



They want YOU as a new recruit

gair rhydd takes a look at what the student parties have to offer



LABOUR

By Kate Tildsley

As the student wing of the Labour Party we're the place for all students who share Labour's values of democracy, equality, freedom and social justice.

If you want to be part of Labour's

campaign for change and want to help shape the policies that will drive this governments forward, then the Labour Club is the place for you.

From homelessness to the minimum wage, Labour Students has run campaigns which make the Government take note. This year will

be no exception as we will launch campaigns on a multitude of issues.

We are proud of the fact that although we are on side with Labour, we aren't always on message. Through discussion and debate, members of Labour Students help shape Labour's Student policies.



BLAIR: Listening to students

CONSERVATIVES

By Michael Wallbank

We're on the up, it's official. On a national level, we made big parliamentary gains in the general election, and our membership is increasing across the UK.

Here in Cardiff, we've also got

plenty of things to be positive about. Our members spent many hours delivering leaflets and knocking on doors to encourage local residents to vote for us.

Many of our members also had the opportunity to appear on television

and radio programmes to support the cause. What we're about, first and foremost, is giving our members the chance to try their hand at frontline politics. Sure, we're not for everyone, but never before has the "Tory Boy" stereotype been less relevant.



CONSERVATIVE

PLAID CYMRU

By Dewi Morgan Lloyd

The Party of Wales Students Federation, often known as 'The Fed' gives students in Universities or Colleges across Wales a voice.

We actively encourage young

people to get involved in politics and through a network of college branches, we meet regularly to discuss campaigns and events.

We support the main Party's aims to move towards self-government with a Welsh Parliament. We believe that this is the best way to create a

fairer society in Wales where a world class education and healthcare system is available to all.

Much of our work centres on student issues and over the past few years we have campaigned tirelessly in order to ensure top-up fees will not be charged in Wales this year.



PLAID: Fully Welsh

LIBERAL DEMOCRATS

By Katie Leech

Cardiff Student Liberal Democrats have managed to balance successful campaigning and involvement in the local party, with loads of social events and sufficient nights in the pub!

We're a really active and vibrant society, with loads of our members working really hard on the successful 2005 general election campaign.

There's loads planned for the coming year, including our legendary pub crawls, quiz nights, and a trip to

Westminster for some MP spotting.

Whether its serious debate you're after, the chance to meet politicians or simply like-minded people to have an argument with over a pint at the local, Cardiff Student Lib Dems has plenty to offer.



SOCIALIST STUDENTS

By Angelika Gounelas

Socialist Students campaign for a free, fully funded education system through opposition of tuition fees the restoration of the grant system.

We believe education should be open to everyone, regardless of their background and in addition to this, students should not incur massive debt as a result of attending university.

Socialist Students aims to build and spread the ideas of socialism

among Cardiff students. Alongside this we debate socialist ideas with universities throughout the country.

Socialist Students believe that Under socialism society can be democratically planned so the needs of all are met.



WILLOTT: Students choice

Do student parties still have a point?

By Andrew Mickel
Politics Editor

Student political parties certainly still have something of an image problem. Whether it's the coal miner's son with a socialist chip on his shoulder, or the Sloane Ranger who will openly admit a deep love for Thatcher, the clichés are wide and varied.

Even when people are willing to set them aside, there is still a fundamental problem that few people believe in the wholesale political ideologies that the parties provide. And even if someone is willing to accept all of that, they don't necessarily want to wear their beliefs on their sleeve.

But despite all of these problems, membership for many student parties



ACTIVE: Socialist students make themselves heard

continues to rise. So why have people been willing to join?

Even if people don't necessarily agree with everything that a party has

to offer, it still provides one of the easiest ways to get involved with politics. This was obvious at the General Election in May, where Cardiff Central

was one of the tightest marginals in the country. Students were important to all of the parties campaigns – every time you saw a candidate, they were flanked by their student party.

Triumphant Lib Dem candidate Jenny Willott puts much of her success down to the student party. 'They delivered shedloads of leaflets, they always turn out and knock on doors and that,' she said after her massive victory, 'we couldn't have done anywhere near as well as we would without their help.'

The parties all claim that they offer a chance to mix with people with similar views. But what exactly are the parties positions now? Plaid Cymru and the Socialists aside, it is difficult to pinpoint what exactly the central ethos is that drives the three main parties. When people are not certain what

the Tories, Labour or the Lib Dems stand for, they are inevitably going to be put off joining. This is a problem that student parties have inherited from national politics, where people have become disinterested by the petty differences between the choices. But it is nevertheless something that they have to deal with.

There is little point in avoiding the fact that there's still inevitably going to be an image problem with student parties that they're not going to be unable to change. On the other hand, if you are genuinely interested in what a party has to say, then there is little point in getting too hung up on what everyone else thinks – you name a student activity, and there is guaranteed to be a stereotype already attached to it. The question facing the student parties at