

Speech by
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Diane Abbott speech to Labour Party Conference

Diane Abbott MP, Shadow Home Secretary, speaking at Labour Party Conference, said:

*****CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY*****

Good morning conference.

It is a pleasure, and a privilege to address this conference as Shadow Home Secretary.

But I would like to begin by thanking the members and supporters up and down the country, and those of you in this hall, who helped to deliver the stunning advance in this year's General Election.

You were the architects of our success. And you were able to do it because: you believed in our values; you believed in our manifesto and, above all, you believed in the Labour party leadership.

Many commentators did not foresee the General Election result that we had.

Some even said that we would be annihilated. But today the Labour party is stronger than ever, we are still standing... I am still standing.

But there is much more to do. We have to get rid of this appalling FAILING Tory government. We have to win the next General Election. Whenever it comes. AND WE WILL.

The theme of this session is "Protecting Our Communities".

And there is no greater responsibility for government than keeping the nation safe from the menace of TERRORISM. Tragically last week we saw the fifth terror incident this year at Parsons Green tube station. This comes after the terrorist atrocities at: Westminster; the Manchester Arena; London Bridge; Borough Market and Finsbury Park. Looking back we must pay tribute to: the brave police officers; firefighters; NHS workers and transport police who ran towards danger and rose to the challenge of keeping us safe.

The Tories have no respect for public sector workers as their unfair public sector pay cap shows. But in its moments of greatest peril the nation turns to its public

sector workers. They should NOT be played off against each other and they should ALL be paid properly.

Because you cannot keep the nation secure on the cheap.

Yet only on Friday the Chair of the National Police Chiefs Council warned that that counter-terror funding to police forces was to be cut by seven-point-two per-cent over the next 3 years.

Yet, Home Office documents reveal that the budget for the Office for Security and Counter Terrorism will fall by more than fifty million pounds over the next two years.

We oppose these cuts and Labour will reverse them in Government.

And, as part of combatting terrorism effectively, Labour is committed to a thorough review of the "Prevent" strand of counter-terrorism policy. Increasingly there is a concern that Prevent is a tainted brand and not fit for purpose.

Trampling on our civil liberties will do the terrorists work for them.

What makes us free is what makes us safe.

And what makes us safe is what will make us free.

Another key aspect of protecting communities is POLICING. I have represented an inner city constituency for thirty years. I know it is the poor, women and minorities who suffer most from crime. I have always taken fighting crime very seriously, and will continue to do so as Labour Home Secretary.

And the reality of the Tory record on law and order is a long way from their rhetoric. Since 2010 Theresa May has been Home Secretary and now Prime Minister. But ON HER WATCH: the number of police officers has dropped by twenty thousand. Two-point-three-billion has been cut from police budgets.

The truth is austerity undermines policing in exactly the same way that it undermines our health service. We see the consequences of this around us, with rising levels of homicide, knife, and gun crime. And the police themselves are suffering from spiralling levels of overwork and stress.

Labour in government will work to make communities safe. And we will recruit ten thousand new police officers working in the community.

Another key aspect of protecting communities is keeping them safe from FIRE risk. Once again, this is something where this Tory government has let the people of this country down.

And the extent of their failure is symbolised by the Grenfell Fire.

Who can forget those images of Grenfell tower ablaze? And this did not happen in a slum in an impoverished country far away. It happened here in Britain, in one of the wealthiest areas of the country, in one of the richest countries in the world. 🙄

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 the 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?

But Tory failure in relation to Grenfell goes further than the borough council. Events at Grenfell are also a direct consequence of: deregulation of fire standards and inspection; privatisation and outsourcing.

We demand justice for the Grenfell survivors. They will not be **FORGOTTEN**. We demand an immigration amnesty for former Grenfell residents so they ALL feel able to come forward for help.

Labour in government will recruit three thousand additional firefighters. We fully support the campaigning of the Fire Brigades Union, against the cuts. We all saw the photographs of the brave smoke blackened firefighters insisting on going back into the flames to save lives. We relied on our fire brigade at Grenfell. And the fire brigade must be the lead agency for assessing risk, fire inspections and proper sign-off for all major works and refurbishment.

No more outsourcing to the private sector.

And I cannot leave this subject without paying tribute to my colleague Emma Dent Coad, the MP for Kensington.

As a new MP, she found herself having to deal with a national tragedy on the scale of Grenfell. She has offered love and leadership to her community in full measure and conference should applaud her.

Emma has shown that Labour can make a difference EVERYWHERE. And that Labour can WIN anywhere.

We finally had an Inquiry into the Hillsborough tragedy, thanks to tireless campaigning of the people of Liverpool with the support of my colleagues Andy Burnham and Steve Rotherham. But as Labour Home secretary I promise: a full Inquiry into Orgreave; an inquiry into the trials of Shrewsbury twenty-four AND an inquiry into what happened to the thirty-seven Cammell Laird workers.

They ALL deserve justice

Another vital Home Affairs issue is IMMIGRATION.

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.

They have pandered to anti-immigrant sentiment whatever the cost to the economy and communities.

Many of you will have seen the Panorama program which revealed the brutal regime at Brooke House detention centre.

Labour will put an end to indefinite immigration detention.

There ARE real labour market issues. But the Labour party under the leadership of Jeremy Corbyn will not scapegoat immigrants for these issues.

Labour in government will work across departments to counter the effects of deregulation, liberalisation and weakening of trade union rights and freedoms.

Far from immigrants being a drain on the public sector the truth is that, without immigrants, and the children of immigrants we would not have a National Health Service we have today.

And of course EU citizens in this country also play a vital role in the economy.

The willingness of the Theresa May to use them as bargaining chips in the negotiations is shameful. We will guarantee the rights of EU nationals living in this country. It is both vital for our economy and it's the right thing to do.

I have visited refugee encampments in Calais, Greece and Lebanon and seen the pitiful conditions that so many refugees live in.

And even in Britain the current arrangements for housing refugees are not fit for purpose. They are not fair to refugees and they are not fair to our communities. We will review these arrangements.

Labour under the leadership of Jeremy Corbyn will fulfil its responsibilities to refugees, in particular child refugees. Parliament passed the Dubs Amendment and we will implement it fully.

The watchword for our approach to immigration in government will be fairness and the reasonable management of migration.

But as the child of immigrants, Conference must believe me when I say that, under Jeremy Corbyn's leadership, immigration policy will always be shaped by enduring Labour values.

Conclusion

Thank you again, Conference. For coming to Brighton, for listening to me, for participating in the debates to come and helping to formulate policy.

Ends