

Jonathan Bartley and Caroline Lucas' full speech to Spring Conference



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STARTS

JB

2016 – a bad year

2016.....

The hottest year on record.

The year Britain was divided by a toxic referendum campaign and voted to leave the EU.

A bigoted bully was elected to the most powerful job in the world.

A British MP, Jo Cox, was murdered for daring to speak up for others denied a voice.

A Polish national killed on the streets of Harlow, apparently for not being British.

And the response to the refugee crisis was to bulldoze a camp and build a wall... 2016.

2016 – a good year CL

2016...

The year that more Americans voted for Hilary Clinton than for Donald Trump.

The year Portugal ran entirely off renewable energy for 4 consecutive days.

In India, volunteers planted 50 million trees in 24 hours.

Across Britain, people repeatedly honoured the idea that we have far more in common with each other than things that divide us.

Here in Liverpool, the city won a 27 year battle: Justice for the 96 who died needlessly at Hillsborough.

And the year the world agreed to create the largest ever marine reserve in Antarctica's

Ross Sea.

Truth and Hope

JB:

Two different versions of the same moment in time.

Not fake news, not alternative facts, but alternative ways of seeing what's around us.

Right now, many of us feel fearful and uncertain.

And last week's terror attack in Westminster only adds to that feeling.

The senseless loss of life.

Our thoughts are with the families and friends of PC Keith Palmer, Aysha Frade, Leslie Rhodes and Kurt Cochran.

In the face of Trump and Brexit, terror, wars and environmental crises, it's easy to only tell one story – one where things are getting worse.

It's easy to feel powerless. But that's what the establishment wants.

Cynics, motivated by greed and a thirst for power, they want us to think we cannot win.

They want us to give up hope. But Conference we won't give up.

We are better than that. And when we connect with one another we find courage, purpose and unity.

That is how we start to resist.

So Conference, in a world where simply telling the truth has itself become an act of resistance, we are proud to say this:

Greens will not stay silent whilst toxic rhetoric is used to scapegoat our friends, family and neighbours.

Greens will not let terrorists, tyrants or tricksters write the story of our times.

And we will not stand by and let the politics of hatred win.

Welcome to Liverpool

CL:

It's a pleasure to welcome all of you to Liverpool – and to this very special conference, where we are joined by Greens from across the world.

We meet when the challenges we face here in the UK are so similar to those

faced by our friends elsewhere.

And when the response to this moment demands we rise up as a movement, here we remember that we are already part of a huge global Green family.

One that is already making real changes.

With over 400 Green parliamentarians in 25 national parliaments around the world.

It is a conference tradition that we celebrate our successes since we last met

JB:

My band going double platinum

CL:

Fake News....

But seriously, and in keeping with the international focus of this weekend – I want to start by highlighting the wonderful results in the Netherlands.

The Dutch Greens have experienced an incredible rise, thanks to their consistent optimism about a better country.

A stark contrast to the establishment's failure to respond meaningfully to escalating inequality.

The far right sought to fill that vacuum with the politics of fear.....

But with Jesse Klaver, Groen Links showed that people are crying out for a politics that faces the future with big ideas.

In Austria too people chose hope over fear when they rejected the far-right presidential candidate and backed Alexander Van Der Bellen.

Truly a kick back against a rising fascist tide.

Much closer to home, in fact just up the road in Knowsley, last week we won our second Council seat with a 70% swing from Labour, having taken our first seat there just 2 months ago.

Congratulations to Joanne Burke and our newest – and youngest ever – Green councillor Kai Taylor.....

They're showing that Greens are a force to be reckoned with here in the North West.

I also want to mention Greens in the Forest of Dean who recently won a by-election with 35% of the vote.

A fantastic result by any measure.

But conference this was not just any victory.....

This was a gourmet election result. Organically reared, locally sourced, and one to be slowly savoured and enjoyed.

Conference, this was the Green Party taking our very first seat from UKIP.

Hope over hate.

A beacon for all of us, up and down the country, working hard to defeat the regressives and reclaim the future.

And, as we approach this year's local and metro mayoral elections – from the Vale of Glamorgan and Powys to Durham and to Worcester, as well as a parliamentary by-election in Manchester Gorton where the brilliant Jess Mayo is our candidate – hope will have a voice again.

Jess, Kai and Joanne take a bow.

EU/Article 50

JB:

Just 2 days ago the Prime Minister triggered article 50 and ploughed ahead with an extreme Tory Brexit for which she has no mandate.

We have seen Parliament vote away its right – its duty – to scrutinise the deal that Theresa May claims she can extract for Britain.

Now this is the point when we are often accused of ignoring the wishes of the British people.

I am a lifelong democrat....

I believe in taking power from our country's elites and passing it on to communities and individuals.

So I want to answer that charge head on.

I believe in the British people. Which is why I do not believe they voted for the extreme form of Brexit adopted by this government.

I don't believe they voted to turn away from European values, from democracy or the rule of law.

