

Contemporary Motions for Labour Party Conference 2017

Anti-austerity policies will deliver growth and a Labour victory

Conference notes August 2017 reports indicating an increasing decline in the UK economy and people's living standards:

1. The 10 August Office of National Statistics report that industrial production, manufacturing output and construction activity all declined in the April to June quarter, with the trade deficit widening; and
2. The 8 August British Retail Consortium report that food prices rose 2.6 per cent from January to June 2017.

Conference notes:

1. The economy significantly slowed down in the first half of 2017;
2. The Institute of Fiscal Studies has warned workers face the worst period for pay in at least 70 years, with 2021 real wages predicted lower than in 2008;
3. Nearly a third of people in the UK live in household where there is not enough money for adequate food, clothing and housing and the basics of a social life, according to research for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation;
4. Labour achieved a 9.6 per cent national vote share increase at June's general election, Labour's largest increase since 1945, standing on a clear anti-austerity manifesto.

Conference believes:

1. Tory policies are responsible for the renewed deterioration in the economy, living standards and real wages;
2. A Labour government is needed which replaces Tory austerity with policies to deliver an economy that works 'for the many, not just the few';

Conference affirms Labour's 2017 manifesto commitments to increase public investment and establish a National Investment Bank – to stimulate growth, create good jobs, raise living standards and improve the public finances.

250 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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Our NHS: Don't let the Tories run it down

Conference notes the NHS revelations reported between 7 and 11 August, for example that:

1. millions of patients now have worse access to GPs than 5 years ago;
2. fewer than 1 in 6 mothers now see the same midwife throughout their pregnancy and aftercare;
3. 87% more cancer patients last year waited 62 days or more for treatment;
4. more than 2.5 million people waited over 4 hours to be seen in A&E, a rise of 460,530;
5. delayed discharges from hospitals have increased, due to cuts in Social Care;
6. more than 4 million people are waiting for surgery.

Conference therefore calls on all sections of the Party to join with patients, health-workers, trade unions and all other NHS supporters to campaign for:

- an NHS that is publicly owned, funded, provided and accountable;
- adequate funding for all services, including mental health services;
- integration with a Social Care system which is also publicly funded and provided;
- an end to privatisation, PFIs and the debts which they entail;
- urgent reductions in waiting-times;
- scrapping the Tories' austerity cap on pay-levels;
- restoration of bursaries for students;
- constructive engagement with NHS staff-organisations;
- recognition of the continuing vital NHS role of EU nationals;
- tackling the causes of ill-health, e.g. austerity, poverty and poor housing;
- no service closures (or 'reconfigurations') without proper local consultation and consent;
- rejecting the Tories' Sustainability & Transformation Plans (STPs) as vehicles for cuts in services;
- excluding our NHS from TTIP and other 'free trade' agreements.

Labour created our NHS. Labour must now defend it.

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The Housing Crisis

Responding to the DWP's benefit cap figures released on 3 August, the Joseph Rowntree Foundation said, 'The benefit cap has had only a small impact on moving people into work. To make a serious reduction to the benefits bill the Government should scrap the benefits cap and focus on addressing the serious lack of genuinely affordable housing.'

Conference calls upon all Labour MPs to support the Foundation's statement by opposing the welfare cap and demanding immediate government action to tackle the housing crisis.

Conference also calls upon Labour Councils to lead the way in delivering Labour's commitment to build the thousands of council homes that our communities urgently need.

Conference recognises that the private sector will not deliver a solution to the housing crisis. We, therefore, call upon Labour Councils, in areas where the need for social housing exceeds supply, to meet that need by:

- directly delivering construction and maintenance services that can guarantee high quality council housing, with secure tenancies and genuinely affordable rent;
- ensuring a sustainable means of meeting their local housing need by retaining ownership and control of available public land, and prohibiting both the transfer of land to private developers and engagement with flawed joint venture vehicles;
- supporting and strengthening those communities that rely on social housing by requiring at least 1:1 advance replacement, within the same neighbourhood, of council homes sold or demolished under regeneration schemes, and requiring 50 per cent of any additional housing to be genuinely affordable.

