

Science Matters

Science Matters

No. 36

Labour Party

Conference 2009

The AGM of Scientists for Labour

Committee Room 6

House of Commons

1 pm Tuesday 27th October 2009

Followed by

"Priorities for Science Funding"

with Prof Sir Tom Blundell,

Lord O'Neil, Nigel Titchen,

Brian Iddon MP

Scientists for Labour

Secretary Paul Connell,

2 Redwood Close

Ross-on-Wye

Herefordshire

HR9 5UD

www.scientists-for-labour.org.uk

Patrons include:

Prof Sir Tom Blundell

Sir Paul Nurse

Lord Martin Rees

Lord David Sainsbury



Science Matters No. 36 conference

Scientists for Labour



"The future competitiveness of this country depends on the excellence of its science."

Lord Mandelson, Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills, says that the new department for Business, Innovation and Skills will put science at the centre of the Government's economic recovery plans for a prosperous, sustainable future.

"The world is on the edge of a new industrial revolution that's driven by new technologies and the world's shift to low-carbon. Our ability to maintain and develop our strong science base through both applied and a substantial element of fundamental curiosity-driven research will be essential to our long-term economic success."

We can build on the success of our world-class universities and further education system to equip our people for a lifetime of opportunity in a competitive global economy.

Over the last ten years, we've worked hard to boost our science base. Our science and research budget has more than doubled in real terms

<http://www.scientists-for-labour.org.uk>

Contents

Notice of AGM	Page 8
Prof Sir Tom Blundell	Page 3
Barack Obama's boost for Science	Page 7
What Labour has done for Science	Page 4
Profile on Lucy Powell	Page 6

Scientists for Labour AGM

The AGM of Scientists for Labour will take place in

Committee Room 6 at the House of Commons

1 - 4 pm

Tuesday 27th October 2009

AGM 1.00 pm

Presentation and meeting "Priorities for Science Funding"

with Prof Sir Tom Blundell, Lord O'Neil, Nigel Titchen, Brian Iddon MP 2.00 pm

The meeting is expected to end at 4.00pm

What are the Science funding priorities for a period when the country is coming out of recession?

How do we get the applied / fundamental research balance right?

Professor Sir Tom Blundell FRS, Chair and former Chief Executive of the Biotechnology and Biological Science Research Council, Sir William Dunn Professor of Biochemistry at Cambridge University, President Biochemical Society, Sfl patron.

Lord O'Neill of Clackmannan, member of the House of Lords Science and Technology Committee which has recently announced an inquiry into setting funding priorities for scientific and technological research.

Nigel Titchen Vice President of Prospect.

Introduction and welcome from Brian Iddon MP for Bolton South East. Member of the Commons Science and Skills Committee, Editor "Science in Parliament, stalwart supporter of SFL in Parliament.

Professor Sir Tom Blundell appointed new Chair of the BBSRC



MPs from the Innovation, Universities, Science and Skills Select Committee recently approved the appointment of Professor Sir Tom Blundell as the new Chair of Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC).

Professor Blundell, who is the Sir William Dunn Professor of Biochemistry, Head of the Department of Biochemistry and Chair of the School of Biological Sciences, is expected to take up the appointment on 1 July.

The BBSRC funds non-clinical bioscience and is one of six research councils funded through the Department for Innovation for Universities and Skills. It supports research into plants, microbes, animals and biological tools and technologies.

It is governed by a council comprising the Chair, the Chief Executive and up to 18 other members. The Chair holds 'overall responsibility for the governance and direction of the Council which in turn is responsible for the BBSRC's overall strategy.

Following positions at the Universities of Oxford, Sussex and Birkbeck, Professor Blundell entered science administration as Director General of the Agricultural and Food Research Council, the forerunner to the BBSRC, in 1991. After the formation of the BBSRC in 1994 Professor Blundell became its first Chief Executive, a post he held until 1996. He also chaired the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution between 1998 and 2005, producing reports on energy and climate change, the marine environment and other current environmental concerns.

His own research explores the relationship between molecular structure and biological function and diseases such as cancer. This research has led to the design of various new drugs and co-founding of Astex Therapeutics.



Prospect Vice-president: Nigel Titchen

Nigel for the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC) as a research scientist. He sits on the following committees: Equal Opportunities; Members' Education and Development; Finance and Audit; Science, Engineering and Technology group; Civil Service sector executive. He is particularly interested in training and continuing professional development; SET issues; energy and environment issues.

