GMB calls on Labour Party conference to rally behind Protect our Protectors Bill

GMB National President for Manufacturing, Andy Irving, successfully moved an emergency motion at the Labour Party Conference to back an initiative to protect emergency services workers as they do their duty. Assaults against our emergency services are at a record high; 1,000 fire-fighters, 2,400 paramedics and over 2.4 million assaults on police officers last year.

GMB say this is yet more evidence MPs should support Chris Bryant’s Assault on Emergency Staff Bill, which would make assaulting emergency workers in the execution of their duty an aggravated offence. Addressing Labour Party Conference, Andy Irving said:

“This year we have seen the very best of our emergency services and we have been completely humbled by their bravery. Frontline workers are increasingly finding themselves in vulnerable situations and all too often security at work is far from a reality.”

“We can do something about it today. MPs and trade unions are fighting for a change in the law so that any assault on emergency services is an aggravated offence.”
Introduction

The Annual Labour Party Conference of 2017 is sure to be one that goes down in history. In terms of attendees, this years’ conference was the largest yet with a record breaking 12,000+ supporters making their way down to Brighton to witness the excitement and democratic change happening in the party over a snapshot of a few days. The sheer size of the event, along with the atmosphere and engagement of all visitors, is a further assertion of the inspiring movement that is happening within the party and a great reflection of the mounting membership which now stands at close to 600,000 - making the Labour Party the largest political party in Europe.

Sunday 24th September

The conference opened thirty minutes late due to the massive queues trying to get in. The conference proceedings started with Jeremy Corbyn receiving a hero’s welcome. The delegates start singing “Oh Jeremy Corbyn” as he took his place on the platform.

The Chair for the first session was Glenis Willmott MEP. Glenis has been a Labour MEP for the East Midlands since 2006 and from January 2009 has been Labour’s leader in Europe. In the European Parliament she is a member of the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety Committee. Glenis, a GMB member, is retiring shortly - we all wish her well.

Glenis Willmott MEP
The welcome to Brighton speech was given by Lloyd Russell-Moyle MP - Labour and Co-operative Member of Parliament for Kemptown and Peacehaven. He said he was pleased say Brighton was a Tory free zone and he welcomed all the hundreds of delegates attending conference for the first time. He praised the Labour Manifesto “the many and not the few” for its vision of hope for the future.

Lloyd Russell-Moyle MP

Merit awards

Winning team Batley and Spen

Batley and Spen Constituency winning the merit award for their effort in the by election after the murder of Jo Cox; then having to do it all again in the general election.

Obituaries

Mary Turner

A former school dinner lady at Salusbury primary school in Brent, north London, and a fervent socialist, Mary campaigned for 40 years for free hot meals at lunchtime for schoolchildren.
The introduction of free meals for infants, implemented as part of the Liberal Democrats’ policy programme for the coalition with the Conservatives in 2010, was a consequence of Mary’s unremitting pursuit of this cause but to her fury and dismay was destined for abolition in the recent Tory manifesto. However, the proposal was abandoned as a result of Theresa May’s failure to secure an overall majority - an outcome in which Mary rejoiced.

She left school at 16 to train as a bookkeeper at Jackson’s Tailors in Oxford Street. She joined the National Union of Tailors and Garment Workers, now part of the GMB. She also worked in the print industry, joining Sogat and becoming Mother of the Chapel of her branch.

She became increasingly active in the London region of the GMB. She was secretary of the Hendon branch for 26 years and a member of the union’s regional council. As a shop steward she was proud of her ability to mobilise a small army of secondary pickets to support industrial disputes or confront political opponents such as the National Front. During the 1981 People’s March for Jobs, she organised a mobile field kitchen to feed the unemployed marchers.

Mary was good at rostrum rhetoric as well as the small stuff; skills that were rewarded when she was elected to the union’s executive in 1983. She fought for those who needed help, for part-time workers, for the low-paid and for protection against unfair dismissal. Tim Roache, GMB general secretary, said: “The word ‘giant’ is sometimes overused but in the case of Mary she really was a true giant of our movement. Mary was the woman who led the GMB for 20 years and was the authentic voice of ordinary men and women rest in peace comrade”.

Mary Turner born 15 June 1938 - died 19 July 2017
Diane Abbott’s speech - summary

Diane Abbott, the shadow home secretary, claimed the Tories have “weaponised immigration”. She said:

“Tory opportunism on immigration is a disgrace. They continue to talk about bogus immigration targets, which they have not met and will never meet. The Tories have weaponised immigration”.

Using the language in Labour’s manifesto, Abbott said that Labour’s approach to immigration in government would focus on “fairness and the reasonable management of migration”. But she also strongly stressed the benefits of immigration.

She said Labour would reverse the government’s cuts to the counter-terrorism budget.

She said she thought the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea should be taken over by commissioners because of its failings over Grenfell Tower.

“The Tory controlled Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea treated the residents of Grenfell like second class citizens.

And when the disaster struck the Royal Borough’s response was shameful. Even now, out of all the families made homeless only a handful have been offered permanent homes.

And this in a borough with over two thousand empty properties. Am I the only person wondering why Commissioners have not been sent into the failing Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea”?

She the Grenfell Tower fire was “a direct consequence of deregulation of fire standards and inspection, privatisation and outsourcing” and the fire service should be the lead agency for fire inspections and assessing fire risk.

A Labour government would order inquiries into three separate miscarriage of justice allegations involving the treatment of workers involved in industrial disputes: Orgreave, the Shrewsbury 24 and the 37 Cammell Laird workers.
Debate

Speakers from the floor along with local government speakers delivered many personal accounts of how public service cuts have severely threatened our communities, hear are selection of contributions;

“Economic recovery has been the slowest recovery in a century the NHS starved of money and this has left us teetering on the brink of another recession”.

