

Suggested motions for Labour Party Annual Conference 2022

Cost of living crisis

Conference notes

1. The July TUC report which says that:
 - real wages in the UK are forecast to shrink by 6.2% (£1,750) over the next two years – the tightest contraction in pay of any G7 economy.
 - UK workers are suffering the longest and harshest pay squeeze in modern history.
 - UK workers are still earning £75 a month less – in real terms – than in 2008.
2. More than 93% of food banks surveyed by Independent Food Aid Network (IFAN) in May 2022 reported an increase in demand since the start of the year
3. Research from the Trussell Trust (April 2022) which estimated that one in ten parents expects to need to access food banks or other related support over the summer

Conference supports the TUC's call for

- A significant rise in the national minimum wage
- Strengthening collective bargaining rights to boost pay across the economy
- A real-terms pay rise for public sector workers with a move towards restoring earnings lost over the last decade
- Raising Universal Credit to 80% of the real Living Wage

Conference supports the trade union movement in its efforts to get pay rises for its members that keep up with inflation, including by taking industrial action when they have not been able to get pay rises through negotiation.

Conference also welcomes the support Labour MPs have given to the trade union movement including by visiting and speaking at union picket lines.

235 words

Right to protest

This Conference notes that the Conservative's Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act introduces drastic new restrictions on the right to protest.

We note that it gives the police sweeping new powers to restrict or ban protests that they believe may cause 'serious disruption'.

It also gives the police powers to limit how noisy a protest may be.

The Act covers not just marches but also static demonstrations, with police give new powers to limit where these may happen, how many people may be present and how long these may last.

It changes the definition of a protest to include one person demonstrations.

Penalties for breaching the new rules are more severe than before. The previous position that it was an offence to knowingly break a rule has been replaced by expecting protesters to know what rules have been imposed on a particular event.

Further it give government ministers the right to amend these rules by regulation rather than after full debate in parliament.

This Conference recognises that many of the rights we have were only won after protests which were often disruptive and noisy.

We therefore call on an incoming Labour government to repeal the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act and instead to introduce legislation setting out the right to protest as an essential part of a democratic society.

220 words

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Tackling climate breakdown

Conference notes:

- The terrible impacts of climate breakdown; already hitting us at home and abroad at just 1.2C above pre-industrial averages, combined with the terrible impacts of the rising price of fossil fuels on everyone's energy bills.
- The \$2.85 billion profit made every day by fossil fuel producers.
- The rapidly falling costs for producing energy from renewable sources.
- The complete failure of market led Conservative gestures at home insulation or to reduce carbon emissions from Transport since 2010.
- That Conservative backsliding on climate targets and failure to plan realistically for even those they have puts all our futures in danger.
- Conference recognises that tackling the climate crisis can also help address the cost of living crisis.

Conference calls on the Party at all levels to campaign with everyone else who agrees for:

- the TUC affordable energy plan; to bring the big five into responsible public ownership at a cost of £2.85 billion (no more than the current government has spent on subsidising one private company) cap bills and provide energy security
- a windfall tax on the banks to pay for free public transport as Spain has done
- unblocking the planning restrictions on Onshore Wind and for local campaigns wherever such a project is held up.
- a tax of 56% on North Sea Oil and Gas producers pending public ownership
- a planned transition for workers in North Sea Oil and Gas to comparable jobs in renewable energy.

236 words

Tory 'Hard Brexit' has intensified the cost of living crisis

Conference notes:

- The Tory 'Hard Brexit' has led to reduced foreign inward investment, a worsening balance of trade deficit, reduced employment, a labour shortage in many industries, most obviously in agriculture, hospitality and in the NHS and jobs are being offshored to western Europe.
- The withdrawal from the common energy market, has contributed to the UK's increase in energy prices.
- These negative economic consequences of Tory policy are significant contributors to the cost of living crisis.
- The labour shortages are compounded by the xenophobia released by the referendum and the Tory's 'hostile environment'.
- Northern Ireland's post-Brexit economic performance is outperforming all other parts of the UK, except London.

Conference believes:

- It was a mistake for Keir Starmer to whip Labour MPs to vote in favour of the Tory 'Hard Brexit' trade deal.
- To start reversing the damage inflicted by the Tory 'Hard Brexit', Britain needs to significantly reduce the trade frictions it has imposed on its imports of goods, services and labour from its biggest trading partner, the EU.

Conference resolves that Labour will call for a closer relationship with the EU in order to alleviate the trade frictions the Tories have introduced, that we will seek to rejoin Horizon Europe and Erasmus+, and that we will repeal the cruel and intrusive hostile environment.

214 words

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Defend trade union rights

Conference is alarmed at the proposals being put forward by those in the leadership of the Conservative Party that further threaten trade union and worker rights in Britain.

The campaign proposals of Liz Truss included a plan to introduce minimum service levels during strikes affecting 'critical national infrastructure' such as railways and hospitals as well as further impediments to being able to take lawful industrial action by making balloting requirements even more onerous on unions.