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Ending UK support for Saudi Arabia

Conference notes:

1. On 9 August the UN Children's Fund reported that airstrikes in Yemen in 2017 already exceeded the total for all 2016, with the monthly average almost three times higher; and that there are over one million internally displaced people in Yemen.
2. On 11 August ten Nobel Peace Prize winners appealed to the Saudi authorities against the revelation that it is about to put to death 14 men arrested in protests in 2012. The letter reported that the condemned men, primarily young, had been tortured into making confessions that were afterwards retracted.

Conference believes:

1. That by continuing to licence arms exports to Saudi Arabia the Conservative government is complicit in the bombing of Yemen and the killing of more than 10,000 people.
2. That in its attempt to secure further arms deals the Conservative government mutes its criticism of human rights violations within Saudi Arabia including the use of the death penalty, the execution of minors and the flogging of those calling for freedom of expression.

Conference resolves:

1. That the next Labour government should impose an embargo on the export of military equipment to Saudi Arabia.
2. To do everything possible to campaign for human rights in Saudi Arabia and to support those working for them.
3. To work with trade unions to create a Shadow Defence Diversification Agency so that practical plans are in place to use the skills of those currently working in the arms industry on socially-useful projects such as renewable energy.

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Railways for the future: safety and access for all

Conference notes that Transport Secretary Chris Grayling has used the summer period to break the Tories' promise of rail electrification for the North of England, the Midlands and Wales, all of whose economies are significantly dependent upon better, electrified rail links.

Conference is further concerned by the 15 August announcement that fares next year will go up by an inflation-busting 3.6%

Conference also notes that special talks were entered on 7 August with a view to resolving the long-running Southern Rail dispute. A fresh start is urgently needed for the sake of the long-suffering passengers and staff involved. Conference regrets that the government has refused to engage with these talks or to communicate with the service's users and staff in any constructive discussion of proposals concerning the service's safety and accessibility.

Conference calls on all sections of the Labour Party to:

- campaign publicly to introduce a requirement for a guard on all passenger trains;
- halt the introduction of 'Driver Only Operation' (DOO) for passenger services;
- halt the current programme of ticket-office closures.

The past few months have provided tragic evidence of the need for our society to prioritise the safety of all its members. Labour must constantly campaign against the government's refusal to recognise such priorities. In the transport context considerations of safety and access are particularly vital for those passengers (both existing and potential) who suffer from disabilities. Conference resolves that their rights must not be disrespected.

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Global Nuclear Ban Treaty

This Conference is aware that:

- North Korea has successfully concluded long-range missile tests,
- President Trump responded on 8 August threatening ‘fire and fury like the world has never seen’; and
- the escalation of tensions between these two states brings the world closer to nuclear war.

Conference notes:

- the UN recently approved a multilateral, legally-binding Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, which opens for signature on 20 September;
- a UK opinion poll showing 75% of respondents wanted Britain to participate in Treaty negotiations; and

condemns:

- Theresa May government’s boycott of Treaty negotiations; and
- Britain’s joint statement with the US and France that ‘we do not intend to sign, ratify or ever become party to’ the Treaty.

Conference recalls the 2017 manifesto commitments to:

- ‘reducing human suffering caused by war’
- ‘lead multilateral efforts with international partners and the UN to create a nuclear-free world’. and
- creating ‘a Minister for Peace and Disarmament to lead this work’.

Conference believes that support for the Treaty is in line with these commitments, and therefore calls on the next Labour government to ratify the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

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Social security and disability

Conference notes:

1. On 4 August, the DWP was again found to be acting unlawfully.
2. Margaret Greenwood's comments that 'It is outrageous that the Tories are putting the commercial interests of private companies before the well-being of disabled people'.
3. Reports of foodbanks running out of supplies during school holidays and child poverty described as a 'national emergency'.
4. The United Nations previously found the Conservative-led government guilty of 'grave and systemic' human rights abuses of disabled people.
5. Life expectancy has ceased to increase.
6. Since 2010 thousands of disabled people have died within 6 weeks of being assessed as Fit To Work by the DWP and its private contractors.
7. The DWP is described as operating a shadow penal system without the legal protections of the criminal justice system.

Conference believes the cumulative impact of policy since 2010 can be described as Democide – government and associated corporations inflicting harm, up to and including the deprivation of the right to life.