“The Tories have based their so called economic recovery on the biggest drop in Public Service wages since Victorian times”

“The tragedy of Grenfell Tower was the result of deregulation and it must never be forgotten”

“Our economy is based on privatising public services and replacing them with increasingly insecure work and a deregulation”.

It appears that the Tories haven’t learned any lessons from the economic crash. The dire need for Labour’s commitment to anti-austerity was made crystal clear.

End of morning session

Afternoon session

Andrew Gwynne, the shadow communities secretary, told delegates that Labour would deliver “a renaissance in local government” by giving councils more power, demanding greater transparency and boosting wages.

As the Press Association report, Gwynne said the measures amounted to some of the largest reforms to local government in recent times. PA goes on:

Under the plans Labour would ensure council services are run in-house as a default, to stop the tide of privatisation in local government.

Any service that is outsourced would have to go through public consultation.

But Labour would ensure private companies delivering public services would be subject to freedom of information, and demand extra transparency on their finances and performance.

The party would also introduce a “fair wage” clause for outsourced services, to stop workers in the private sector having worse pay and conditions than colleagues in the public sector.
Andrew Gwynne

**Housing debate**

Michelle Dorrell hit the headlines in October 2015 when she launched an impassioned attack on the home secretary over tax credits. Dorrell told the BBC programme she was a Tory voter. But, addressing the Labour party conference for the first time, she said she had now joined the party “to fight back against the destruction of my children’s future”. She told the main conference hall:

“Good afternoon comrades, my name’s Michelle Dorrell, I’m from the Folkestone and Hythe CLP, and yes, I am the woman that had a go at Amber Rudd on Question Time”.

She told delegates how she, her husband and then three-year-old child were left homeless when they were younger and the council had housed them in social housing within months.

“Somewhere we could call home, somewhere free from the fear of homelessness and anxiety, where we could raise our children and, crucially, we could afford the rent.

That was 15 years ago, and that safety net will never be available to my children or your children in the future.

Not whilst we have a Tory Government hell bent on putting money, corporations and themselves before the people they’re meant to represent.”

Michelle Dorrell
General Secretary’s Report - Iain McNicol Labour Party General Secretary

Iain McNicol the main points in his report: Labour finances are now in the black the deficit has been wiped out. Labour is now officially the biggest political party in Europe with five hundred and sixty thousand members. Labour achieved its largest percentage of the vote since nineteen forty five. The election has put Labour in sight of power.

Iain McNicol

Priorities Ballot

The results of the Priorities Ballot were also delivered, revealing which topics delegates from affiliates and CLPs deemed to be of most importance and worthy of debate later in the conference. I voted for the NHS, Social Care, Housing and Brexit.

Affiliate delegates (mostly trade unions) voted for: Growth and Investment Public Sector Pay, Workers’ Rights and Grenfell Tower.

CLP delegates voted for: the NHS, Social Care, Housing and Rail.

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<th>Issue</th>
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<td>Access to Education</td>
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<td>15,879</td>
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<td>North Korea</td>
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<td>Ban Conversion Therapy</td>
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<td><strong>8,556,000</strong></td>
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This result was slightly controversial as it excluded Brexit.
Yorkshire Night

The annual Yorkshire night was sponsored by GMB this year. GMB Yorkshire and North Derbyshire Regional Secretary, Neil Derrick, addressed the gathering.

The main points of his speech were GMB’s continuing support for working together with the Regional Party and the excellent effort by the Regional Party and GMB working together in the snap General Election. Tracy Brabin, MP for Batley and Spen, spoke about the election and by-election.

Tracy brought along two young singers who sang a selection of material from Les Miserable; they were both very talented and a good night was had by all!

Monday 25th October

The morning session debated Brexit and International Relations. There were many concerns, most notably by the media, that the conference had ducked the issue of Brexit. However, Monday morning saw plentiful debate.


Here are some of the key points from Emily Thornberry, shadow foreign secretary’s speech.

“Conference we now have a President of the United States who believes that none of these rules and laws apply to him.

- Imposing a travel ban on Muslims;

- Equivocating over illegal settlements;

- Reneging on the Paris climate treaty;

- Imperilling the nuclear deal with Iran;
- And threatening to “totally destroy” North Korea, a country of 20 million men, women and 5 million children. This is not what we need from the leader of the free world. To be honest, conference it’s more like what we would expect from a rogue dictator.”

She accused Theresa May of being “supine, sycophantic and spineless” in her relations with Trump.

Emily Thornberry used a joke about Boris Johnson’s private life to attack his stance on Brexit. “Let’s all take a second to sympathise with poor old Boris. Come on, just a second. He’s not been happy lately. Apparently he’s sick of being blamed for the way that Brexit is going, and all the broken promises of the leave campaign.

I’m sorry, what? Like, what? Who does he think made all those promises? Who does he think was in charge of the leave campaign?

I know that Boris does not like paternity tests, but maybe we need one for Brexit. Maybe we should take him into a studio with Jeremy Kyle. “I’m sorry, Mr Johnson, we got the results back, and it looks like this one is one of yours. It must have been that wild night out you had with Michael Gove. And I’ve calculated your maintenance payments. And that will be £350m a week.”

Thornberry was, of course, referring to Johnson fathering a daughter after an extramarital affair.

The speech went down really well in the hall with the delegates ending in a standing ovation.

Sir Keir Starmer MP - summary of his speech

Keir Starmer also has a go at Boris Johnson and other Conservative leaders.

