

Esther McVey speech at Conservative Party Conference 2018

Esther McVey, Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, speaking today at Conservative Party Conference at The ICC, Birmingham, said:

(Check against delivery)

“Hello everyone

It’s an honour to be standing here today at this year’s conference in Birmingham.

A city with a great history.

A dynamic city.

A thriving city.

A city where employment has increased by over 67, 000 in 8 years.

Now I come from another great city, Liverpool.....

And Liverpool’s riding high in the Premier League.

But, after last week’s Labour Conference, not doing so well in the political league!

For in my home city, we witnessed the extraordinary spectacle of a shadow cabinet minister praising the legacy of Derek Hatton and the Militant Tendency running the city in the 1980s.

Yes, you heard it right, a member of the shadow cabinet praising a council that broke the law; fleeced the taxpayer and brought a proud city to the brink of bankruptcy. And the ringleader is back. Derek Hatton has just been accepted back into the Labour Party – after 33 years – inspired to return by Corbyn’s far left Socialism which now makes up Labour Party Policy.

Momentum is the modern day Militant

And remember there are 3 M’s in Momentum...

Militant, Militant, Militant...

Can you imagine it?

... this country with Corbyn, McDonnell and Abbott at the helm?

It would be a political nightmare.

With Labour doing what it always does – leaving office with higher

unemployment than it inherited!

Now, I became a Conservative not just because of the things we stand for – like aspiration, patriotism, freedom and responsibility...

... but also because of what I stand against – the ugly, destructive, Marxist, Militant, socialists of the past...

And I am here today...

...to join you to rise up as one strong Conservative force, for the good of the economy, for the sake of our country – its values and our future.

For bullying and intimidation should not be allowed to drive our politics into the gutter.

Remember what John McDonnell said about me...

That I should be lynched...

Well he picked on the wrong woman...

And let me tell you a bit about the department Corbyn's Labour tries to malign. The Department for Work and Pensions which has helped over 3.3 million more people into work since 2010.

And it's often lost on people just how big the Department is.

We spend £180 billion a year – equivalent to the whole economy of a country the size of Portugal.

We see around 80,000 people a day in jobcentres.

We make 12 million payments a week – for pensions, welfare, child care and more.

We rely on 78,000 staff.

It is a Department I know well, having started here in 2010.

Interestingly, I'm the only Minister I believe who has spent their whole Ministerial career in one department- Work and Pensions – moving from Parliamentary Private Secretary into a Junior Minister role to a Minister of State to now Secretary of State – even with a spell of unemployment in the middle!

And don't think that irony wasn't lost on me – when, standing on stage at 5am on a May morning in 2015, surrounded by cameras, lights, people, and hearing the election result that I'd lost.

One moment Minister of State for Employment the next moment unemployed!

So I'm delighted to be back here as Secretary of State.

Working with my excellent team of Ministers who I'd like to thank for their dedication, commitment and incredible hard work: Sarah Newton, Alok Sharma, Guy Opperman, Justin Tomlinson and Peta Buscombe, along with our excellent PPSs Rebecca Pow and Julian Knight and whip Craig Whittaker.

I also want to extend a massive thanks to all of the DWP's committed staff across the country.

We have put the Conservative approach to welfare into practice. This, alongside sound, Conservative, economic policies, means we are delivering an employment revolution.

Guiding the country out of Labour's mess. Let's not forget under Labour the number of households where no one had ever worked almost doubled.

In stark contrast, since 2010 we have added on average 1,000 more jobs each and every day – and despite what the Labour Party say, the vast majority of these are full-time permanent roles.

We have created more new jobs in the UK since 2010, than France, Spain, Ireland, Netherlands, Austria, Sweden and Norway combined.

In fact it would take me over a month to read out non-stop all the names of those we've helped into work... so I hope you're all sitting comfortably!!

And youth unemployment has plummeted by almost 50 percent – whereas in Spain and Italy it is almost three times higher. Making us the envy of Europe.

However it's about more than just numbers.

We are helping people take control of their lives. And we are transforming the country into a great working nation, prepared for a prosperous, post-Brexit future.

And it is the Conservatives who have redesigned the welfare system to make it fit for the 21st Century. The vision of Iain Duncan Smith.

