

Priti Patel: Speech to Conservative Party Conference 2019

Priti Patel, Home Secretary, speaking today at Conservative Party Conference at The Manchester Convention Centre, said:

(Check against delivery)

"Today, here in Manchester, the Conservative Party takes its rightful place as the Party of Law and Order in Britain once again.

We stand with the brave men and women of our police and security services.

And we stand against the criminals.

The gang leaders, drug barons, thugs and terrorists who seek to do us harm.

We say that proudly and without apology.

As the Party that has always backed the forces of law and order, and we always will.

We ask them to do the most difficult of jobs.

To run toward danger, to ensure that we are not in danger.

Being here in Manchester it is impossible to forget that.

Just over two years ago, this city was victim to one of the most sickening terror attacks our country has ever witnessed.

Manchester truly experienced the worst of humanity that night. But, also the best.

That spineless coward met with the heroism of our emergency workers and Britain's finest intelligence agencies.

And as they face up to such danger, they need to know they are not alone.

They need to know they have a Prime Minister,

a Home Secretary,

and a Government that stands beside them.

I am that Home Secretary.

Boris Johnson is that Prime Minister.

The Conservative Party is that Government.

One of my first acts as Home Secretary was to start recruiting 20,000 new police officers.

Giving them the strength in numbers they need.

Giving them new and immediate funding.

And supporting and equipping them with the powers they need to keep us safe.

Including lifting restrictions on emergency stop-and-search powers for all forces across England and Wales.

Giving police officers the confidence they need to clamp down on violent crime.

These are the powers police chiefs tell me they need.

I have heard their voice.

I am answering their call.

And I want to tell you why.

There are three reasons:

Firstly, because backing the forces of law and order is central to our DNA as Conservatives.

Giving people the security they need to live their lives as they choose is an essential part of our freedom.

We recognise that freedom and security are not opposites, but equals.

And that ensuring people can live their lives free from fear is the essential foundation for a life of liberty.

Because the people posing the threats are ever more callous and the job we ask the police to do is ever more difficult and dangerous.

These are the facts that I never forget.

Almost every day, I pass the gates of the Houses of Parliament.

There stands the memorial to PC Palmer killed in the line of duty on 22nd March 2017, during a terror attack at the heart of our democracy.

His sacrifice will never be forgotten.

Around the corner from my office stands the National Police Memorial,

and a book containing the names of 4,000 men and women killed as they went about their work.

Tragically, we must now add a new name to that proud roll of honour.

PC Harper, a 28-year-old newlywed, senselessly and brutally killed in the line of duty on 15th August this year.

He too will always be remembered.

I will always remember visiting Thames Valley police the day after he was killed.

The shock and sorrow was palpable.

But the determination to come together, to carry on and continue the relentless pursuit of justice was inspiring.

Their safety, their dedication and their loyalty are what I think of every single day.

The second reason we must back the police is to remove the grip gangs and organised criminals have on our communities.

They just don't care who they hurt or abuse.

The kingpins of these criminal gangs are exploiting children.

Forcing them to carry crack cocaine and heroin across rural and coastal communities.

Threatening them into carrying guns and knives as "protection".

Manipulating them into killing innocent people.

Faced with this new and growing danger, our police will know that I will back them to get this under control.

If there has been any doubt about that commitment in the past.

Let that end here today.

Recruiting 20,000 police officers is just the start.

I am equipping Police Officers with the kit and tools they need to protect themselves and others from harm.

I have created a new fund to give police chiefs the ability to train and equip police officers with tasers.

It is the job of Chief Constables to make that operational decision.

It is the job of the Home Secretary to empower them to do so.

I am giving them that power.

And today I am announcing a £20 million package to roll up county lines drugs gangs.

To stop them terrorising our towns and villages and exploiting our children.

And a new £25 million Safer Streets fund for new security measures for Britain's worst crime spots.

And as well as giving the police the kit and powers they need, we must do more to recognise their commitment, their bravery, and their professionalism.

I have been humbled by the officers I have met and the experiences they have shared with me.