The proposals put forward by Grant Shapps are more insidious in that he is suggesting that the government would invoke emergency powers to put striking workers outside the law.

As the Conservatives have raised the bar since 1980 and forced workers and their unions into an ever decreasing legal space those involved in the strike wave this summer have shown that workers can beat the strictures placed on them by the law.

Conference calls for:

- (i) an ongoing commitment to the proposals to improve employment rights as set out in the Green Paper New Deal for Working People;
- (ii) an agreement that the Green Paper is but a first step towards a major reform, including necessary repeals, of labour law in Britain to ensure that as a minimum labour rights become compatible with international labour standards set by the ILO, Council of Europe and others;
- (iii) our leadership to move beyond supporting a right to strike as an abstract idea and give physical and political support to striking workers resisting the cost of living crisis.

250 words

Public ownership of utilities

Conference notes

a) that Labour's 2021 Conference voted to support public ownership of energy including energy companies

b) that one of the ten pledges made in 2020 by Keir Starmer when running for the party leadership was common ownership of energy and water

c) that water companies have paid out £57 billion to shareholders since 1991 and in 2021 alone, water company bosses pocketed £15 million in pay and bonuses

d) six water companies have been found to be avoiding millions in tax

e) that the Environmental Agency has called for heads of privatised water companies to face jail terms for breaching the law in serious pollution incidents

e) that public ownership of energy is popular with 60% wanting energy in public ownership

f) that public ownership of water is popular, with 63% of people wanting water in public ownership

Conference therefore resolves that bringing energy and water into public ownership will be a priority for an incoming Labour government.

160 words

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Public ownership of Royal Mail

Conference notes:

- a) That since being sold off cheaply when privatised, Royal Mail has made enormous profits (£726m for the tax year 2020-2021), paid out large sums to shareholders (£400m at the end of 2021) and senior management (CEO Simon Thompson was paid £753,000 according to the annual report);
- b) That Royal Mail has been repeatedly fined by Ofcom for its failures in quality of service;
- c) Privatisation has meant worsening conditions for the Royal Mail workforce. Management is talking of splitting off the parcels section and running it along 'gig economy' lines. Privatisation is producing a race to the bottom.
- d) That re-nationalisation is favoured by 69% of the public.
- e) That Labour's 2021 Conference voted to bring Royal Mail back into public ownership, reuniting it with the Post Office and creating a publicly owned Post Bank run through the post office network.
- f) That one of the ten pledges made in 2020 by Keir Starmer when running for the party leadership was common ownership of mail services

Conference therefore resolves to make re-nationalisation of Royal Mail a manifesto commitment for the next General Election, and a priority for the next Labour government.

195 words

Greater protection now for disabled people from Covid-19

During 2020, 60 per cent of people who died due to Covid-19 were disabled. Mortality rates due to the pandemic continue to be higher for disabled people than for the rest of the population.

Conference commits to continuously campaign for more resources to help reduce the pandemic's ongoing impact on disabled people, including:

- Giving higher priority to disabled people receiving booster vaccines;
- More help in getting to vaccination centres or offering more home visits;
- Greater employer flexibility in allowing disabled people to continue to work at home;
- Improved services to support disabled people to regain confidence and independence, choice and control.

Conference also commits Labour to monitor the official Covid19 Enquiry and ensure that it includes the following actions:

- Hears evidence directly from disabled people, given the disproportionately negative impact Covid-19 has had on them;
- Investigates specifically how the needs of disabled people were considered when government policy decisions were made, to fully establish the real reasons behind the disproportionately high deaths, increased discrimination, isolation, loss of support and deterioration of physical and mental health amongst disabled people;
- Determines the funding required for disability organisations to build capacity and resilience for future pandemics;
- Ensures that disabled people are explicitly identified as a priority group in the Enquiry's terms of reference to help avoid similar disproportionate impact from future emergencies;
- Ensures that the Enquiry is transparent, accessing all relevant medical and scientific information and statistics during the pandemic.

237 words

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A new official measure of inflation for uprating benefits

Conference notes that the Bank of England is forecasting in the next year or so the biggest fall living standards since records began. Wage increases are lagging well behind price inflation, following a prolonged period of low-income growth. Poorest families and those receiving benefits for subsistence experience the worst hardship.

For instance, gas and electricity bills have risen exponentially during 2022 and the lowest tenth of households (by income) suffer most as they spend three times as much as a share of their expenditure on heat and light as the richest tenth. These poorest households have suffered an inflation rate at least 1.5 percentage points higher than the richest tenth.

