

Labour Party Women's Conference 2021

Campaign for Labour Party Democracy suggestions for motions: deadline Midday on 26 May

More information: <https://labour.org.uk/conference/womens-conference-2021/>

Women, Climate Change and the Economy

Conference notes:

1. Humanity has, at most, nine years to stop catastrophic climate change by keeping global temperature rises below 1.5°C.
2. Already 1.2°C of warming has taken place, causing floods, droughts and rising seas.
3. Women, especially in the Global South, are disproportionately impacted by climate change.
4. The disproportionate impact of Covid on women's employment, and therefore the need for new green jobs.
5. The necessity to rapidly cut emissions.
6. Despite green rhetoric the Tory government has no plan to meet climate targets, instead cutting Green Home Grants and provide an additional £40bn of fossil fuels subsidies since March 2020.

Conference supports a Green New Deal to keep temperature rise below 1.5°C, create millions of green jobs and cut the substantial majority of emissions by 2030 by:

- a. Upgrading homes to the highest standard of energy efficiency.
- b. Powering Britain with renewable energy, and banning fracking.
- c. Increasing public ownership.
- d. Investing in public, low-carbon transport.
- e. Ending fossil fuel subsidies
- f. Supporting the TUC's proposal to create 1.24 million jobs within two years by investing £85bn in green technology, transport and housing, ensuring these are accessible to women and young people.

Conference calls on the Women's Committee to promote the TUC's 'Voice and Place: How to plan fair and successful paths to net zero emissions' and STUC's 'Green Jobs for Scotland' reports; and build a joint campaign across local Labour Parties, community groups, and trade unions for a Green New Deal, highlighting the benefits for women.

250 words

Prioritising Women and the Poverty Emergency in a post-Covid economy

Evidence shows that low-income, working class people – those most politically invisible and powerless within society and in particular, low-income single parent women – have again been most harshly impacted by Covid, including many lost lives and livelihoods.

Being unable to afford rent or mortgage, buy in additional help to support children through trauma, have adequate access to safe outdoor and indoor space, savings or the option of downsizing, have added up to a particularly harmful set of pressures for many women. We stand in solidarity with the daily struggles of our less politically visible sisters and call on the Labour Party to recognise poverty and class as significant equalities issues, intersecting with and compounding other equalities factors, causing untold misery and harm.

The Poverty Emergency declaration commits councils to addressing poverty as an equalities issue, to working collectively with other councils to improve poverty data, to be more proactive in lobbying government and to put people and poverty alongside planet at the heart of recovery from COVID. It promotes a rights-based rather than charitable recovery model that includes community education and support regarding collective ownership, in order to shape a community-led more equal and democratic economy.

We call on the Party, and the new Women's Committee, to support Labour-led councils to take actions for women and their families, to support the Poverty Emergency declaration, as put forward by Cheshire West and Chester Council, and to promote Community Wealth Building initiatives such as those supported by Preston Council and North Ayrshire Council.

250 Words

More information: <https://www.classactivist.com/poverty-emergency>

Violence against Women and Girls

Conference notes with concern the increase in domestic abuse and violence against women and girls during the pandemic.

Conference also notes the rise in harassment and misogynist abuse online, with isolation during the pandemic increasing pressure on women and girls, amid growing concerns of inadequate mental health service provision.

Conference notes that Jess Phillips MP on 11 March spoke in the House of Commons, recording the names of 118 women and girls killed in the UK since March 2020, where a man has been charged or convicted.

Since 2009 the Femicide Census and the Counting Dead Women project have recorded in the UK over 1,690 women and girls aged 14 and over that have been killed by men.

Conference reaffirms the Labour Party's commitment to:

- 1) increase funding for frontline services supporting women and children living with or seeking to leave, domestic abuse situations
- 2) Invest in public services, including local authority housing, with specific allocations to meet the needs of women experiencing domestic violence
- 3) Invest in mental health support services, with dedicated resources for women and girls
- 4) Press for the incorporation of the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women into UK, Scottish and Welsh law, as agreed at previous UK Labour Women's conferences and in previous manifestos.

Conference calls on the Women's Committee to campaign alongside all those speaking up against violence against women, and to resist measures which prevent women from taking to the streets to protest to express their very legitimate anger.

