

We attended the National Youth Policy Conference in Warwick on 14-15 October as delegates for the Young Labour South-East region including Oxfordshire. This event was generally a more comradely experience in comparison to previous conferences. There was a general shift to the left, with motions on free education, capital controls and nationalising the major banks passing with substantial majorities. Mental health and workers rights featured prominently, with motions calling for real parity of esteem for mental health, and for repealing all anti-trade union legislation since the 1980s passing almost unanimously.

Contentious votes included one advocating withdrawal from NATO which has received national attention. In addition, a motion which would have advocated defending existing free movement and extending it by closing down all migrant detention centres and eliminating income thresholds for immigration to the UK was also defeated after opposition from the larger trade unions. Finally, a motion on the Israel-Palestine conflict was defeated primarily because it called a two-state solution a “prerequisite” for peace in the region, ruling out potential alternatives such as a democratic, secular binational state, as well as because of its mention of Ma’an which implies opposition to BDS.

The events around the conference were generally quite good, with Jeremy Corbyn and Cat Smith addressing delegates and receiving fantastic receptions. Fringe events were well attended and addressed areas like campaigning in the May elections, getting votes at 16, student accommodation, organising in the workplace and combatting anti-semitism.

Potential concerns/things of note:

- There was frustratingly no procedure for amendments on the floor which meant some imperfect motions had to be simply voted down
- Chairing was generally decent, however there were motions where debate was cut short, despite the fact that the motions debate finished earlier than scheduled
- As often happens, union block voting was usually decisive, with Unite being on the winning side in every contentious vote, while the GMB delegation abstained on most “political” motions bar free movement
- Concerns about delegate entitlements were less prominent than expected, but the decision taken without the assent of Young Labour’s committee to give  $\frac{1}{3}$  of delegates at conference to Labour Students and trade union delegations, leaving only  $\frac{1}{3}$  of the spaces to Young Labour itself at its own conference, did have repercussions. Not only did this reduce the total number of delegates officially to 303, but nearly half of the eligible student Labour clubs did not send delegations at all (up to 51 could send delegations, while the number actually doing so appeared closer to 30).
- Furthermore, the total number of delegates voting on motions, particularly on the final day, was usually close to 150, so it is likely a number of clubs and regions were unrepresented.
- Part of the reason for this may be the prohibitive cost of travel, the very expensive accommodation, and passes, particularly for low income students from Young Labour who could not seek funding from their club or trade union.