

Building a Britain for the many, not the few

Conference notes that in November 2018 the UN rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights delivered a searing verdict on 'austerity' policies and their impact, stating cuts and reforms to social security had been driven by a goal of radical social engineering and 'there is such a gender dimension to these welfare reforms that if you got a group of misogynists in a room and said how can we make this system work for men and not for women they would not have come up with too many ideas that are not already in place'.

Women, BAME and disabled women in particular, have borne the brunt of austerity, with severe cuts to public services, social security, the growth of insecure work and a spiralling housing crisis. This has placed women at greater risk of sexual harassment and violence and our ability to enforce our rights has been restricted.

Conference welcomes Labour's strong policies to:

- end austerity and build a country for the many not the few;
- deliver social justice, greater equality and stronger trade union and employment rights;
- properly fund our public services – including social care and childcare;
- end privatisation;
- build council homes;
- tackle unequal pay for women;
- extend public ownership; and
- invest £500 billion over 10 years to transform our country and ensure the rewards of wealth are genuinely shared.

Conference resolves to unite behind this agenda, putting women at the centre of this economic and social transformation and win a Jeremy Corbyn led Labour government to achieve it.

250 words

Ratify the Istanbul convention

Conference welcomes the UK Government's decision in 2012 to sign the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (known as the Istanbul convention)

Conference notes that the Istanbul Convention, once ratified, requires all signatories to commit to funding and resourcing a number of measures, including:

- ensuring that victims have access to services facilitating their recovery from violence;
- ensuring that victims have access to health care and social services and that services are adequately resourced and professionals are trained to assist victims and refer them to the appropriate services.

Conference notes that the UK Government has yet to ratify the Istanbul Convention.

Conference commends the 'I C Change' campaign which brings third sector organisations and individual women together to press for the full adoption of the Istanbul Convention.

Conference agrees to:

- Support the demands of I C Change
- Encourage CLPs and affiliated organisations to do likewise, pressing for the UK Government to adopt the Convention in full with immediate effect
- Ensure Labour places this issue high up on our agenda for campaigning, including in the Manifesto, and commits to immediate ratification when in government.

190 words

The deadline for receipt of motions is Monday 14 January 2019

The motion has a maximum of 250 words

Support women's right to choose in N Ireland

Conference notes:

1. The huge victory for women in the referendum in the Republic of Ireland to repeal the Eighth Amendment to the Irish Constitution which effectively outlawed abortion in all cases.
2. The anomaly that now exists in Northern Ireland, where women there will be the only ones on these islands who have virtually no access to free and safe terminations.
3. The role of the Democratic Unionist Party in blocking any legislation in Northern Ireland that would allow women safe and legal access to abortion.
4. The refusal of the Tory Government to break the legal and political deadlock in Northern Ireland because it is dependent on DUP votes.

Conference believes:

1. Women have a right to control their own reproduction. They have a right to choose.
2. That in all cases it must be the women of any country who lead the fight for their own rights.
3. In all cases public health providers are the best way to ensure safe and legal access to abortion, not costly private clinics or other private providers.
4. The Good Friday Agreement is the foundation of all rights in Northern Ireland, and must be upheld in order to ensure women's rights there, including the right to choose.

Conference supports Jeremy Corbyn's commitment to calling a British-Irish Intergovernmental Conference under the terms of the Good Friday Agreement, which can bring forward proposals for new legislation for abortion rights for women in Northern Ireland.

242 words

Solidarity with Brazil – oppose far right attacks on social progress

Conference is deeply concerned by extreme right-wing candidate Jair Bolsonaro's election as Brazilian President.

Conference notes that Bolsonaro:

1. was a military officer under Brazil's former dictatorship, which he has praised and said 'should have killed 30,000 more'.
2. has publicly backed torture and extrajudicial killings;
3. has used sexually violent language against women opponents and made repeated misogynistic, homophobic and racist comments;
4. threatened to criminalise trade unions and the 'cleansing' of political opponents during the recent Presidential campaign.

Conference further notes that:

1. Such threats are in the context of increasing violence – in the run-up to the 2018 election the black human rights activist Marielle Franco was assassinated.
2. Former President Lula was favourite to win the presidential election but was imprisoned for 'undetermined acts of corruption' – his barring condemned by the UN Human Rights Committee.
3. Brazil's elected, and first woman President, Dilma Rousseff was illegitimately ousted in 2016.
4. During Lula and Rousseff's Presidencies tens of millions, mostly women, were lifted out of poverty; subsequently social programmes were scrapped, workers' rights rolled back, environmental protections removed, national assets privatised and violence against political opponents grew.

Conference resolves to:

1. oppose Bolsonaro's attacks on democracy, human and trade union rights
2. join Jeremy Corbyn, Shadow Foreign Secretary Emily Thornberry and others in welcoming the launch of the Brazil Solidarity Initiative; working work with them, the TUC and others in solidarity with progressive movements in Brazil.

238 words

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Suggested motions for Labour Party Women's Conference 2019

Addressing sexism in our schools

Conference notes the National Education Union and UK Feminista report on Sexism in Schools titled 'It's just everywhere' highlighted that 'sexual harassment, sexist language and gender stereotyping are commonplace...in schools settings, yet teachers report feeling unsupported and ill-equipped to respond'.

Conference believes

1. that to address sexism in society, we must make sure our education system has the policies and resources to tackle the sexual harassment, language and stereotyping that are endemic in our schools. This is of particular importance in addressing women's inequality, and tackling violence against women.
2. Relationship and Sex Education (RSE) teaching and learning must challenge and inform, with professional development provided for educational professionals.
3. The DfE should also issue guidance for schools on how to prevent and respond to sexual harassment and sexual violence.