249 words

Support for women threatened with fines and imprisonment

Conference notes

1. that at several points in the Covid pandemic, schools have been forced to open for all students by the government despite the view of experts and unions that it has been unsafe for those attending and their families.
2. That the government has been encouraged in their bad decision-making, by the Leader of the Labour Party, for example writing in the *Daily Mail* 'I don't just want all our children back in school, I expect it. No ifs, no buts.'
3. Many parents, and in particularly mothers, have been deeply concerned about the potential impact of Covid spreading in schools on clinically vulnerable students and members of the family, and chosen to temporarily home school their children for this reason.

Conference believes that threats by authorities to withdraw school places, fine, prosecute or imprison mothers who have not sent their children into schools they believe to be unsafe are wrong. No parent who has kept their child home should be threatened or punished in this way.

We stand in solidarity with all parents and school staff at this stressful time. We call on the Labour leadership to support:

- parents and unions campaigning for safer schools;
- parental choice regarding attendance;
- increased mental health support, resources and spaces for all children that need them.

We applaud women who as mothers and carers have shouldered the heaviest burdens in terms of childcare and home-schooling alongside formal work and other caring roles.

241 words

Improving representation of low income, working class women

During the pandemic, those on the lowest incomes have experienced over twice the rate of mortality of those on the highest incomes, with working class women having borne a disproportionately heavy impact. Yet this, and the range of other disproportionate impacts on long term health/mental health, income, education and housing security, despite being well-documented, are largely absent from national discourse.

Much more effort is needed to ensure that politically invisible working class people have a place at the table within our Party. We cannot make serious claims to care about equality and democracy whilst less than four per cent of Labour MPs come from working class backgrounds, relative to over 30 percent of the general population.

Low income working class women are invisible within influential and public-facing political roles currently. Studies confirm that our party has seen a marked decline in working class participation in general over the past three decades and this has impacted our vote where we have lost seats. We need low income women in public-facing and policy-influencing roles in order to regain credibility within those communities.

We call on the Labour Party to pro-actively ensure increased visibility and participation of working class / low income women at all levels of the party, with an emphasis on low income women members' practical support needs in self-organising and influencing, starting by pro-actively gathering appropriate monitoring data and urgently developing and publicising access pathways.

235 words

Valuing women as carers and mothers

Most mothers bear multiple additional pressures as a result of their unpaid and under-valued caring roles within society, and this is particularly the case for low-income women. There is much evidence to confirm that, over the past year, the economic, health, housing and educational impacts of austerity on low-income mothers and their children have only intensified as a result of the current Covid crisis and will continue to do so.

'Low status' women workers and benefit claimants who are mothers have fewer savings and lower disposable income after housing costs. Their work (including in health and social care, education, retail, and unpaid caring) has been vital to society. They have borne a greater proportion of gendered violence. Against a backdrop of overcrowding and home-schooling with insufficient digital access, the invisible yet vital emotional labour of mothering, caring and accessing support for vulnerable relatives and traumatised children has taken a heavy toll on low-income women's mental health, who will see further cuts to support services for themselves and their children.

We call on the Labour Party, including the new Women's Committee, to call out these additional tolls on women, to demand an end to poverty parenting and to value the emotional labour of caring and being the primary parent, given the skills and energy required and the vital contributions afforded to our wider society. We demand an equalities approach to all women's labour and greater esteem for those that fulfil these roles.

241 Words

Justice for victims of child sexual exploitation.

On 28 November 2020, the government finally introduced changes to the automatic disclosure of past convictions by the Disclosure and Barring Service. Whilst this may be a great victory for a man whose old convictions for drug dealing can now be 'filtered' or forgotten, it is not a victory for the women who were victims of child sexual exploitation and who were victimised for a second time by convicting them for soliciting even though they were children. Whilst the offences of supplying drugs can be 'filtered' or forgotten, 'soliciting', even if the offender was a child, can never be 'filtered' or forgotten.

Fiona Broadbent was trafficked into prostitution as a child and sexually exploited but she was not recognised as a victim and was instead convicted a number of times for the prostitution offence of 'soliciting and loitering' contrary to section 1 Street Offences Act 1959. The men who sexually abused her walked away unchallenged but Fiona, and many women like her, are still being punished today, as their convictions haunt them. These women are prevented from working in schools, as carers and even from entering university. They cannot enter the professions or take up such roles as serving as a magistrate or Police special constable, where their experience would be invaluable in reducing crime, helping victims and protecting the most vulnerable in our society.

The 2015 law that decriminalised soliciting by children must be made retrospective and soliciting must become an offence that can be filtered.