He says: “who are the authors of this Tory tragedy? First, David Cameron, who gambled his country, because he couldn’t hold his party together.
Then, Boris Johnson, standing in front of his red bus, with a lie on the side - a false promise of £350m a week for the NHS. Ruthless about his own ambitions, but reckless about our country.

Now Theresa May, robotically marching towards an extreme Brexit - focussed on her own survival not the national interest. Maybe the Tories can afford this disastrous approach to Brexit. Maybe the Tories would benefit from a Brexit of deregulation, where rights are put at risk.

But you know, and I know, that millions of working people cannot. Whether you’re in the front seat with Theresa May, or in the backseat with Boris Johnson, there’s nothing patriotic about joy-riding our country’s economy off a cliff.”

He goes on to say: “Over the summer, Labour reached an agreed position that transitional arrangements on the same basic terms that we currently have with the EU are in the national interest.

For Labour that means that during the transitional phase, we would remain in a customs union with the EU and within the single market”.

Finishing off he says: “Our country today is so much better than our government. This is a country yearning for change. Theresa May - and whichever Brexiteer replaces her - cannot deliver that change. The old politics and the Tory old guard have had their day.

We need a transformative Labour government. Not just to break the impasse in Brexit negotiations and to deliver a progressive new partnership with the EU - vital though that is. But to tackle the wider injustices and inequalities we see all around us. To give hope that our society, our public services and our economy don’t have to be like this. That we can build a better, fairer and more inclusive Britain.

That’s why I came into politics. That is why you are in this hall. It’s why Jeremy has been able to mobilise 600,000 members …and inspire the support of over 12 million people. It’s why the clock is ticking for this prime minister and this government”.

A good speech but having followed Emily Thornberry he did not have quite the same impact.

Keir Starmer
Economy business and trade debate

Dennis Skinner, the veteran left-winger was next up. He said when he was a miner, and working with foreign miners, there was never any problem in the pits because everyone was on the same money and in the NUM. But the problem now is that zero-hours contracts are rife.

He said “Labour is thriving. You can tell from the fact that the conference was really busy on Sunday. That never happened even in Tony Blair’s day”.

He said governments should borrow to invest. “That is what private firms do. Governments should do so too.”

Short blunt and straight to the point, the Beast of Bolsover got a standing ovation.

Dennis Skinner

Debate

Discussion surrounding the economy followed on from Internationalism debate. Three composite motions were bought to the floor. The first was delivered by Unite the Union and seconded by the CWU.

Central to this composite motion were calls for infrastructure investment, re-nationalising the railway and Royal Mail, ensuring secure work, and the motion was summarised by “a Labour government is needed to replace Tory austerity policies to deliver an economy that works ‘for the many, not just the few.’”

Other motions included public sector pay and called for meaningful pay negotiation across the public sector with pay rises fully funded by the government to return to at least pre-Tory austerity levels of pay across all public services in order to reverse the impact of the pay cap.
The economy

**John McDonnell - Shadow Chancellor**

He said: “Only a few months ago we were 24 points behind in the polls. Our opponents and virtually every political commentator - those two groups are often interchangeable, by the way - they predicted that we would be wiped out in the general election.

I said then in interview after interview that the polls would narrow and we would shock them all. Not many believed me. And let’s be honest until you saw the exit polls, most of you were pretty on edge too, weren’t you? Before the election, I said that once we entered the election period and broadcasters were legally obliged to give us some semblance of balanced coverage, we would turn the poll ratings around.

Why? Well, first because people would be given a chance to see Jeremy Corbyn for what he is. The honest, principled and, yes, the strong and determined person and leader that he is. And, second, because people would see in our manifesto what we really stood for and our vision of hope”

John McDonnell then goes on to pay tribute to the Wilson government and even to the Blair/Brown government.

“And, yes, in 1997, after 18 years of Thatcherism, when whole industries and communities across our country had been destroyed by the Tories and our public services were on their knees, it was the Blair/Brown government that recognised and delivered the scale of public investment that a 21st century society needed”.

John McDonnell said Britain must prepare for the fourth industrial revolution.

“We have already had a foretaste of what this revolution would look like if it was left to the Tories. It is being used to vastly enrich tiny elite, whilst creating a life for many workers of long hours, low pay, and insecure employment.

There’s a choice to be made. We can remain a low-wage economy, specialising in zero hours contracts. Or we can use the state to help shape Britain’s future in this new world. We know it can be done.

As the Tories waste time and energy, alienating our closest trading partners, other countries are using state direction of innovation and investment to carve out vital areas of expertise - in robotics, in electronic cars, in clean-tech, in the smart city.

Though the technologies are new - the British problem is old.

The City is not channelling investment into high value, high productivity businesses. Instead, it’s channelling investment into property speculation.”

John McDonnell reaffirms Labours commitment to renationalisation.
“Building an economy for the many also means bringing ownership and control of the utilities and key services into the hands of people who use and work in them. Rail, water, energy, Royal Mail- we’re taking them back”.

This gets the conference into a frenzy with a cheer louder than I have ever heard at conference before in eighteen visits.

Finally John McDonnell said Labour wants Europe ‘for the many, not the few’.

“We cannot allow this dynamic vision for our economy to be undermined by the combination of belligerence and incompetence, displayed by the Tories in the current EU negotiations. Our aim is to create a Britain for the many, not the few. Our conscience doesn’t end at the English Channel. We also want a Europe for the many, not the few.

That’s why, whilst respecting the referendum decision, we will work with our partners across Europe to create a new European future, based upon collaboration and co-operation.

A long speech with a lot of content but very well received by conference.

John McDonnell

End of morning session

Monday Lunch Time event Taxi Campaign

Tim Roache, GMB General Secretary with Taxi Drivers
GMB, the professional drivers’ union, and taxi and private hire drivers from Brighton and the south coast held a rally outside Labour conference calling for urgent reform of regulation of taxi and private hire driving.

