freely from the mouths of a myriad of politicians and party activists. Alistair Darling covered 20% of his speech on aerospace, car industry, science budget, stem cells, nanotechnology, Energy technology Institute, climate change, modern facilities for scientists in universities, audio & imaging research from Edinburgh Univ. and fuel cell research from Imperial College. Professor Martin Rees, one of our members, was even featured on the platform describing the science of climate change via a powerpoint presentation: whereupon my mind flashed back to all those endless resolutions and the tedious compositing process.

Progress has been made yet we still have a long way to go to improving the accurate representation of science among politicians and the wider public. I think too that we need to be careful that scientists themselves are well represented in high profile scientific debates and do not become marginalized by others' views of the significance of their work. This was brought home to me as I appeared to be the only scientist (or delegate for that matter) attending a fringe meeting on "Science and the Media" where 50 journalists and PR people for industry and charity groups debated how and why the public didn't understand or believe their science-based explanations.

We have held two special topic meetings this year: "Science and Overseas Aid" at last year's AGM led by Hilary Benn and "Science in Schools" as a Fringe Meeting at conference. At the first we debated the balance between the need to boost agricultural research at the most exciting time for agricultural science in Africa for many years stimulated by the Maputo and Gleneagles declarations and the need to make technology work for the poor via enhanced citizen engagement.

We must thank Paul Connell for organising the fringe meeting debating "whether current and proposed changes to the way school students learn Science will lead to a more scientifically literate and competent workforce." Science still is not yet a strong magnet for conference delegates and the attendance was fewer than we hoped, nevertheless we had a very stimulating discussion, established a professional network for this issue, and were filmed, or rather Ian Gibson was, as he had a cameraman in tow filming his overall contribution to conference.

However, like the Labour Party at large, Scientists for Labour is suffering from the need for some regeneration. We have talked in recent years about the need to rejuvenate our membership base, which incidentally has been very loyal since our formation in 1997. I think this is our most urgent priority in 2007. Now that we have reached a time when politicians really do want to hear our views, we need much more active participation from many more members to take advantage of the opportunity.

We look forward now to working with the new Science Minister, Malcolm Wicks, who has kindly agreed to speak to us after this year's AGM. He indicated at our initial meeting in March that he saw the science brief as championing science, and assuring science's place within the government's long-term strategy, and he has welcomed the involvement of SFL in the on-going dialogue.

Some useful Web connections

The European Research area, part of the European Commission

http://ec.europa.eu/research/era/consultation-era_en.html#greenpaper

There is a lot of European science in the latest edition of "The Parliament" magazine.

"Sustainable fuels and lubricants for improving engine efficiency: Development of a pan-European Research Network" (found on page 43) will be mentioned at the AGM.

http://www.theparliament.com/NR/rdonlyres/D81DEBD1-C67D-44E2-8347-1D3842174AF1/0/parl_4jun07_full_mag.pdf

NOTICE OF Sfl ANNUAL MEETING

The annual meeting of Scientists for Labour will take place in Committee Room 21 the Houses of Parliament London SW1A from 2.00 pm until 5 pm on Tuesday, 10th July 2007. The room is booked in the name of Martyn Jones MP. All members are cordially invited to attend. Non-members will be made most welcome.

2.00 pm: AGM

1. Minutes of 2006 AGM (available at www.Scientists-for-Labour.org.uk)
2. Matters arising
3. Chair's Report
4. Secretary's Report
5. Treasurer's Report
A full treasurer's report will be available at the AGM.
6. Editor's report
7. Report on Socialist Societies
8. Election of EC members (nominations to Stephen Keevil)
9. Future strategy and activities
10. AOCS

2.45 pm Science and Europe Chairs introduction

3.00 pm Malcom Wicks MP

other speakers to be confirmed.

A short meeting of the EC will take place to appoint office bearers

- a. Chair
- b. Vice Chair
- c. Treasurer and nomination of auditors
- d. Secretary
- e. Membership Secretary
- f. Editor of Science Matters.
- g. Webmaster
- h. Rep on Socialist Societies Committee
- i. Ratification of Conference delegate

'Science Matters' is the newsletter of Scientists for Labour, a Socialist Society affiliated to the Labour Party.

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