

## Billy and Benn show hits the TUC

By Ben Davies  
BBC News Online politics staff at the TUC in Brighton

**It is not unreasonable that after a morning of earnest speeches in the TUC conference hall some delegates will seek out a bit of light relief.**

And an event with popster Billy Bragg and Labour veteran Tony Benn is always going to ensure a good turnout here.

Both men were at a fringe meeting supporting 'Raising the Banner' - which aims to promote festivals of music and speech with an avowedly Left message.

Most famous perhaps is the Leftfield at Glastonbury each year.

### Stalwarts

But there are others such as the Tolpuddle Festival and the Durham Miners' Gala.

Both Benn and Bragg are stalwarts at a number of these events which they argue raises political consciousness among the young.

Bragg explained that 'Raising the Banner' was being driven by "the way Tolpuddle has grown from a garden party to a festival".

Leftfield, he explained, had the advantage of taking place at an event attended by tens of thousands of people and had evolved from a low key tent to a bigger venue marked by a rather ostentatious sculpture.

### Oasis?

"So when some shroomed herbert bumps into me at Glastonbury and says 'oi Braggy where you playing?' I can point them at the Leftfield tower."

And scores of people turned up at this year's festival to see the likes of Amicus general secretary Derek Simpson who, much to the delight of the Sun newspaper, arrived in a helicopter, Benn, Bragg and Mick Jones, formerly of the Clash.

Jones performed with his new band as Oasis were headlining on the nearby Pyramid Stage.

"But I am not going to see Oasis making fools of themselves when I can see Mick Jones of the Clash," said Bragg.

### Teetotal?

Benn meanwhile said his only problem with some of these festivals was that they were sponsored by the Workers Beer Company.

He remarked that he's a life-long teetotaler who is saving alcohol for his old age.

But that hasn't stopped him appearing and apparently being mobbed at this year's Glastonbury.

Benn, like Bragg, stressed the importance of getting political messages across to the young.

"Music and the arts play an important part," he said.

Story from BBC NEWS:

[http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/1/hi/uk\\_politics/3652318.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/1/hi/uk_politics/3652318.stm)

Published: 2004/09/14 09:14:04 GMT

© BBC MMIV