Mick Rix, GMB National Officer for Taxi and Private Hire Drivers, said:

“Our taxi and private hire industry is descending into a ‘Wild West’ situation with unscrupulous operators exploiting government’s failure to regulate properly. A government deregulation bill has created a chaotic situation in many towns and cities, where some licensing authorities issue licenses for taxis which then operate out of that jurisdiction - in places like Brighton.

Afternoon session

Work pensions and equality debate

Debbie Abrahams, the shadow work and pensions told delegates:

“The acceleration of women’s state pension equalisation by this government has left hundreds of thousands of women in dire straits. I’ve heard of women sofa-surfing in their 60s, living off the kindness of family or friends, having used up all their savings, because they can no longer do the work they used to. Too often older people are discriminated at work, as well as when they try to get into work. A government minister suggested that women should go and find an apprenticeship during a recent debate!

These women feel understandable anger that they have done the right thing and that the government has failed to deliver its side of the bargain. I have been meeting with them on my national pension’s tour. We promised in our manifesto to provide pension credit and additional support to the two and a half million 1950s women still waiting to retire.

As a starter, I can announce today that a Labour government in power now would allow these women to retire up to two years early.”

Later the Labour Party clarified the position by saying this proposal would be cost-neutral over the long term because an early retirement reduction would be applied to anyone taking advantage of this option and retiring early. The reduction would be applied to the state pension at 6% for each year that they bring their retirement forward.

Debbie Abrahams
City Mayors

It had been decided that in future the conference would only have room for one mayor to speak. This year would be Sadiq Khan, Mayor of London.

He started with a full and sincere tribute to Jeremy Corbyn. He said; “Let’s be clear, Theresa May called this snap election to try and wipe us out. And boy did she fail.

It was inspiring to see millions of people vote for the first time - especially so many young people. And it was inspiring to see so many people who used to vote for our party return home to Labour.

We made huge progress in the general election and the credit for that goes to one person - the leader of our party - Jeremy Corbyn”.

Following this opening piece he received more support from conference by praising the emergency services for their response to the London terror attacks and to the Grenfell Tower fire. He orchestrated some sustained applause for the emergency services and health workers.

He went on to say: “Conference, despite the challenges we’ve faced over the past year - I’m optimistic, positive and hopeful about our future. I’m so proud to call myself British and to call myself a Londoner. I’m confident that both London and the UK have bright futures ahead. That we can become a more prosperous, safe and equal country.

And, Conference, I’m optimistic about Labour’s future too. Optimistic that we’ll build on the success of Labour in power in London, Manchester, Liverpool and Wales. That we’ll make more progress in the local elections next year. That we’ll make a huge difference to the lives of millions. That we can build a fairer Britain. A more prosperous Britain. A safer Britain. And that Labour under Jeremy Corbyn will win the next general election”.

It was a well delivered relatively light speech. Ending with a burst of optimism appreciated by conference.

Sadiq Khan
Workers’ rights debate

Tim Roache, the GMB general secretary, urged people to boycott Starbucks, Uber and Amazon because their products are “cheap at the expense of workers”. Speaking to the conference earlier he said:

“We have a moral responsibility: these things are not cheap for nothing; they are cheap at the expense of workers. So it’s not good enough for you to get into an Uber cab and then deny or pretend it was a proper licensed one.

It’s not good enough to use Ryanair when Michael O’Leary abuses his workers by making them pay a fee to interview for a job, and pay them nothing for six months while they train. It’s not good enough to use Amazon because it’s cheap because you find across the website there are people being abused.

It’s not good enough to go in Starbucks when you come sneaking out wrapping your hand around the coffee in case anyone sees you”.

This was a short rousing speech greatly appreciated by conference.

Tim Roache

Tuesday 26th September morning session

Diana Holland, the Labour party treasurer, presented her report to the conference “10 years ago the Labour party was in debt to the tune of almost £25m. But last year, for the first time since the 1960s, the party was debt free.”

She said the party’s finances are “strong and stable”. And every penny donated for campaigning is spent on campaigning.

She said Labour had more than £2m set aside for the local and mayoral elections in May. And, when the snap election was called, it was able to start immediately with a budget of £3.5m. She says Labour’s donations during the election came from “the many, not the few”. On one day £470,000 was donated.

The financial report was unanimously adopted.
Diana Holland

Labour party rule changes debate

Jim Kennedy, a member of Labour’s national executive committee, opens the debate.

He said the NEC is proposing three rule changes: one would add four new seats to the NEC three for constituencies, one for the unions. The second would reduce the proportion of supporting MPs and MEPs needed for someone to stand as leader from 15% to 10% and the third would tighten disciplinary rules.

There are another 10 proposed rule changes from constituency parties that the NEC wants delegates to vote down.

Other rule changes include measures to tighten Labour rules on anti-Semitism.

The rule changes are approved.

Jim Kennedy

Investing in the future debate

Rebecca Long-Bailey shadow business secretary starts by talking about her father, who had a job in Salford unloading oil tankers.

“My dad’s work was unskilled, but it paid well. My parents even managed to get a mortgage for their own little house. And from poverty-plagued childhoods, which made the film Angela’s Ashes look like an advert for a luxury minibreak, they felt proud of their achievement!”
And that was true of so many working class people right across Britain, for the first time in history they were truly being offered the chance to aspire!

But under Thatcher industries such as my fathers were put into what is so callously called ‘managed decline’. It meant factories shutting their doors, firms moving abroad or simply closing down, lower wages for those who could still find work, and cuts to benefits for those who couldn’t”.

She went on to say that change is moving ever faster.