246 words

Women and the fight against racism

Conference notes:

1. Structural, systemic and institutional racism alongside institutional sexism have a detrimental impact on Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic women.
2. The controversial Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities (CRED) report has been widely condemned, including by some commissioners.
3. CRED denies that structural, systemic and institutional racism are the cause of race disparities, in the face of all evidence.
4. Black women in Britain are four times as likely to die in pregnancy and childbirth.
5. IFS Covid research found that, after stripping out age and geography, Bangladeshi hospital fatalities are twice those of the white British group, Pakistani deaths are 2.9 times as high and black African deaths 3.7 times as high.
6. ONS research shows that unemployment for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities increased from 5.8 per cent to 9.5 per cent, between the final quarters of 2019 and 2020, and employment data is worse for women.
7. Between October and December 2020 young black men in London were 19 times more likely to be stopped and searched than the general population.

Conference believes that:

1. CRED prettifies slavery, undermines the Black Lives Matter movement and the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry; and seeks to roll back several decades the debate on race relations in Britain.
2. Labour must
 - a. campaign for implementation of recommendations from Macpherson, Lammy, Angiolini, and McGregor-Smith reviews.
 - b. reject CRED and put forward serious actions to address institutional racism, and in particular the position of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic women.

250 words

A serious response to Covid in the interests of women

Conference notes:

1. the Tory government's handling of the coronavirus pandemic has led to more than 128,000 deaths – one of the highest per capita death tolls in the world – plus many suffering with related long term health problems;
2. The Women and Equalities Select Committee report into the gendered economic impact of coronavirus demonstrated that government policies have repeatedly skewed towards men;
3. The government's approach has worsened existing inequalities for women: inadequate support to self-employed people, to pregnant women and new mothers, to the childcare sector, and for women claiming benefits.
4. Countries that have adopted a 'Zero Covid' strategy – such as New Zealand, Vietnam and China – have the lowest death tolls and suffered the least economic contractions due to the pandemic.

We believe that:

5. Britain should adopt a 'Zero Covid' strategy to address the virus and prevent more deadly mutations arising;
6. Vaccinations are important in suppressing the virus but are not sufficient to eliminate it, which is a necessary precondition for economic recovery.
7. Because women have been disproportionately impacted by the catastrophic health and economic impacts of the virus, it is all the more important for women that a 'Zero Covid' strategy is adopted.

We call on the Shadow Cabinet and the new Women's Committee to campaign for a 'Zero Covid' strategy and to provide strong opposition to the Tory government's disastrous policies on this pandemic, developing and campaigning for an alternative policy agenda that will reduce inequalities and benefit women.

246 words

More information: <https://zerocovid.uk/>

Justice for Palestine

Conference notes

1. the continuing deterioration in living conditions that Palestinians have suffered in the last year, including a particularly detrimental impact on women;
2. Palestinian women bear disproportionately the impact of relentless human rights violations including administrative detentions of their children, ongoing attacks on their homes and denial of access to education, health services, water and electricity.
3. 2020 saw the highest number of home demolitions and forced displacements, including those most recently in East Jerusalem, since 2009;
4. Israel's failure to meet its requirements as the occupying power to support Palestinian vaccinations;
5. Trade policies allow British companies to facilitate demolitions, for example in 2020 British-made JCBs demolished 191 Palestinian structures, making 160 children homeless and destroying vital irrigation networks.

Conference welcomes the decision of the International Criminal Court (ICC) to investigate possible Israeli war crimes in Palestine, whilst condemning Boris Johnson's subsequent statement undermining the role of international law.

Conference believes Labour must:

1. draw attention to the discriminatory situation for Palestinians, in particular women, in Palestine and Israel – as most recently documented in the reports by B'Tselem and Human Rights Watch.
2. publicly support the work of the ICC
3. work with all supporting justice and self-determination for Palestine
4. demand positive action from the British government, including banning trade with illegal settlements, for Israel to stop all demolitions and release all children in detention;
5. call on the Israeli Government to fulfil its obligations to provide a full vaccination programme to all Palestinians.

250 words

More information: <https://labourandpalestine.org.uk/>

Covid and inequalities

Conference notes the disproportionate impact of the Covid pandemic on women, and in particular on disabled women, low income women and Black women.