This is why I have personally accelerated work to establish the Police Covenant.

This is a pledge to do more as a nation to help those who serve our country.

To recognise the bravery, the commitment and the sacrifices of serving and former officers.

And we will enshrine this into law.

We will also ensure that anyone who assaults a police officer receives a sentence that truly fits the crime, to make the thugs who would attack an officer, think twice.

That's what I mean by backing the police.

And there's a third reason we must back our police.

It is because this is what the people want and what they expect us to do.

This is a Government driven by the people's priorities.

Hardworking, honest, law-abiding people whose needs are humble, whose expectations are modest and whose demands of their government are simple.

They want us to listen.

They ask us to respond.

And they expect us to do what we say.

From crime, to immigration, to leaving the European Union, we are ready to listen and to do what they want.

It's called democracy.

That shouldn't really be a controversial statement.

They are the masters and we are their servants.

Our job is to deliver on their priorities.

But too many people are losing faith in politics and politicians.

And they are questioning the health of our democracy.

Because over three years ago, the British public turned out to vote in their millions.

They knew what they were voting for. They were told that the final result would be delivered.

But their euphoria and optimism of that referendum day has given way to frustration and anger.

As a group of politicians led by Jeremy Corbyn think they know better.

And have done everything possible to stand in the way of democracy, ignoring the will of the people.

I was proud to be part of the referendum campaign.

A campaign that was electrified by one man.

Who encouraged us to believe in a brighter Britain.

And I am proud to serve in his government as we work as a team and focus on getting Brexit done.

And as Home Secretary at this defining moment in our country's history, I have a particular responsibility when it comes to taking back control.

It is to end the free movement of people once and for all.

Instead we will introduce an Australian style points-based immigration system.

One that works in the best interests of Britain.

One that attracts and welcomes the brightest and the best.

One that supports brilliant scientists, the finest academics and leading people in their fields.

And one that is under the control of the British Government.

Because, let me tell you something.

This daughter of immigrants, needs no lectures from the North London metropolitan liberal elite.

That's what you get with a government that is driven by the people's priorities.

Of course, there will be only two dissenting voices.

Diane Abbott and Jeremy Corbyn.

Because the choice isn't just who the people want to be our next Prime Minister.

It's also about who the people want to be their next Home Secretary.

Do we really want a Labour Home Secretary who would leave our communities and our country less safe?

A Labour Party who won't even attempt to take back control of our borders.

Because they want to surrender our border control and extend free movement.

And on policing The Labour Party would stop the police from doing their job.

And when it comes to our brilliant intelligence agencies, well – what can I say?

The Labour Party trust our foes more than our friends.

To all of this, I say, no, no no.

Only the Conservative Party is driven by the people's priorities and that means backing our police, our communities and our great country.

That pragmatic approach, grounded in the good sense of the British people, keeps us focused on what truly matters today.

That's the lesson I took from the person who inspired me to join our Party.

A Conservative Prime Minister first elected forty years ago, this year.

Margaret Thatcher knew that if you made the British people your compass. If you took time to understand their lives and their priorities, then your direction would always be true.

"My policies", she said, "are based not on some economics theory, but on things I and millions like me were brought up with: an honest day's work for an honest day's pay; live within your means; pay your bills on time; and support the police"

That advice is as sound today as it was forty years ago.

Support the police we will.

This Party, our Conservative Party, is backing those who put their lives on the line for our national security.

So as we renew our place as the Party of Law and Order in Britain, let the message go out from this hall today:

To the British people – we hear you.

To the police service – we back you.

And to the criminals, I simply say this:

We are coming after you.

We stand for the forces of right, and against the forces of evil.

We stand for the law-abiding majority, not the criminal minority.

We stand by those who seek to do right by themselves, their families and their communities.

And we stand by Britain, ready to give the leadership our great country deserves.

So as Conservatives, we must remind the public what we stand for.

And as the Party of the United Kingdom, we will get Brexit done and deliver on the people's priorities.

Thank you."

ENDS