“The pace of change we have seen in the last 20 years will pale in comparison to the next 20. Over the last few centuries, we have gradually learnt how to transfer more and more human skills to machines. With current technological breakthroughs, we are, for the first time, designing machines that do cognitive and non-routine work even machines that think!

There is no doubt about what the digital age will look like under the Tories: monopoly profits for the few, and increased exploitation for the many.

Only Labour will ensure that workers and businesses are equipped to enjoy the prosperity this changing economy can bring.”

Workers’ rights

“We’ll restore the rights of workers - rolling out sectoral collective bargaining and guaranteeing union’s access to the workplace - to ensure that new technology is not just an excuse for disgraced old employment practices. Because there is nothing cutting edge about hire-and-fire, casual contracts.

We’ll ensure that workers themselves can have a stake in our industrial journey alongside business.”

She concluded her speech announcing a review of alternative models of ownership.

“Imagine if the technology which allows us to hail a taxi or order a takeaway via an app was shared by those who rely on it for work. They would have the power to agree their own terms and conditions and rates of pay, with the profits shared among them or re-invested for the future.

That’s why we are today launching a Report on Alternative Models of Ownership.

To start asking fundamental questions about how we achieve real diversity of business in the digital age, and how to ensure that it’s enormous potential benefits serve the many, not the few.”

A good speech that goes down well in the conference hall.
Angela Rayner, the shadow education secretary says she has personal experience of how politics can make a difference to people’s lives.

“When I became pregnant at sixteen, it was easy to think that the direction of my life, and that of my young son, was already set. My mum had a difficult life, and so did I and it looked like my son would simply have the same.

Instead, the last Labour government, through support of my local Sure Start centre, transformed my son’s childhood, and made sure that his life would not have to be as hard as mine had been. So when I say that politics changes lives, I say it as someone whose own life was changed”.

She went on to say:

“Theresa May started it by warning of a coalition of chaos. Now she leads it. And her education ministers have spent the last few months ripping up their own manifesto page by page.

They wanted to open new grammar schools. But they can’t. They said they’d build 140 free schools. They couldn’t. They pledged the healthy pupils fund would not fall below £400 million. Now it will. They promised they’d provide free school breakfasts. But they won’t.

When we beat them on tuition fees, they refused to accept it. Instead they will just stop turning up for votes. They’ve gone from running the place to running away from the place.

In fact, I went through their manifesto line by line. There are more education policies that they are reviewing or abandoning than they are actually implementing”.

She said she is publishing a plan for free childcare.
“The Tories promised free childcare to the children of working parents. They promised over 600,000 places. But they created less than a quarter of them. The most disadvantaged aren’t even eligible and costs are rising more than twice as fast as wages.

Today, we are publishing a report setting out the alternative. Free, high-quality early education, universally available for every two to four-year-old and extra affordable care for every family, saving them thousands of pounds a year. So our children will be ready for school. And when children arrive, they won’t be let down for a lack of resources there either”.

Angela Rayner concluded by stating Labour’s proposed national education service won’t stop at 18. It will make further education more available. And Labour will invest £1bn making T-levels (new technical qualifications) “a true gold standard”. She said “our national education service will be life-long, providing for people at every stage of their life”

Quite a long speech full of detail very popular with conference, she receives a standing ovation.

Angela Rayner

Afternoon session

International speaker Naomi Klein Speech highlights

The writer and activist Naomi Klein spoke to the conference. She was speaking in the slot reserved for an international visitor. The passage that went down best was probably this one, where she described Jeremy Corbyn and his Labour party as an inspiration to progressives around the world, she said:

“The public is hungry for deep change - they are crying out for it.

The trouble is, in far too many countries, it’s only the far right that is offering it, or seeming to, with that toxic combination of fake economic populism and very real racism.

You showed us another way.
One that speaks the language of decency and fairness that names the true forces most responsible for this mess - no matter how powerful. And that is unafraid of some of the ideas we were told were gone for good. Like wealth redistribution. And nationalising essential public services.

Now, thanks to all of your boldness, we know that this isn’t just a moral strategy.

It’s a winning strategy.

It fires up the base, and it activates constituencies that long ago stopped voting altogether. If you can keep doing that between now and the next election, you will be unbeatable.

You showed us something else in the last election too, and it’s just as important.

You showed that political parties don’t need to fear the creativity and independence of social movements - and social movements, likewise, have a huge amount to gain from engaging with electoral politics.

That’s a very big deal. Because let’s be honest: political parties tend to be a bit freakish about control. And real grassroots movements we cherish our independence - and we’re pretty much impossible to control.

But what we are seeing with the remarkable relationship between Labour and Momentum, and with other wonderful campaign organizations, is that it is possible to combine the best of both worlds.

If we listen and learn from each other, we can create a force that is both stronger and more nimble than anything either parties or movements can pull off on their own.

I want you to know that what you have done here is reverberating around the world - so many of us are watching your on-going experiment in this new kind of politics with rapt attention.”

The speech went down well with a packed conference giving her a lasting standing ovation.

Naomi Klein
Health

Jonathan Ashworth - Shadow secretary of state for health

Jonathan Ashworth said: Labour would reverse the marketisation of the NHS.

“Our NHS is undermined by millions of pounds wasted on endless tendering of services to private providers. It is patient care that suffers.

Let me give a quick example, an ambulance contract here in Sussex handed to a private company who didn’t own any ambulances so they sub-contracted to 20 other companies. Two ceased trading and ambulances drivers couldn’t be paid. Thankfully the contract was taken back off private hands.

I had the privilege of meeting those ambulance drivers recently. They continued taking patients to appointments for 8 weeks without pay.

Doesn’t that show public service is about a greater calling, is about compassion, care and public duty, not contracts, markets and commercialisation.