This conference therefore calls on the Labour Party to:

- a) work with education professionals, education unions and sexual violence specialists to encourage the development of policies and resources for use in schools
- b) support campaigns to ensure the curriculum for RSE, across all stages, is designed to prevent sexism and harassment among children and young people and that RSE teachers have access to high quality professional development
- c) ensure all teachers are trained to understand and tackle gender stereotyping in their classrooms and across their school communities, from the early years upwards
- d) push for sufficient funding to enable schools to tackle this and;
- e) make a commitment to fully funding schools in tackling these issues when elected to Government.

250 words

Solidarity with Palestinian women

Conference welcomes:

- 1) Policy passed at Labour's annual conference in 2018, which included demands for an "independent international investigation into Israel's use of force against Palestinian demonstrators"; "immediate and unconditional end to the illegal blockade and closure of Gaza"; and "a freeze on UK government arms sales to Israel".
- 2) Jeremy Corbyn's speech to the same conference which promised the recognition of Palestine by an incoming Labour government.

Conference notes:

- 1) The UN Women 2018 report "Needs of Women and Girls in Humanitarian Action in the occupied Palestinian territory" which registered that women in the occupied territories are particularly disadvantaged due to a limited share of agricultural holdings, economic opportunities and restricted mobility. It also registered that female headed households, pregnant and lactating women are particularly vulnerable to food insecurity and malnutrition.
- 2) The decision of the US government to end support for the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine will further worsen the position of Palestinian refugees, increasing the precarious position of Palestinian women and girls.
- 3) Palestinian women are prevented from receiving adequate medical treatment as a result of Israeli occupation.

Conference resolves:

- 1) To actively promote solidarity with the struggle of Palestinian women and the Palestinian people, including access to medical treatment.
- 2) Affirm our support for an immediate end to:
 - i) the blockade of Gaza;
 - ii) the illegal occupation of the West Bank; and
 - iii) the expansion of illegal settlements in Palestinian territory.

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NHS charging for ante-natal and maternity care

Annual Women's Conference deplores the 2017 introduction of NHS charging regulations requiring undocumented and destitute migrant and refugee women to pay 'up front' charges for ante-natal and maternity care.

We note these charges are part of Tory 'hostile environment' policies, introduced during the 2010 General Election. They lead to vulnerable and destitute migrant and refugee women losing care; they and their babies are at risk.

All maternity-related care is deemed to be 'immediately necessary' and should be given, regardless of ability to pay. However, most NHS Trusts charge and destitute pregnant women face hostile action by Home Office officials when they cannot pay.

We resolve to:

- 1) call on the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care and the Government to rescind the Regulations – and meanwhile suspend them pending research on their impact
- 2) call on the Shadow Secretary of State for Health and Social Care to express Labour's opposition to charging and agree to rescind the policy under a Labour government
- 3) call for all NHS Trusts to:
 - a) provide information on the number of women charged for care since the regulations were introduced.
 - b) exercise their discretion not to charge undocumented migrants in need of ante-natal and maternity care.
 - c) ensure that their Overseas Visitor Managers are trained in relevant law and Regulations and do not charge women eligible for free care or harass destitute women who are clearly unable to pay.

235 words

End period poverty now

Conference notes that:

1. One in 10 girls in the UK are unable to afford sanitary products, and 140,000 of them miss school each year. Some are forced to use old clothes, toilet paper and newspapers or rely on foodbanks for handouts.
2. Over a woman's lifetime, sanitary products cost more than £5,000, or around £13 every month.
3. Women on low incomes say they are often forced to choose between buying food or sanitary products.
4. Women in prison/police custody have inadequate access to sanitary products, which is a potential breach of human rights and equality law.
5. All the above result in safety (risk of toxic shock syndrome), hygiene and dignity issues.

Conference believes

1. That no girl or woman should suffer the distressing stigma of being unable to afford sanitary products.
2. That no girl should have to miss vital days of her education to avoid the embarrassment of bleeding on her school uniform in front of her peers.
3. That menstrual care is a human right. We rightly provide free contraception to all, why not free sanitary products too?

Conference welcomes

Dawn Butler's announcement at Conference in September 2017 that the next Labour Government will provide funding for free sanitary products for secondary schools, foodbanks and homeless shelters but believes this policy should go further.

Conference resolves

To call on the Labour Party Conference to extend this pledge in the Party's Manifesto and to commit to a universal system of free sanitary products across the country.

250 words

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FROM LABOUR CND:

Defend the INF Treaty

Labour Women's Conference:

- a) applauds the inspirational struggle of the Greenham Common women against US cruise missiles in Britain which highlighted the danger of nuclear war on our doorstep;
- b) recognises women's role in the adoption of the UN of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons for which ICAN was awarded the 2017 Nobel Peace Prize;
- c) is aware that the 1987 Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty
 - i. led to the removal US cruise and Pershing and Soviet SS20 missiles from Europe, including Greenham Common; and
 - ii. helped end the cold war between the US and USSR.

Conference deplores:

- a) President Trump's announcement that he intends to withdraw from the INF Treaty, reintroducing the threat of nuclear confrontation in Europe and beyond; and
- b) UK Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson's support for Trump's statement.

We recall Labour's 2017 manifesto:

- a) pledged 'to protect the security of our citizens and country';
- b) recognised 'We live in a period of growing international tensions'; and
- c) undertook to 'lead multilateral efforts with international partners and the UN to create a nuclear-free world'.

In line with this, we call on the Labour Party to:

- a) vigorously defend the INF Treaty in parliament and the country;
- b) commit to signing and ratifying the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, which will inevitably involve a commitment to scrap the Trident nuclear weapons system; and
- c) devote resources to the human security needs of Britain's citizens.

242 words