I don't believe they voted to cosy up instead to dictators and one-party states in return for dodgy trade deals.

I don't believe the British people voted to put at risk our environment, our workplace rights or the NHS.

And conference, I know that the British people do not want their fellow Europeans, who've made their homes here in Britain in good faith, treated as hostages or bargaining chips whilst the Prime Minister gambles with their

future.

JB:

Conference, make no mistake. What we face is a right-wing coup.

None of this was in their manifesto.

None of this was in the referendum question put to the country last year.

And where, in all this, are the Official Opposition?

The Labour Party has failed in its most basic duty to hold the government to account.

They have abandoned any thought of keeping us in the Single Market.

We are out of the Custom's Union and we face the most extreme Brexit possible.

The truth is the Labour leadership are running scared of some in their own Party, of the right-wing media and of UKIP.

They've traded their red flag for a white flag.

Well, I don't usually hand out advice to other parties...

But I will say this. Trust the British people.

We are not a nation of bigots and xenophobes.

What people in Britain really want is to be listened to, and to have politicians working for them, not for their own political calculations.

Respect comes from sticking to your principles.

And in the Green Party we do not turn away when things get tough.

We stand by what we believe. We stand FOR something. We are not scared of UKIP. We are not scared to tell the truth.

And we are not scared to set out our vision for a better future.

Globalisation & the age of disorder

CL:

Day by day Greens are writing a different story.

One that speaks truth to power and looks the future squarely in the eye. We aren't afraid to occupy difficult ground or confront the reality of how people feel.

So let's tell the truth now:

Trump and Farage are right about one thing. Globalisation has let people down. It extracts wealth from our communities. Competition through deregulation has stolen people's jobs. It has stolen their futures.

Global trade has not made poverty history. It has made it a seemingly inevitable part of our present and our future.

The problems created by our globalised economy are complex. They defy simple answers.

Yet when you are angry, when you've been lied to, and taken for granted, simple answers have enormous appeal.

That's how a story that casts foreigners in the role of villain can take root. One in which experts are derided and the truth no longer matters.

Friends, repairing the damage caused by globalisation needs people to genuinely get control of their lives.

It needs a seismic shift towards a radically different economy. One in which nobody is left behind.

It will not be done through division.

And it will not be done by the scapegoating and shaming that turns neighbours against one another and singles out people of colour.

Conference, we know where that leads and we will never go there.

A Green alternative to the bigger parties

JB:

How did we get to this place?

We have a Tory Government that commercialised the NHS; auctioned off everything from our schools to our public transport; and stripped local government spending to the bone.

And every time Labour repeated the myth that overspending caused the economic crash or blamed free movement for low wages – they sold out the people they claim to represent.

Labour have lost their fire and lost their way.

Principled leadership does not alone make for an effective opposition.

And then we have the Liberal Democrats. Still inevitably tainted by their time in coalition.

No amount of opposition to a hard Brexit will wipe the slate clean.

Trust has to be earned and the Lib-Dems have let people down – on the NHS, on student fees, and on austerity.

CL:

Whether you voted Leave or Remain, you need a Party that will stand up with consistency, integrity and conviction for your rights.

For young people in particular, let down by Brexit, the Green message is one of a more hopeful alternative.

Young people deserve a Party that will say loudly and clearly: freedom of movement is your right, tuition fees must be scrapped and private rents brought under control.

So today we have this message for young people in Britain.

If you want a Party interested in moving forwards, not turning the clock back.

A Party that's honest about the challenges we face and brave enough to build a better, more hopeful country.

Then come and join us – the Green Party.

Electoral Alliances JB:

I joined the Green Party because it listens to everyone – gives them a voice.

We need a system of democracy that does that too.

Proportional Representation is not a dry matter for constitutional nerds... like me.

It's the ultimate sign that you actually trust the people. We've seen this in the Netherlands. The far right ran under a PR system. And the far right was beaten.

And the path to reform of democracy must begin with a reshaping of the mainstream of British politics.

And yes, friends, that means sometimes putting aside our differences when we face a lost generation of Tory rule under the influence of the likes of Farage, Nuttall and Aaron Banks.

So, with the prospect of a snap general election, we continue to believe that, in some key places, it will make sense to co-operate with candidates that share our values and goals.

To form alliances in the name of electoral reform.

To lead by example when it comes to building a better politics. Because a better politics is how we build a better, bigger future.

More and more people are already looking for an alternative political movement that's about connecting, about giving them hope.

I will never forget the five year-old boy from Iraq I met last month in the Dunkirk refugee camp.

I connected with him over a Fireman Sam jigsaw puzzle.

Volunteers at the centre believe he is on the autistic spectrum – but do not have the resources to get an accurate diagnosis.

In the UK, his life could be transformed. In the UK he would have hope.

Our politics speaks to those that think his life and his future matter.

CL:

We need a political movement that redistributes both money and power. One that redefines the relationship between work and life.

One that embraces the future. Pioneering and forward facing.

A future better balanced between what we own and who we are – and more focussed on what genuinely makes us happier.