So a Labour government will legislate to reinstate the Secretary of State’s duty to provide universal care, we’ll reintegrate the NHS, reverse the Health and Social Care Act, fight fire sales of hospital assets and end Tory privatisation.”

He said he would introduce a national strategy to help the children of alcoholics and drug users.

“This year £43m will be slashed from alcohol and drug addiction treatment services. Recently, I chose to speak out very personally about my own circumstances, growing up with a dad who had a drink problem. He was an alcoholic.

His drinking hung over my childhood with the fridge empty other than bottles of drink. His drinking became so bad in his final years he couldn’t bring himself to come to my wedding because he felt too embarrassed.

I tell this story not for your indulgence or sympathy. But because 2 million children grow up with an alcoholic parent, 335,000 children grow up with a parent with drug abuse issues.

So as part of our assault on child ill health, I will put in place the first ever national strategy to support children of alcoholics and drug users and we’ll invest in addiction treatment and prevention as well.

He said Labour would allocate an extra £45bn for health and social care. There would also be a new £500m “emergency winter fund”.

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Jonathan Ashworth delivered one of the best received speeches of the conference. There was a feeling in the hall that the NHS would be safe in Labour hands. Both emotional and uplifting at the same time, great!

Jonathan Ashworth

Emergency Motion - Bombardier

The emergency motion was seconded by Neil Derrick the Regional Secretary of the Yorkshire and North Derbyshire region of the GMB.

The motion was about American air giant Boeing taking US court proceedings against Bombardier which could lead to two hundred per cent tariffs being imposed. In fact Boeing had suffered no detriment and there was no merit in this case.

“We are emphasising that the British Government needs to be stronger in saying to Boeing that they are reviewing, revisiting, re-looking at contracts that are very sizeable, second only to Japan, and that the British Government should be using that leverage with Boeing”.

Neil Derrick
**Emergency Motion - assaults on emergency workers**

The emergency motion was moved by Andy Irving the Regional President of the Yorkshire and North Derbyshire region of the GMB.

The main issues were, assaults on paramedics, police officers and other public service workers and the widespread mental as well as physical health problems they cause.

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**Andy Irving**

**Grenfell debate**

Matt Wrack, general secretary of the Fire Brigades Union, gave a speech moving an emergency motion on assaults on emergency service workers.

Most of his speech was about the Grenfell Tower fire. He said people had been criticised for “politicising” the fire. But it happened as a result of decisions taken by politicians.

He said politicians should be summoned to give evidence to the inquiry.

But, he said, if it became clear to the FBU and community representatives “the whole thing is working towards a whitewash”, the FBU would consider withdrawing cooperation from it.

“We need to ask questions about the privatisation and deregulation of building controls, of fire risk assessments, the destruction of the fire inspecting role within the fire service, the elimination of publicly funded fire research within the UK, the abolition of national standards within the fire service.

We have to look at why housing becomes more and more a commodity for the production of profit for developers. We need to look at why local authority funding is cut as never before, the fire service is cut as never before and when regeneration means forcing out working class communities out of our city centres and into other areas.”

Wrack also spoke about the Grenfell Tower fire at a fringe meeting last night, saying it was a crime that should bring down the government.
Barbara Keeley, the shadow minister for mental health and social care, told the conference in her speech that Labour would set up a national care service, spending £3bn a year on it at the start. She said:

“A service in which we pool the risk of high care costs so that no-one is faced with catastrophic costs as they are now.

In its first years, our national care service will receive an extra £3bn in public funds every year: Enough to place a cap on what individuals have to pay towards care. Enough to raise the asset threshold for paying for care. Enough to provide free end of life care

To act on our pledge, we will invite an independent, expert panel to advise us on how we move from the current broken system of care to a sustainable service for the long term.
“Machiavelli’s famous advice was that it’s better to be feared than to be loved. This mantra runs as deep in the Tory party as blue through a stick of Brighton rock. Fear is how they win. Fear is how they govern.

Mrs May, the Tory party was never loved. But you were happy to be feared. It worked for you. Well not any more. 15 months in, you still seem as dazed as on day one. Caught between your enemies and, even worse, your friends. Caught in the headlights. Living on Boris time.”

As shadow culture secretary, I’ve got one of the best jobs there is. When I get invited to the theatre or to the cinema or, yes, to Glastonbury, I get to say I’m only there for work. And one of the most surreal moments of my political life happened to me late at night, in a field, surrounded by people much younger and far more stylish than me.

I realised something as the crowd at Glastonbury’s silent disco began to sing:

“Oh, Jeremy Corbyn…..” And as they sang, I realised it’s actually better to be loved than to be feared. And Jeremy has shown us that it’s possible”.

Tom Watson said as culture secretary in a Labour government one of his early priorities will be tackling problem gambling he said:

“The damage to the families of gambling addicts can be terrible. Yet some gambling firms, driven by greed, are deliberately targeting our poorest communities. We now know that when vulnerable people try to opt out of online gambling, companies don’t always block their accounts as they should.

Gambling companies are even harvesting data to deliberately target low-income gamblers and people who’ve given up.

As Mike Dixon, boss of mental health charity Addiction says, “gambling addiction tears lives and families apart. It’s outrageous that an industry with £13bn revenue contributes less than £10m to treatment”.

Well Mike, I can tell you that a Labour government will introduce a compulsory levy”.

Our review will look at how best to fund NHS treatment and help free problem gamblers from the destructive cycle of addiction. My message to gambling firms today is clear: stop targeting vulnerable people. Start acting properly. And meet your obligation to help those whose lives have been blighted by addiction.

You can do it now, because it’s the right thing to do. Or you can wait for the next Labour government to do it for you.

