# National Conference Report 2018

I’m hugely grateful to Oxford East members for giving me the opportunity to attend conference as a delegate. To participate in some incredibly difficult debates and to see our Party come through united was truly a privilege to be a part of, and I hope the following can provide an overview of some of the key points and discussions that were raised.

Women’s Conference

* Conference held detailed and quality discussions on Women and the Economy; Abortion Rights; Childcare; and Women’s Health and Safety.
* Votes: Priority ballot for motion to be taken to conference: I voted for Women and the Economy, where the motion was moved by an excellent speech from a Unite delegate and passed unanimously.

Observations

* I was really happy to see such serious issues being discussed in such detail. All motions carried unanimously, which was great in bringing more detailed and hard hitting policies directly from the experience of members and workers to the Party. But I agree with Jane S: If Women’s Conference is going to play an important role in policy making in future, I think it needs to develop the confidence to tackle more challenging and controversial issues. I look forward to the upcoming standalone Women’s Conference next year, which will hopefully mark a significant step in that direction.

Key Discussions at Conference

Democracy Review

* On the first day of conference, I referenced back the CAC report and challenged the days agenda, which saw the democracy review get discussed as a single package, to be accepted or rejected as a whole, with no opportunity to take sections alongside CLP rule changes that might be relevant. I made the point specifically regarding the changes to BAME Labour, and requested that a motion from Battersea CLP on how the BAME NEC seat is elected, be taken alongside the part of the democracy review relating to BAME/Equalities structures, to allow full debate and the opportunity for members to choose their preferred option. Over half an hour was spent taking reference backs from the floor on similar points and, while unfortunately these fell, as a result I, along with 90% of CLP delegates, voted to reference back the first CAC report.
* Despite this, I was really happy with a lot of the changes that were passed, especially the significant and hard won reforms to BAME Labour and Disability Labour!

Brexit

* Oxford East delegates discussed at length how we would approach the priorities ballot, and came to a consensus decision that as Brexit was guaranteed to reach conference floor via the Unions, we decided that instead of wasting a vote on a foregone conclusion we would prioritise something else that we considered to be an issue of importance to our members. We therefore voted to prioritise Housing, Windrush, the Economy and Social Care.
* Dan and I braved a 6 hour compositing meeting on Brexit, which was incredibly tense but ultimately fruitful as we got a full consensus after a debate which lasted into the early hours of the morning. Everyone who wanted to speak was heard, and there was a huge cheer when the last hand in the room went down. There were many compromises on all sides, but ultimately the arguments that all options should remain on the table, while not tying Labour’s hands to any single one, while also prioritising pushing for a General Election, prevailed. I feel it was a huge achievement to see Labour united behind a single position. It puts us in a strong position to fight the Tories moving forward, and I’m proud to have been a part of this achievement.

Windrush and Palestine

* It was great to see two ‘BAME’-related topics prioritised, and Palestinian solidarity was an amazing highlight for me with Colin Monehen’s incredible speech moving the motion, and the show of hundreds of Palestinian flags across conference
* I found it frustrating that the Brexit debate was extended into the Windrush and Palestine slots, which diluted a lot of the discussions. And I thought there should have been a greater number of people from ethnic minority backgrounds called to speak on these issues, but this was watered down by Brexit.

Observations

* There were lots of speakers from the floor, and all Points of Order and Reference Backs were taken which was really positive. But there was clearly an issue with selecting speakers fairly, and some misunderstandings about who had been called to speak. Again, ethnic minority speakers could have been called to speak more, especially on issues relating directly to us. Also, by taking two or three topics to debate at a time, it watered down debate (generally fine in the circumstances as the most contentious motion – Brexit – had been composited into a unity motion), but it meant reference backs were not properly debated and other debates got lost. I think this could be addressed and improved in future.

I left feeling incredibly proud of being part of a united Party brimming with transformational ideas and exciting policies, ready to take the challenge to the Tories and fight for radical change in our society and for a socialist future!

Becky Boumelha, Oxford East delegate