We have ditched Labour's confusing mix of benefits and tax credits. They stifled opportunities to work by creating punitive, effective tax rates of over 90 per cent.

And we have eradicated the bureaucracy which meant people had to apply to three organisations for welfare: HMRC for tax credits, local authorities for housing benefit and DWP for unemployment benefits and disability payments.

Universal Credit is an up-to-date system that replaces 6 benefits with one monthly payment and ensures that work always pays. This is why Labour hate it so much.

We are helping people into work and up the career ladder. The Conservative ladder of opportunity.

Our employment success hasn't happened by accident, just like Labour's

failures haven't either.

Since becoming Secretary of State in January, I have listened to the concerns of claimants, constituents, charities, welfare organisations and colleagues and I have made significant changes to the benefit system.

Including extra support for those with disabilities, more help for vulnerable young people and more support for families.

People spoke, I listened.

And we'll continue to improve the system where we can and work with independent organisations to deliver vital services.

Because the State cannot, and should not, work in isolation. It would be arrogant to suggest it can.

Which is why today, I can announce a new, national partnership with Citizens Advice to deliver Universal Support across the UK, worth £39 million from 2019. This will help the most vulnerable get timely access to Universal Credit, providing budgeting advice and developing their digital skills.

I want to continue to build partnerships with organisations across the country to help even more people into work.

So today I can announce that from the New Year we will work with Barnardo's to provide care leavers with work experience opportunities in Barnardo's high street shops. It will give that crucial, first step towards employment, all within a supportive, working environment, alongside trained staff and volunteers.

Over the years Barnardo's has transformed the lives of millions of children and families across the UK. They provide unconditional support, without judgement, giving the space, time and help for people to get back on their feet. So, as one of those children, and standing proud, thank you.

Conference, we are Compassionate Conservatives.

We care about the vulnerable in society and how to support them.

Yes we look after the money, yes we balance the books to ensure we can support those who need it, when they need it. But we are not a party only interested in numbers.

A sound economy is part of the picture; a cohesive, caring society is the other part.

If you were to believe everything you heard from Labour or read on social media you'd think we were somehow letting down the most vulnerable in society.

Especially disabled people.

However, those who say we are cutting budgets are peddling fake news.

So here's the real news –

We have never spent more on those with disabilities and long-term health conditions. We spend over £50 billion a year, up £9 billion on 2010.

But we want to do more than provide financial support, we want to help disabled people achieve their career ambitions and goals. In fact from 2013 to 2017 we've helped 600,000 more disabled people into work through personalised and tailored support.

And don't let history be rewritten – it was William Hague in a Conservative Government in 1995 who introduced the Disability Discrimination Act – to champion, support and hold up the values of a caring society.

It was the Conservatives who created 'Access to Work' – a scheme for disabled people to support them in the workplace.

And Conservatives who introduced 'Disability Confident' – a scheme I created and launched back in 2013 – designed to help businesses recruit, and retain disabled people and those with health conditions, and which now has over 7,500 businesses signed up to it. We are also creating 3 additional Sector Champions responsible for – website accessibility, product design and countryside & heritage, to amplify the voice of disabled people. This is the Conservative approach to assisting those with disabilities.

And we support Pensioners who have worked their whole lives, and contributed enormously to the success of this country.

We are providing certainty in retirement through the state pension, which has increased by £1,450 per pensioner since 2010. In sharp contrast to the 75p increase pensioners received under Labour in 2000 – remember that?

And we will continue to protect UK pensioners living in the EU post-Brexit by applying the triple lock as we do here.

At the same time we are delivering a private pensions revolution. More people than ever are saving into a work place pension up nearly 50 percent in the last 6 years, and significantly driven by younger people. Through automatic-enrolment, we have helped create almost 10 million new pension savers.

And we will be giving people the opportunity to access their pension information through an industry led pension dashboard, building on the government's check your state pension online service.

We are opening up opportunities for all, through our welfare, employment and pensions reforms.

Only the Conservative Government have a track record of success in these critical areas.

We are here to give a hand up, and not a hand out.

We are the party of opportunity and social mobility.

These values unite us all.

They will also be the guiding light for our exciting post-Brexit future with a Conservative Government.

A UK which is working like never before and open to business.

An inclusive nation – with opportunity for all.”

ENDS

For further information, please contact the Press Office on 020 7984 8121.