For example recent research from the Women's Budget Group, Fawcett Society and others shows:

- Less than a third (29%) of women believe the women's specific needs have been considered or addressed in the government's response to Covid.
- Almost half of women (47%) report that their mental health has worsened since the pandemic;
- Half (49%) of disabled mothers have been furloughed compared to one third (34%) of non-disabled mothers
- Three times as many disabled mothers lost their main job as did non-disabled mothers (20% of disabled mothers compared to 7% of non-disabled mothers)
- National policies and processes which largely disadvantage ethnic minorities – including in areas such as housing, health and employment – have contributed to increased exposure to and worse outcomes from COVID-19 among Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic groups.
- 30% of Black, Asian and Ethnic Minority women are worried about how they will pay their rent or mortgage compared to 17% of white women.

We call on Labour's leadership and the new Women's Committee to publicise these inequalities and champion:

- Greater representation of women in decision-making;
- A stronger safety net, including increase in benefits;
- Sectoral support for areas that employ a lot of women;
- Investment in care, including urgent funding for early years, and sustainable funding for both early years and social care sectors.

236 words

More information: <https://wbg.org.uk/>

Improvements to Early Abortion Services

Conference notes that the emergency measures introduced by NHS and GP services in England, Wales and Scotland in response to the pandemic, allowing the drugs (two pills taken separately, mifepristone and misoprostol) for early medical abortion to be prescribed after a telephone/video consultation (telemedicine), and taken at home where appropriate and requested. It was clarified that abortion consultation and consent for treatment could be carried out remotely.

Conference further notes that ongoing monitoring of the service has confirmed that this has brought benefits to many women, along with benefits to the NHS, reducing delays and the prospect of later terminations, once the decision is made. Additionally in certain areas of the country geographical disparities, have been reduced, and travel costs for women avoided.

Conference welcomes the clarity provided by the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RCOG), and the Faculty of Sexual and Reproductive Healthcare (FSRH) in their published guidance at the start of the pandemic and notes that these organisations now support these measures being made permanent.

Conference therefore urges the Women's Committee to:

- Support the continuation of telemedicine consultation and prescriptions for early medical abortion at home where appropriate, within the NHS
- work to ensure this is delivered by all administrations including the devolved nations
- Support the work of Abortion Rights, the pro-choice membership campaign.

217 words

Labour CND: model motion for Labour Party Women's Conference

Nurses not nukes campaign

1. Labour Women's Conference 2021:
 - a) recognises the indispensable role of NHS staff during the Covid-19 pandemic;
 - b) notes the average salary of nursing staff has fallen between 9-14% in real terms since the Tories came to power in 2010; and
 - c) believes their remuneration consistently undervalues the importance of their work.
2. Conference is aware that Boris Johnson's *Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy* includes decisions to:
 - a) increase the UK's stockpile of nuclear warheads by 40%;
 - b) stop publishing the size of Britain's nuclear stockpile, operational warheads, and deployed missiles; and
 - c) widen the conditions under which the UK will consider using nuclear weapons to include threats from chemical and biological weapons and from emerging technologies.
3. Conference:
 - a) welcomes Labour's commitment to 'lead multilateral efforts under our obligations to the Non-Proliferation Treaty to create a nuclear-free world'; and
 - b) notes the UN Secretary General's concern that 'the UK's decision to increase its nuclear weapons arsenal... is contrary to its obligations under Article VI of the NPT'.
4. Conference:
 - a) understands that budget-setting involves political as well as economic choices;
 - b) does not believe that parliament should give the government authority to spend an unquantified amount on increasing nuclear weapons whilst capping nurses pay increase at 1%; and
 - c) calls on the Women's Committee to launch a 'Nurses Not Nukes' campaign contrasting the increase in nuclear warheads to the derisory increase in pay for nursing staff.

241 words

Explainer

Nurses pay – according to a study by Oxford Brookes University in 2020, 9 out of 10 UK nurses are women, and their weekly pay was on average less than a third of that of doctors and dentists. <https://www.rcn.org.uk/news-and-events/news/uk-nurses-are-undervalued-because-they-are-mostly-women-new-study-finds-290120>

<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2017/apr/29/nhs-nurses-pay-cut-12-per-cent-over-decade>

<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2017/mar/28/nhs-workers-to-get-derisory-1-pay-rise>

Integrated Review – see for example <https://cnduk.org/no-more-nukes-time-to-scrap-trident/> and <https://cnduk.org/integrated-review-in-more-depth/>

Multilateral disarmament – see Labour Party 2019 manifesto at <https://labour.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Real-Change-Labour-Manifesto-2019.pdf>

UN on NPT obligations – see <https://www.un.org/press/en/2021/db210317.doc.htm>