Oh and by the way, the same applies to the organisations that run football in this country. If you won’t ban football clubs from signing shirt sponsorship deals with betting companies - Labour will.”
He finished off by saying: “Winding up my speech last year, I predicted an early election. In which, I also said, we’re going to give the Tories the surprise of their lives. Well conference, we did it.

Jeremy, you did it. So this year I’m going to go out on another limb.

Yes, there’s hard work to do and no, we mustn’t be complacent, but Jeremy Corbyn has broken the spell of fear the Tories sought to cast on this country. He has helped us all to remember that politics should be about inspiring hope, not peddling despair. He has shown us again what a real alternative to Toryism looks like and what it can achieve.

And because of that, I tell you, Conference, Jeremy Corbyn will be our next prime minister.

Politics now is a fight between those who want to be feared and those who’re not frightened to love. Britain’s run out of patience with the tin-pot Machiavellis. Boris Johnson, Michael Gove, Liam Fox and the rest of you: your time is up.

This country is ready for change. Ready to throw off the shackles, to turn back the tide; ready to do the right thing and to do the thing right. In place of fear, love.

Conference, Britain is ready for Labour. Love wins and so will we.”

A decent speech. After Tom Watson finished he was joined on stage by the whole shadow cabinet, to pose for pictures alongside Jeremy Corbyn. There was more “Oh, Jeremy Corbyn” chanting. The time was now well past six but the hall was still relatively full.

Tom Watson
Wednesday 27th September

The leader Jeremy Corbyn’s Speech

Jeremy Corbyn spoke for 75 minutes in a speech that promised Labour would be an “antidote to apathy and despair”, with better housing at the heart of its reforms. These are the key points:

Labour is on the threshold of power and has become the government in waiting. Labour only won 262 MPs out of 650 but made a significant gain in vote share and added seats in unexpected areas. Corbyn is also sounding much more confident as a potential future prime minister, declaring: “Labour is ready.”

The Tories are definitely not strong or stable but relying on the magic money tree. The Labour leader is turning the Conservatives’ rhetoric on themselves, saying Theresa May has a “coalition of chaos around her own cabinet table”. This is a rare attack on individual Tories such as Boris Johnson and Philip Hammond over their squabbling over Brexit.

Labour is the “party of unity”, bringing young and old together. It is remarkable the Labour leader can make this claim after talk of a split at last year’s conference. It is not yet quite true that young and old are united in support of Labour though - the young overwhelmingly opted for Labour while older people voted for the Tories in their droves.

Jeremy Corbyn puts the Grenfell fire tragedy at the heart of his speech, saying housing will be a Labour priority. This is the Labour leader’s most powerful passage, arguing Tory deregulation and austerity contributed to the fire. “That degraded regime has a tragic monument: the chilling wreckage of Grenfell Tower,” he said.

A Labour government will bring in rent controls and ensure tenants are rehoused locally when estates are regenerated. This is the new policy in Jeremy Corbyn’s speech. He says regeneration schemes will have to benefit existing communities, as tenants must still get a home on the same site and will get a ballot on whether the project should go ahead. That will be a blow to developers who often try to limit affordable housing. Rent controls would allow cities potentially to go as far as controlling prices, not just the rate of increases.

Labour wants more workplace democracy. Jeremy Corbyn only hints at possible reforms but this is likely to please the unions and put businesses on their guard. He talks of “new participatory forms of management” and employees “given their voice at work, with unions able to represent them properly, freed of undemocratic fetters on their right to organise”.

Jeremy Corbyn attacks the traditional media and its tax exile owners who “trash Labour at every turn”, especially the Daily Mail. He makes a joke that he wishes the Mail would extend its coverage because it was counterproductive but he makes
a serious point that hostile media reports fuelled abuse online against Diane Abbott. His attack on powerful newspapers suggests Labour is feeling emboldened.

Labour is the only party that can unite those who want to leave and those who want to remain in the EU. That is a big promise and very difficult to achieve given the strong feelings on both sides. But Jeremy Corbyn says this is possible if Labour is allowed to run the economy, boost wages, improve employment laws and make people’s living standards better. “We will never follow the Tories into the gutter of blaming migrants for the ills of society,” he says.

The economy is at risk under the Tories regardless of Brexit. This is the overarching narrative of the speech, arguing Conservative deregulation caused the economic crash and austerity worsened subsequent wage depression, which people are still feeling almost a decade later. He is trying to rewrite the script, set by David Cameron in 2010, that Labour crashed the economy.

Jeremy Corbyn recommits to taking back utilities into public ownership. This was a manifesto policy but he singles out the water companies for particular criticism for high pay and dividends to foreign owners.

Businesses will have to pay a bit more tax. Labour says it is focusing its tax-raising plans on businesses and higher earners, while promising low and middle earners will not be affected.

Labour would scrap the public sector pay cap. This is no surprise as the trade unions have long fought against the 1% cap and Jeremy Corbyn has repeatedly spoken against it.

Labour would change the law on organ donation so people are presumed to consent to donation unless they have opted out. This has been a big campaign by the Mirror, and would mean families no longer have to take difficult decisions at the bedsides of dying relatives.

Tuition fees would be abolished for both university and further education students. The Labour leader stressed people will be funded through vocational qualifications as well; taking the emphasis off the free university education that became a focal point during the election.

Democracy is under threat from both authoritarianism and political elites. This is a new version of the attacks on the political establishment, comparing authoritarianism with “equally insidious” democracies where governments ignore their voters. He said democracy must mean “listening to people outside of election time”.

Jeremy Corbyn dismisses those who still want to “do politics the old way”. That appears to be a mildly worded warning to the Labour MPs and officials who still pine after the Blair and Brown era.