Conference Resolves:

1. To make law the Clapson Rule – That no government department or associated contractor can remove from a person the necessities to remain alive, whether by sanction, disability assessment, eviction, or conditionality of benefits. That the minimum amount a person needs to live on that is quoted in DWP documents becomes properly assessed at a level that supports life and no person be allowed to fall beneath that amount.
2. To restore Legal Aid to people living in poverty.

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Schools need proper funding

Conference notes:

1. The Education Policy Institute report *Closing the Gap? Trends in Educational Attainment and Disadvantage* published on 3 August shows that the most disadvantaged pupils in England have fallen further behind their peers.
2. Reports in *TES* on 10 August that DfE has confirmed a 1% pay rise for teachers and on 16 August that teachers will suffer because of benefit changes.
3. The Government wants to cut £8.9bn in school funding by 2022; schools are returning after the summer break to teacher vacancies, larger class sizes and cuts to support services due to funding cuts.
4. The level of concern about the impact of Tory cuts on schools expressed by voters.

Conference believes

1. The current level of under-funding is unsustainable; our children are suffering and increased funding is desperately needed.
2. Unless investment and correct interventions are in place the attainment gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers will continue.
3. The government has wasted millions on its inefficient free schools programme.
4. School funding cuts are part of the failed Tory austerity programme; we need investment to secure our economic future and support young people to achieve their full potential.

Conference calls on all sections of the Labour Party to commit to ensure schools are properly funded, have sufficient numbers of qualified teachers with lower class sizes and improved school buildings. Teachers and support staff should be properly rewarded and valued to address recruitment and retention problems at a time of increasing pupil numbers.

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Campaign against unjust LP suspensions and expulsions

Conference notes the 9 August report by online political news journal SKWAWKBOX revealing the Information Commissioners Office ruling that Labour headquarters cannot trawl through members' social media accounts for disciplinary purposes as this was a breach of the Data Protection Act because, as a 'Data Controller' under the Act, it does not have permission from the members to use their data for that purpose.

Conference recognises that in the past two years, particularly during the Labour Leadership contests of 2015 and 2016, a large number of Labour members were suspended, excluded or expelled from the party.

That there is a great deal of evidence that many of these members and applicants were treated as such for unclear and sometimes seemingly arbitrary reasons, and often without the transparent, time-limited process, based on natural justice recommended by Labour's Chakrabarti report into anti-Semitism and racism. [<http://www.labour.org.uk/page/-/party-documents/ChakrabartiInquiry.pdf>]

Conference deplores the malicious and vexatious accusations against Labour Party members that has resulted in their suspension from the party. And, that while these accusations have sometimes been overturned, they caused a great deal of distress to these individuals involved and damaged their reputation and standing within the party and the wider community.

Conference calls on the NEC to review the suspensions policy so that only in exceptional circumstances of credible accusations of hate speech, violence or threats of violence or intimidation a member is suspended whilst the allegations are investigated.

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Digital rights

Conference notes:

- The new Data Protection Bill announced on 7 August gives assurance on the front of corporation held data, but does nothing to address the vast drives of data the government afforded itself through the Investigatory Powers Act (IPA) and Digital Economy Act (DEA);
- Amber Rudd's statement that 'real people often prefer ease of use and a multitude of features to perfect, unbreakable security';
- Promises of a controlled internet in the Tory manifesto;
- The Queen's Speech announcement to introduce a Data Protection Bill and the publication of a statement of intent by DCMS;
- That the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) guarantees rights of freedom of speech and the right to privacy.

Conference believes:

- That the Human Rights Act is an essential law granting citizens and residents rights and protections from the Government;
- That the DEA's requirement for age verification is contrary to freedom of speech rights;
- That the IPA is in breach of right to privacy as it legalises mass surveillance by the intelligence services;
- That the IPA is in breach of the ECHR's right of freedom of speech as it legalises the regulation/prohibition of encryption technology;
- That citizens and residents have a right to use communications technology encryption as an aspect of freedom of speech.

Conference resolves that the Labour Party will:

- Seek repeal and replacement of the Investigatory Powers and Digital Economy Acts;
- seek to ensure that coming Data Bills enhance the right to privacy and decrease state surveillance and censorship powers.

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