SfL is pleased to share web links with Progress:

www.progressonline.org.uk/



What has Labour done for science? Josie Cluer

After the Tories let British science go to rack and ruin, Labour is building up the British research base

- Labour has more than doubled the **science budget** over the past ten years, from £1.3 billion (1997) to £3.4 billion (2007). The science budget will continue to rise above inflation reaching almost £4 billion by 2010/11.
- Labour is increasing spending on **medical research** by 30% over the next 3 years. It will receive over £1.9 billion over the next three years from the science budget to fund both basic and translational research.
- Labour is funding a number of **multi-disciplinary research programmes**, including a major contribution to the £1 billion “Living with Environmental Change” programme; a new research programme on ageing; and increased investment in energy research and stem cells.
- Labour’s funding for R&D (including Higher Education Funding Councils and Research Councils) stood at £ 7.4bn in 2006.
- Labour has provided £2.3 billion of support for business through **R&D tax credits** during the first six years of the scheme that began in 2000.
- Labour is supporting **knowledge transfer**, including through the Higher Education Innovation Fund (HEIF), which will receive £150M a year by 2010/11 to strengthen links between academia and business and help take research to the market.
- Labour has increased capital expenditure through the Science Research Investment Fund (£500M per annum) and Full Economic Costing (£200M per annum), has significantly improved the **research infrastructure** in universities.
- In 2006/07, the total resources made available under the **Small Business Research Initiative (SBRI)** was £2.3 billion. The value of contracts made with SMEs was £136.9M, representing nearly 6% of the baseline budget.

Our investment is working – Britain is recognised as a world class science base

- A fifth of the world’s current top selling medicines were discovered and developed in the UK.
- Britain is the sixth largest manufacturing economy in the world.
- With just 1% of the world’s population, UK produces 9% of all scientific papers and receives 12% of all citations. UK is second only to US on the majority of leading scientific indicators.
- Between 1992 and 2003, the percentage of UK research papers with international co-authorship doubled, from 20% to 40%.
- In 2005-06, over 40% of students studying for PhDs came from overseas.

Labour has established joint ventures with business to solve challenges facing the world

- The **TSB** has an important leadership role. It will develop and lead a strategic programme worth £1 billion over the next three years.
 - The TSB will be investing £100M in eight collaborative R&D technology areas – Materials for Energy; Technologies for Health; Advanced Lighting, Lasers and Displays; High Value Manufacturing; and Gathering Data in Complex Environments, Low Carbon Energy, Cell Therapy and the Creative Industry.

- *Five Innovation Platforms*. An Innovation Platform creates the opportunity to bring together key partners (Government and business) to address a major societal challenge and to open up market opportunities to increase business investment in R&D and innovation:
 - Intelligent Transport Systems and Services
 - Low Impact Buildings
 - Network Security
 - Assisted Living
 - Low Carbon Vehicles
- The **Energies Technologies Institute** was established as a 50:50 partnership between business and Government to raise up to £1 billion over ten years for low carbon energy R&D.
- Public sector commitment announced publicly by DIUS (up to £50M per annum for 10 years) and DfT (up to £5M per annum for the CSR period to 2011).
- Six companies already signed up (BP, Shell, E.ON UK, EDF Energy, Rolls-Royce and Caterpillar) creating the current capacity of up to £30M pa for matching by the public sector.

Labour is encouraging STEM skills

- Labour has invested over £20m to create 10 **Science Learning Centres** - 1 national centre and 9 regional centres in conjunction with the Wellcome Trust. A further r£10m over 5 years has been allocated for Project Enthuse, a scheme that covers the cost of teachers to attend courses at the national Science Learning Centre.
- The DIUS-funded **Science and Engineering Ambassadors** (SEAs) programme now has over 18,000 individuals registered as SEAs and acting as role models within schools across the UK.
- UCAS figures for acceptances onto **degree courses** in 2007 show rises in some key STEM subjects in excess of the overall average increase for all subjects of 6.4% (Mathematics up by 9.1%; Chemistry 8.9%; Physics 12.4%). Some areas of engineering also showing above average increases.
- **PhD stipends** paid by Research Councils have risen by almost 45% (from £9,000 to nearly £13,000 and just over £13,000 to study subjects of recruitment difficulty – including some scientific subjects) since 2002 and have more than doubled since 1999 (when they stood at £6,500).

Scientists for Labour Dr John Unsworth Chair of SfL



SfL is an organisation open to members or supporters of the Labour Party who are interested or involved in UK science and technology. Since its establishment in 1994, it has become a strong political voice for science. *SfL* aims to improve the understanding both of science and of its importance within the Labour Party and nationally. It is also involved in advising the parliamentary Labour Party on technical issues affecting other areas of government policy, and regularly lobbies government ministers on science policy issues.

SfL is re-launching their web site www.scientists-for-labour.org.uk and is soon to be on Facebook.