Bombing campaigns must not be the kneejerk response to the five awful acts of terrorism the UK has suffered. This is a repeat of the Labour leader’s argument
during the election campaign that foreign wars have exacerbated the terror threat, which appeared to be well received by the public.

Perhaps the biggest cheers of the whole speech go to his plea for an end to the oppression of the Palestinian people.

Jeremy Corbyn ends with a rousing promise to offer “an antidote to apathy and despair”. The crowd was delighted with Jeremy Corbyn’s speech, which ran through the party’s election manifesto and contained little new policy.

The conference finished to a traditional rendition of the Red Flag, followed by Jerusalem.

Jeremy Corbyn

Press reaction

Polly Toynbee:

Corbyn’s uniting words on Brexit sealed the deal. Oh, Jeremy Corbyn, what a difference a year makes. The cult and its chanters sometimes render him a plaster saint, vacant emblem for any passing hope or dream. But here was a speech of solid sense, not airy aspiration. This united party are all Corbelievers now, and which lingering Labour doubters can pick a quarrel with any of this agenda? Believing he might really win has never been easier.
Matthew d’Ancona:

Economically illiterate, but Corbyn’s Labour would win an election. Too long by far, rambling in places and woolly in others, Jeremy Corbyn’s speech yet the most powerful force driving Corbynism towards office is not the strength of his blueprint but the fraying of the blue rosette. For who needs friends when you have enemies like the Conservatives? The phrase “self-interested Brexit bungling” will echo in Manchester next week. So will Corbyn’s demand: “Pull yourself together or make way.” His own party may or may not be, in his own words, “government-ready”. The remarkable fact remains that were an election held today, Labour would win it.

Ellie Mae O’Hagan:

Confident, audacious and ready for power. Jeremy Corbyn’s speech last year was good, but the conference felt somewhat deflated. This year Corbyn was nothing short of incredible - his speech was confident and audacious, his delivery nearly flawless. He had the swagger one would expect from a man closing Labour’s most lively conference in years, and who had recently been at the centre of a grassroots movement that destabilised a hubristic government.

Anne Perkins:

If the heavy policy lifting isn’t done, that chant will become a joke.
Savour this moment (Jeremy Corbyn certainly did, for more than an hour): a Labour leader pledging economic and political revolution, live on national television, cheered to the echo and ahead in the polls. If love conquers all, the next election is a done deal.

Maurice Mcleod: Music to my ears, and perhaps his last speech in opposition

This was my first conference as a Labour member for 21 years. In 1996, Tony Blair talked about Labour “being for all the people rather than just for the few”. This wasn’t the only echo I heard in Brighton.

Analysis

The last two Labour conferences were fractious affairs dominated by widespread party infighting, acrimony and more than a whiff of outright chaos.

This week, by contrast, has almost felt like a victory rally with Jeremy Corbyn’s backers dominating proceedings throughout.

Attempts by the leadership to push through changes to the party’s leadership structure were unanimously successful as what is left of the opposition to the Labour leader faded away.

Two of Jeremy Corbyn’s biggest critics in the party, Deputy Leader Tom Watson and London Mayor Sadiq Khan, both publicly backed their leader in their speeches. Watson’s retreat, from his former position of seeking to oust Jeremy Corbyn, was particularly remarkable.

Jeremy Corbyn was famously reluctant to run for Labour leader and throughout his leadership has often struggled to answer questions about whether he expects, or even wants, to become Labour leader. The experience of the last general election appears to have removed that self-doubt.

The 2017 election campaign was a downbeat - Theresa May against a relentlessly optimistic Jeremy Corbyn.

Whatever you think of Corbyn’s speech and the agenda he has set out, this was the speech of a man who expects to be entering Downing Street in the coming months or years.
Fringe highlights

Clive Lewis, the former shadow business secretary, speaking at fringe event on energy said that trade unions which are involved in the nuclear industry have become “a voice for big business”.

He singled out GMB for being too close to the nuclear lobby and said it was not speaking up for renewable energy because it does not have members there. He also questioned why unions “fight to the bitter end” for the arms industry.

His comments reflect tensions within the Labour movement over union support for nuclear power and a nuclear deterrent. GMB, Unite and Prospect have tens of thousands of members in the nuclear and arms industries.

He said “One of the problems with where trade unions are at the moment is that they have been so weakened that I think they have become, and have been used by big business as, a voice for big business.

Because big business understands that if you have a unionised workforce they also become spokespeople for you. They create a situation where you have a wide and broad spectrum politically of people supporting your particular position.

On nuclear, yes, GMB and other unions are staunchly supporting it because the jobs there generate union members. Contrast that to the highly self-employed solar sector, the unions have no trade unions there. They are not speaking up at all for them”.

The GMB union responded to Lewis’s comments. A spokesperson said:

We’ll put copies of the Uber and Addison Lee judgements in the post for Clive. He can have a read about what taking on big business and organising ‘self-employed workers’ really looks like.

Our energy workers keep the lights on. Of course we want more renewables - and we want good renewable jobs here in the UK - but right now they don’t exist because the government isn’t investing.

GMB will always stand up for our members and their jobs and that’s who we speak for, that’s what a trade union does.
And finally

You have probably seen on TV delegates frantically waving all sorts of weird and wonderful objects, trying to catch the eye of the chair of conference so they can speak. This one is the best I have seen so far, it’s a portrait of Jeremy Corbyn complete with tinsel, flashing lights and a halo. I don’t think he was successful though!

Oh Jeremy Corbyn!


How to contact us

If you want to hear more about GMB or Labour Party events or would like to become a GMB delegate to your constituency Labour Party, please get in touch with us using the contact details below:

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