

Intolerance born of fear

THE DECISION of Labour's NEC to refuse to endorse the candidature of Liz Davies represents a new stage in the Blairites' drive to create an ultra-centralised one-faction party.

Davies has effectively rebutted all the charges against her. She has even managed to extract a confession from the NEC's Disputes Committee that they don't know which specific charges she has been found guilty of! It has been effectively demonstrated that Liz has been blocked as a parliamentary candidate for one reason only — her socialist ideas.

Liz Davies is, in fact, the victim of an embittered group of political nonentities — led by Margaret Hodge — who have carried out a personal vendetta against an old opponent. The NEC have acted as "enforcers" for this clique.

The union representatives on the NEC and the Disputes Committee have displayed a level of spinelessness unusual for even the most dimwitted timeserver. They have endorsed a set of allegations which they know to be false, their only motive not to have to go against the Leader who has identified himself with the purge.

The ban on Liz Davies sets a new measure for how far along the road towards an almost Stalinist party the Blairites have taken Labour. It goes together with the obscene cult of Blair, and with the downgrading of Party conference as the policy-making body.

Who decides what Labour policy is these days?

The Leader and his court do.

Who decides who can be an MP? The Leader and whoever amongst his courtiers can catch his ear — in this case, Margaret Hodge.

Labour is now a massively depoliticised party, concerned only with winning governmental power for its leaders — office at any cost. The right policy is

"Without Liz we would never have been able to get our arguments represented in the Labour Group. She was a great help to us. As for Phil Kelly, as Chair of Education, he was the one trying to close our nurseries."

Janet Owolabi,
active in the campaign to
keep Islington's Springfield
Nursery open

whatever will help win the next election.

Increasingly, anything goes. Jack Straw, one of the least impressive members of a lacklustre Labour Front Bench, recently made a spluttering speech promising to use the police to clear the homeless off the streets. That was a Tory speech, worthy of a benighted right-wing backbench bigot spiritually smothering in his own middle-class complacency.

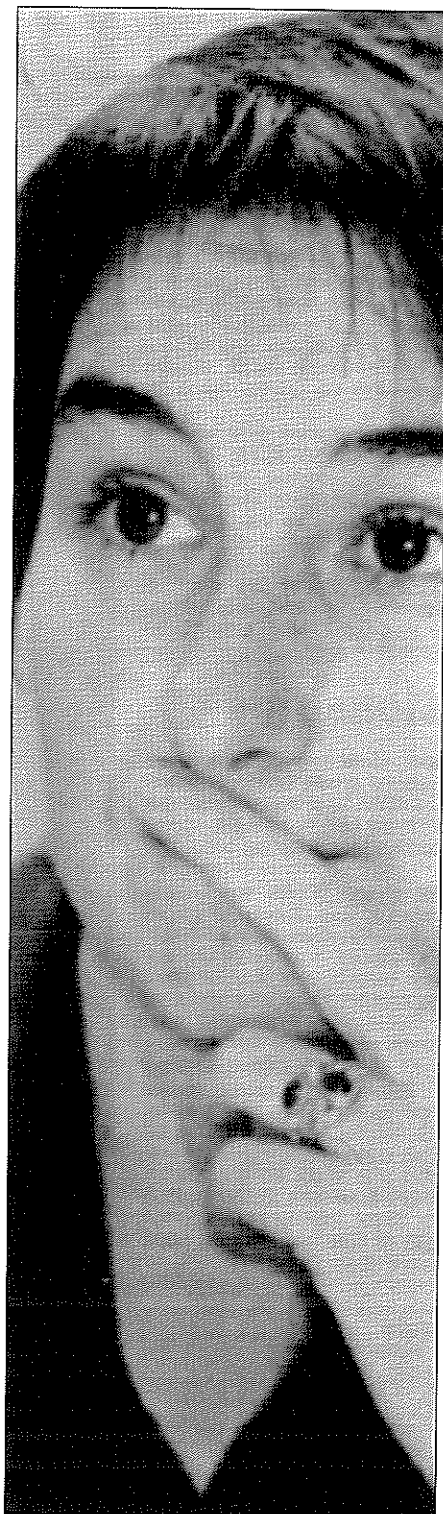
By implication Straw was criticising the Tories for not driving the homeless off the streets now.

Anything goes! Yet things are not quite what they seem.

The Blairites have the arrogance of a middle-class clique completely out of touch with the traditions of the labour movement. But their arrogance hides a deep fear of the future: fear of the labour movement.

The Liz Davies affair shows the underlying lack of confidence behind the arrogance. They moved against Liz Davies because they feared the presence in Parliament of a gifted and effective organiser amongst the Socialist Campaign Group of Labour MPs.

This in turn reflects the deep unease with which the misnamed "modernisers" view the prospects of a Labour left revival after the next election. All their actions are geared to preventing such a development.



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