Lucy Powell, PPC for Manchester, Withington



Write to me at:

4 Holly Royde Close Withington Manchester M20 3HR

Phone me on:

0161 283 3841

Email me at:

contact@lucypowell.org.uk

Website address:

www.lucypowell.org.uk

Lucy Powell is Prospective Parliamentary Candidate for Withington Constituency in South Manchester. She studied chemistry at the University of Oxford and King's College, London. Lucy is currently leading a project for a major investment fund for Manchester – the Innovation Fund – working for NESTA (the National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts), together with the local authorities, universities and businesses.

Prior to this Lucy was the Director of Britain in Europe, the pro-European campaign. She started her career working in parliament for Bev Hughes MP, now Minister for Children.

“It's become unfashionable to celebrate political achievement, and Labour achievement even less so. And it's positively uncouth to be proud of something that this Labour government is doing. So, slam me for saying so, but I'm really proud of the NHS.”

Keep Libel Laws out of Science. Síle Lane, Sense about Science

Good science depends on open, critical discussion. But when the science writer Dr Simon Singh wrote about chiropractic claims to treat childhood conditions such as colic and asthma the British Chiropractic Association sued him for libel, *The Guardian* withdrew the article and the debate was shut down. The high costs and narrow defences of England's libel laws mean that it has so far cost Simon £100,000 and put his career on hold for more than a year and he is still at a preliminary stage of his trial.

Simon and Sense about Science launched the Keep Libel Laws out of Science campaign to ensure someone else doesn't find themselves in the same position next year. We have since heard from many more scientists and writers, who have been sued, have had their work censored or who have been too scared to write or speak out at all because of fear of the unfair laws.

We urge Scientists for Labour to make the case for libel reform to the people who can make the commitments to implement it. A beneficial reform would be to expand the existing 'public interest' defence so that it is available to anyone engaging in important public discussions.

For more information and to add your support see www.senseaboutscience.org.uk/freedebate

Sense about Science is a non-partisan organisation.

Science Matters No. 36 conference 2009

page 6 of 8

Obama boosts Science



“ To undermine scientific integrity is to undermine our democracy.”

With the world economic downturn Science is more essential for our prosperity, our security, our health, our environment, and our quality of life than it has ever been before. Our capacity to deal with a public health challenges rests heavily on the work of our scientific and medical community. The fact is an investigation into a particular physical, chemical, or biological process might not pay off for a year, or a decade, or at all. And when it does, the rewards are often broadly shared, enjoyed by those who bore its costs but also by those who did not. So we double the budget of key agencies, including the National Science

Foundation, a primary source of funding for academic research; and the National Institute of Standards and Technology, which supports a wide range of pursuits from improving health information technology to measuring carbon pollution, from -- from testing "smart grid" designs to developing advanced manufacturing processes.

My budget doubles funding for the Department of Energy's Office of Science, which builds and operates accelerators, colliders, supercomputers, high-energy light sources, and facilities for making nano-materials -- because we know that a nation's potential for scientific discovery is defined by the tools that it makes available to its researchers.

Because of recent progress -- not just in biology, genetics and medicine, but also in physics, chemistry, computer science, and engineering -- we have the potential to make enormous progress against diseases in the coming decades. And that's why my administration is committed to increasing funding for the National Institutes of Health, including \$6 billion to support cancer research -- part of a sustained, multi-year plan to double cancer research in our country.

Yes, scientific innovation offers us a chance to achieve prosperity. It has offered us benefits that have improved our health and our lives -- improvements we take too easily for granted. But it gives us something more. At root, science forces us to reckon with the truth as best as we can ascertain it.

SfL is pleased to share web links with Compass:

www.compassonline.org.uk/

compass
DIRECTION FOR
THE DEMOCRATIC LEFT

Notice of AGM

The 2009 Annual General Meeting of Scientists for Labour is in Committee Room 6 at the House of Commons Parliament Square London, SW1P 0AA, 1 - 4 pm Tuesday 27th October 2009

All members are cordially invited to attend. Non-members will be made most welcome.

1.00 pm: AGM

1. Minutes of 2008 AGM.
2. Matters arising
3. Chair's Report
4. Secretary's Report
5. Conference report
6. Treasurer's Report
7. Editor's report
8. Report on Socialist Societies
9. Election of EC members (nominations to Paul Connell)
10. AOCS

Be prepared to go through security checks. The Room has been booked by Brian Iddon MP
It is possible that a different committee room will be made available on the day.

2.00pm "Priorities for Science Funding" with

Prof Sir Tom Blundell, Lord O'Neil, Nigel Titchen, Brian Iddon MP at 2.00 pm

The meeting is expected to end at 4.00pm

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

Chair: John Unsworth

Secretary: Secretary Paul Connell, 2 Redwood Close, Ross-on-Wye, Herefordshire, HR9 5UD
paul@snippy-connell.wanadoo.co.uk

Membership: Ann Kingsbury a.kingsbury@ion.ucl.ac.uk

www.scientists-for-labour.org.uk

<http://www.scientists-for-labour.org.uk>