A future of radical innovation and creative disruption.

That embraces a 3-day weekend, and a universal basic income. Local banks for the public good. Reclaiming houses as homes, not financial assets. Education as a universal right not a private commodity. People powered renewable energy.

A radical green industrial strategy transforms Britain into the most resource efficient economy of our times.

Where Britain is a world leader in tackling climate change.

A future of good public services paid for by the bedrock of any truly civilised society – a re-distributive tax system.

One that takes on the corporations bending the rules, and tackles the tax dodgers.

And today, conference, we pledge to ensure that inheritance tax is also used to share wealth more fairly.

For too long the tax system has allowed an elite to accumulate wealth and pass it from generation to generation.

It entrenches inequality and it concentrates power.

Our promise is to find a way that inheritance tax in future will be paid according to the wealth of the recipient not the wealth of the donor.

No more free money for the richest in society.

A tax system that's fair.....

Conference, this is the future we promise.

The future Britain deserves.

The future Greens are working hard, every day, up and down the country, to achieve.

Environment and Identity

JB:

In the story of our future, the environment must be centre-stage.

It has to be.

And we are the only Party that truly understands that. That's why the Green Party is demanding a new Environmental Protection Act.

One that takes everything good about EU law and goes even further.

Because of the poor state of our soils we have just 100 harvests left .

What happens now defines our Green and pleasant land in a very tangible and immediate way.

An Environmental Protection Act would deliver an economy that works with the planet, rather than one which exploits it.

And we need to inspire others with a vision that's compelling and positive.

To connect with how people will feel, as well as set out how it will be.

And doing that relies on growing the social and natural capital that glues us together.

Not the kind of capital that resides in skyscrapers out of our reach.

People are yearning to be drawn together... to feel like they belong.

Belonging gives us something to identify with, something to defend.

History is scarred by examples of right-wing nationalism rising up to exploit that very human desire.

In a world of uncertainty it can be where people turn to fill the space created by massive economic, social and political upheaval.

This moment in time is no different, and the regressives, under the cover of phoney Populism will try to seize every opportunity.

But Conference – when we see fascism, we will call it fascism.

CL:

What fills the space doesn't have to be characterised by division. Or limited

by nostalgia for the past.

It doesn't have to be Steve Bannon's belligerent economic nationalism with its hostility to immigration.

Nationalism is not the only alternative to corporate globalisation.

Our role as Greens is to forge a new way for people to belong.

One that brings people together and celebrates our common humanity.

That we are fellow travellers on a shared planet.

What some have already started to talk about as progressive patriotism and to which we bring a new sense of the importance of our natural world.

A way for people to belong that is rooted in place... yes.

Including that good place in our hearts that swells when we make connections with others and with our environment.

A place where we feel enough at home to welcome others.

Turning the rootless ideology of globalisation on its head, whilst also being the very antithesis of nationalism as racism and exclusion.

Helping us build a nation that is resilient and flexible enough to embrace change, rather than turn on one another.

It could transform the age of insecurity. It could halt the age of disorder in its tracks.

All this starts with something small. Something we can all do. A conversation.

About the weather if you like – because after all we are British.

About who won the football or George Osborne's latest job.

The important thing is connecting... Belonging.

And when that one conversation becomes a long-term commitment to many conversations, to real face-to-face community activism, that is how we build meaningful change.

Fear thrives in the empty spaces that emerge when people are separate.

Hope thrives when we connect with our neighbours and with our natural world.

When we build strong resilient movements with deep foundations that can withstand the winds of extremism.

This is how the climate change agreements made in Paris will survive a White House in denial.

This is how we all survive – we make connections, we seed hope.

We look forward not backwards. And together we write a better future.

Close

JB:

2016 divided us – but it is the past.

We will learn its lessons and move forward.

Today it's 2017 and we choose the future.

Conference, our remarkable planet has weathered far greater political winds than those we are currently facing.

We are part of a strong global family who have joined us here in Liverpool and serve as a powerful reminder that the future we are building is far bigger than any one of us.

We are a growing, bold, joyful, fierce, colourful and powerful movement.

And today we honour the truth that there is only one kind of future possible – and it is Green.

CL:

Conference, earlier I said 2016 was a good year. And when I read that list of positive news I was filled with hope.

You fill me with hope.

But hope doesn't hide the truth and we speak the truth.

Underpinning everything there are two simple facts.

The planet is burning.

The gap between rich and poor is getting wider.

So we have a choice, we can consent or we can resist.

Friends, this is what we do. This is what you do.

You knock on doors. You join picket lines and you march.

You talk and you listen. You join the communities saying no to fracking and no to new runways.

You join the fight to protect an independent media. You take a stand when people are evicted from their homes.

You are there when the police act as if black lives don't matter.

You are there when concrete is poured over our countryside.

You rise up to defend what we know to be good and right.

You speak truth to power.

You speak it loudly.

You are a movement that is bigger than this moment.

Conference, you do all this – and we will win.

ENDS.

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