Conference agrees for an urgent review of the scope and methods used in calculating current official measures of inflation, and in particular campaigns for:

- An alternative official inflation measure based on spending patterns for households on low incomes or receiving benefits (e.g., a price index using a low income/poverty spending pattern: CPI-LI). This is to protect poorest families' benefits, especially when the highest price increases are focused on essentials and energy.
- A 'double lock' or safety-net approach to uprate benefits using the higher of inflation rates given by the official consumer price index (CPIH) or the index based on lower incomes (CPI-LI).
- A procedure to uprate benefits and pensions more frequently when inflation exceeds a specified rate (e.g., six-monthly when annual inflation from either the CPIH or CPI-LI exceeds 10%).

240 words

Improvements in the ways claims for disability benefits are assessed

Conference notes that the Government is likely to publish a White Paper on Disability Benefits later this year, indicating its intention to legislate.

Conference agrees to campaign for a fundamental reform of the disability assessment process, including:

- a. measures to ensure that Health Care Professionals assessing entitlement to benefits such as Personal Independence Payment (PIP), Universal Credit and Disability Living Allowance are allocated to cases according to their knowledge of the specific disability or illness which the benefit claimant (or cared for person) suffers from (e.g., neuro-diverse conditions, sickle cell anaemia, or multiple sclerosis);
- b. adequate training and guidance is given to Health Care Professionals and Decision Makers when making 'informal observations' about a claimant's condition and its effect on functioning when assessing their entitlement to benefit;
- c. informal observations must be put to claimants, especially important if the claimant decides to appeal against the assessment;
- d. reversing recent decisions to reduce the eligibility for receiving benefits; for example, for people receiving Personal Independence Payments (PIP) to extend the right to receive help to lease or buy a car to claimants receiving the standard rate mobility component of PIP, in addition to those on the enhanced mobility component.

198 words

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OFGEM must protect consumers, not the interests of energy companies

Annual Conference notes:

- The top five oil companies alone — Shell, ExxonMobil, BP, Chevron, and ConocoPhillips — in the first quarter of 2022 made 200 percent more in profits than in the previous year's first quarter, a total profit of more than \$35 billion;
- Centrica reported operating profits of £1.3bn during the first half of 2022. This profit is almost five times what was made in the first half of 2021;
- OFGEM allowed the cap to be lifted in October 2021 with subsequent reviews every 6 months. For 2022, there is expected to be a huge cumulative increase in the cap of over 175%, with reviews every three months from October 2022.

Instead of acting as a regulator and protecting the interests of consumers, OFGEM are effectively siding with the energy companies who offer no real plan on how to bring down or restrict energy prices from rising.

Conference demands that OFGEM:

- Name and shame the Energy Companies making excessive profits and negotiate reduced prices.
- Penalise and name and shame companies who employ unscrupulous debt collecting agents to extort payments, often using scare tactics, and outdated information.
- Reduce the standing charge, especially for those consumers using prepayment meters.
- Compel energy companies to reintroduce a social tariff for low-income households and support the concept of energy for all.

Labour's campaign should also collaborate with outside organisations such as DPAC and Pensioners' Associations, putting additional pressure on OFGEM.

234 words

Better support for unpaid carers

Conference notes that more than one in eight adults now care for an adult family member or friend. The recent increase in unpaid carers is largely the result of a social care system that is increasingly struggling to meet the needs of a growing older population and people with long term conditions or disabilities.

Conference commits to campaign to ensure national health institutes, local health authorities and social care organisations provide effective and comprehensive support to unpaid carers.

This includes helping and directing carers to the best advice and support that is available for the person they are caring for, safeguarding the well-being of carers and ensuring employers provide supportive working arrangements for carers.

Carers must also be recognised as partners in the care of the person they are supporting, not as a cheap alternative to the social care system.

Furthermore, financial support given to carers needs to be included in the review. For instance, when assessing the eligibility for the provision of a carer's allowance, the condition that applicants can earn no more than a specified net income (only £132 per week in 2022) must be eliminated.

This is particularly relevant to carers on low incomes or benefits, and retired carers, whose only source of income is their state pension.

211 words

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Building a successful economy

Conference recognises the damage inflicted by over four decades of neo-liberal market economics bringing in its wake repeated and increasingly serious economic crises, gross inequality, and a major shift of power from democratically accountable government and working people to private global corporate structures and the grotesquely wealthy.

Conference therefore calls on an incoming Labour government to re-establish an interventionist role in the national economy to the benefit of working people and their families and that this role should require:-

- The recreation of a substantial and democratically accountable public sector including taking back into public ownership of privatised transport and utilities to be governed in future by public need not private profit;
- The insourcing of services across the whole range of national and local government activities and the NHS in particular, re-creating genuinely public and accountable services to the benefit of the workers in those sectors and to all who depend on them;
- The establishment of a national investment bank and statutory measures of regional industrial aid;
- The rebuilding of a strong manufacturing sector using legislative measures and government leverage over public procurement to prioritise British producers;
- The management of exchange rates and interest rates appropriate to the country's economic needs; and
- The reimposition of exchange controls and controls on capital movements across the country's borders.

215 words