

Contemporary Motions 2013

Oppose Tories' racist immigration campaign – promote a united society.

Conference condemns the government's August initiative of immigration spot checks at railway stations across the country where people were reportedly targeted purely because of their race. This followed the government's July initiative of sending vans into ethnically diverse London boroughs carrying billboards telling overstaying migrants to 'go home'.

Conference notes the government is desperate to distract peoples' attention from the government's failed policies that have badly damaged living standards, so the Tories are increasingly seeking to foster division in society – the aim being that people blame migrants or Muslims or claimants for reduced prosperity.

Conference denounces the whipping up of racism and xenophobia and reminds the coalition's parties that only the extreme right is strengthened by the promotion of such bigotry, as confirmed by UKIP's advance this year.

Conference believes Labour should make no concessions to this agenda, so notes with concern Labour's March 2013 Party Political Broadcast on the theme of immigration. Labour should concentrate on promoting a united society - that recognises the value of diversity, the economic benefits of immigration and supports freedom of religious expression.

Conference also believes that when Labour opposes scapegoating and division whilst promoting equality and unity the party draws together the electoral coalition that can deliver victory in the forthcoming elections – whereas when concessions are made to anti-migrant prejudice only the right gains.

For both these evident moral and electoral reasons, conference calls on Labour's leadership to robustly distance itself from all aspects of the nasty Tories' campaign.

246 words

Replace Tory failed 'austerity' policies with investment and growth

Conference welcomes Labour's August publication of 'David Cameron's out of touch, You're out of pocket', revealing the scale of attack on living standards under the coalition, with working people on average £1,350 worse off a year in real terms.

Conference notes the failure of Tory economic policy - three years of 'austerity' resulting in stagnation – the economy 3.9% smaller in June than its 2008 peak, so the deficit not reducing.

Conference believes an economic priority of the next Labour government should be defence of living standards. Continuation of 'austerity' – cutting public services, reducing welfare provision, and frozen public sector pay – cannot generate economic recovery, but will reduce living standards.

Conference notes with concern Labour's front bench June announcements of new economic policies including: adopting the coalition's 2015-16 spending plans, benefit caps and ending universal winter fuel payments. Extending 'austerity' will further undermine the economy and people's welfare, so damage Labour's standing in government.

Conference believes our objective should be Labour elected to government armed with policies that can succeed. Accordingly we urge the front bench to reconsider the economic priorities. Labour's past considerable redistributive achievements in office – from creating the NHS to house building and expanding the welfare state – can and should be maintained. Public service cuts should be halted.

Conference calls for the replacement of the coalition's 'austerity' framework with an economic focus on growth and jobs, underpinned by a sufficient government investment programme, including house building and infrastructure, to restore economic prosperity.

246 words

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The title has a maximum of 10 words and the motion a maximum of 250 words

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No privatisation of Royal Mail

Conference notes the August publication of Royal Mail executives' pay levels, with its Chief Executive earning £1.47m.

Conference notes the intention of the Coalition government to privatise Royal Mail in the autumn or winter. Conference states its opposition because it will lead to:

- higher prices for small businesses and domestic consumers
- pressure to end the six day delivery and uniform tariff
- a deterioration of services in rural and 'non-profitable' areas
- the prioritisation of shareholder dividends over service provision

Conference believes it is vital Labour is seen to defend the public postal service. The most recent YouGov poll registered 67% against the privatisation of Royal Mail.

Conference notes Royal Mail made £403million profit in the most recent financial year. Any necessary investment in Royal Mail can be secured from its own profits, and by allowing it to borrow from commercial markets. Across the EU, government related entities like Royal Mail are allowed such facilities. Royal Mail could become a successful 'not for dividend' company whilst remaining a publicly owned service. In line with practice elsewhere in the EU, such borrowing would not be counted on the Public Sector Borrowing Requirement.

Conference believes privatisation will jeopardise the contribution Royal Mail makes to the national economy through the universal service obligation. Conference agrees an incoming Labour government should re-nationalise Royal Mail in the event of the Coalition government actually selling the company.

Finally, Conference agrees organising against the proposed sale should be an immediate focus for the whole Party.

246 words

Supporting information (not part of the motion)

On Friday 2 August details of Royal Mail executives remuneration were published indicating private sector excess is already affecting pay levels as the government prepares to try to sell the company off.

12 Royal Mail executive directors shared pay and packages totalling £3,753,000 last year.

The company is now paying £1.47 million to Chief Executive Moya Greene for 2012-13, up more than a third from the previous year when she took home £1.1m.

Moya Greene and senior executives Mark Higson and Matthew Lester all receive a cash supplement equivalent to 40% of their salary in lieu of pensions.

The government plans to try to sell Royal Mail this year, Labour should oppose it and make clear it will reverse any such move.

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NHS needs a Labour government

Conference notes that:

1. The NHS is not safe in the hands of the Conservatives and Liberal Democrats;
2. Professor Don Berwick's report to the Government published on 6 August makes it clear that NHS staff should not be scapegoated when services are overstretched and that 'good people can fail to meet patients' needs when their working conditions do not provide them with the conditions for success';
3. David Cameron's 8 August announcement of funding for struggling A & E Departments fails to address the fundamental threats to our NHS posed by increasing privatisation, relentless Government demands for 'savings' and continual cuts to nursing numbers;
4. The 31 July High Court ruling against Jeremy Hunt's decision to cut services at Lewisham Hospital offers nationwide encouragement for defenders of our NHS.

Conference accordingly welcomes Labour's commitment to repeal the Health and Social Care Act and reaffirms our urgent call for Labour to work with health unions and other NHS supporters to campaign against privatisation, cuts and closures; to liberate the NHS from extortionate PFI charges; and to restore the principle of a publicly owned, publicly provided and publicly accountable NHS funded by progressive taxation and delivering care on the basis of need and not ability to pay.

Conference now calls on Labour's spokespeople to step up Labour's public campaigning for these objectives. It was Labour who fought to create the NHS. It is now up to Labour to fight to defend it.

241 words

Britain's railways – defend hard pressed fare payers

Conference notes the 13 August announcement that the July inflation figure was 3.1% and that average fares, already the highest in Europe, will in January 2014 rise by no less than 4.1%.

Conference notes that this hyperinflationary increase holds commuters and other passengers to ransom at a time when their incomes are either barely rising or frozen or even actually declining. It represents an unacceptable attack on the living standards not just of the poor but also of the 'squeezed middle' of our society. Like threats to reduce guards and station-staff, it is thoroughly consistent with the present government's twin policies of austerity for the general public and profits for the shareholding few.

Conference notes, however, that a better alternative exists. The publicly-run East Coast Mainline has, since leaving the private sector in 2009, already delivered to the Department for Transport over £640 million for reinvestment.

East Coast's example clearly demonstrates the wisdom of taking Britain's railways back into public ownership when each private contract expires, in line with long-standing Labour policy. This would not require a spending commitment from a future Labour Chancellor. It would, on the contrary, make the money contributed by fare-payers available for holding down fares and investing in service improvements instead of continuing to subsidise the wealth of private shareholders.

Conference therefore now calls on Labour's leadership to announce without delay that Labour is firmly committed to this policy. It is economically prudent, environmentally sustainable and electorally popular.

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Housing

Conference notes that in the week that the Halifax House Price Index, released on 6 August, reported an increase in the average price of a UK home to £169, 624, more than 6 times UK average earnings, Fitch, the credit rating agency, warned that the government's 'Help to Buy' scheme will push prices higher, boosting the profits of banks and builders, but would not alleviate the housing shortage.

These increases will exacerbate the already severe crisis of affordability that sees millions priced out of the housing market and, due to the severe shortage of social rented housing, increasingly dependent on the private rented sector where rent levels are rocketing in response to increased demand.

Conference calls for a housing strategy that has as its main priority a solution to the affordable housing crisis, not the profits of the businesses and property speculators who are the main beneficiaries of the Tory's flagship scheme.

Conference calls upon the Labour Party to campaign for, and the future Labour Government to deliver, a housing strategy that will:

- Provide sufficient government investment to address the severe shortage of affordable housing and, in so doing, eliminate the argument for pernicious welfare policies such as the bedroom tax.
- End the right to buy, and ensure that publically owned housing remains affordable in perpetuity.
- Provide a regulatory framework to control rents in the private sector.
- Scrap the borrowing caps and write off historic housing debt for councils who want to invest in new and improved council housing.

250 words

A Labour Government would scrap Trident and its replacement

Conference notes:

- The UN Secretary-General's call on nuclear weapon states to 'stop developing new or modernised weapons, and accelerate individual and collective efforts to achieve a world free of nuclear weapons' on 9 August.
- The Trident Alternatives Review, commissioned to consider alternative platforms and postures to the current Trident nuclear weapon system but which failed to consider nuclear disarmament and non-replacement, published on 16 July.
- That Labour's front bench has expressed support for Trident but this does not necessarily represent Labour Party members' views.
- That Labour's National Policy Forum (NPF) has discussed nuclear weapons policy, including the scrapping of Trident and its replacement, on a number of occasions, with members calling for a party-wide debate on this issue, to be held and voted on at conference this year.

Labour members are concerned that:

- Trident is not a means of defence from the real threats we face. Trident's existence encourages proliferation when the UK is committed to disarming under the Non-Proliferation Treaty.
- Trident is unaffordable. Constructing and maintaining Trident's replacement will cost many billions of pounds.
- Trident requires skills that could be better used. Labour should introduce a plan for Trident-related work sites to ensure alternative employment using existing skills.
- Trident is unpopular. Regular polling evidence that shows the public opposes Trident replacement.

Labour should:

- Commit to non-replacement and scrapping of Trident in order to kick-start disarmament negotiations at the 2015 Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference.

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