Jonathan Bartley speech to Autumn Conference: Speaking truth to power

9 October 2017

Jonathan Bartley speech to Autumn Conference in Harrogate.

*Check against delivery.

STARTS:

Caroline. It is an honour to share a stage with you – let alone a job!

Thank you on behalf of everyone here.

Thank you for bravely speaking the truth to those in power. And thank you for being OUR thorn in THEIR side.

Conference, I'm completely prepared for this speech.

I've got some Soothers.

I've got some Blue Tack, just in case any bits of the stage start falling off

And – most importantly – I've actually brought a vision for the future of this country.

It's great to be back in Harrogate. And Yorkshire for the second time in a week.

Last Tuesday I was in Kirby Misperton with those on the frontline of the battle against fracking. On Monday I was in Lancashire at Preston New Road.

It is truly inspirational to see this insurgency grow. Councillors and campaigners like Gina Dowding and Tina Rothery.

Communities taking action for a better future. The REAL Northern powerhouse.

And friends our commitment to the future is one of the reasons I am proud to be co-leader of our party.

A party that's truly different.

A party that isn’t afraid to cause the right kind of trouble.

A party that sees climate breakdown and is willing to put our bodies on the line to stop it.

As Caroline said it’s a year since we became co-leaders. And what a year it’s been!

In May’s local elections we were the only party outside Government to make gains.

And recent by-elections in Lewes and Cannock Chase have added two more to our number.

Johnny Denis and Stuart Crabtree. Give them a round of applause.

Next year I will be standing for election to my local council, like many of you in this room today.

Joining the Green opposition to social cleansing and reckless financial mismanagement in Lambeth. Standing up against the demolition of estates. Telling a Labour council at odds with its own party’s leader that its toxic policies aren’t welcome in my borough.

Our ambition is a strong green voice of truth in every community. Shaping the future by what we do today.

Like Sian Berry standing with survivors of Grenfell, who were ignored by successive Governments before the fire – and abandoned by this Government after.

Or the award winning Caroline Russell pushing the Mayor of London to take action on air pollution.

Like Amelia, bravely sharing her experience of abuse, to stand in solidarity with other survivors.

Like Jenny in the Lords, or Molly, Jean and Keith in the European Parliament.

Like Alison Teal, arrested for challenging the destruction of trees in Sheffield.

And now nominated as councillor of the year!

Consistent Green voices.

Powerful Green voices.

Speaking up when others are silent.

Speaking truth to power.

Our voices count. And they counted in June‘s General Election.

Today I want to thank every single one of you who worked so hard on our campaign.

You were brave and uncompromising. You said the environment must be front and centre. You said “No” means “No” on nuclear weapons. You said an emphatic “yes” to shaking up the archaic straightjacket of First Past the Post.

And you championed the most radical, future-facing manifesto of any party.

Truthful about the economy and truthful about how we TRANSFORM our country.

Thank you.

Conference, today is a day for honesty. It’s a time for straight talking. A time for speaking the truth.

As YOU did at the general election, I am speaking from my heart now.

And I want to talk with you about electoral alliances.

Maybe, if the other parties had been willing to work with us Theresa May wouldn’t be sitting in Number 10 today.

22 local Green parties bravely stood aside to change British politics. Many, many more, bravely stood candidates to give our Green vision a voice.

This was never going to be an easy election. It was always going to be about the two biggest parties.

And we suffered at the hands of a two-party system.

It hurt. And I know many of us still feel that hurt. I do.

But Conference let’s not forget what we achieved together.

Our ideas and policies are now common currency. Part of the mainstream.

We achieved the Party’s second best general election result.

And we helped deny Theresa May her majority and her mandate.

The Dementia Tax – dead.

The ban on fox hunting – safe.

The extreme brexiteers – in retreat

The Tories in disarray.

Conference, I know that sometimes it may not feel like we are winning.

But where we lead, others follow.

Our London Assembly members forced a Living Wage.

Our MEPs stood up for refugees when others stood back.

And in Parliament, we have consistently kept climate change on the agenda.

And you know what. I believe that we will be the most influential party in twenty first century politics.

We warned the system was unsustainable.

And then there was the financial crisis.

In 2010 we were told by the Tories, by Labour, by the Lib Dems – that austerity was the only answer.

We said no. And we kept saying no.

We joined UK uncut on the streets. We marched to Downing Street.

We bravely dared to be different.

And seven years later the agenda HAS changed.

What we were saying then – that neoliberalism is dying and must be replaced – has become the mainstream.

We have changed the minds of other parties on fracking and we are changing the debate about a universal basic income.

Winning is about elections AND it’s about the way we bravely and steadily speak the truth all the time.

Other parties might flirt with changing the economy. Or the welfare system. But we are the only Party that is honest about how much things NEED to change.

We are the only party who will collectively design a future where we can all thrive – and have a larger life.

The only Party prepared to stand up and tell it how it is.

The only Party consistently asking the big questions that matter.

The only Party of real change.

Conference, the tories ARE led by a zombie Prime Minister.

But it isn’t just Theresa May.

The Conservative Party has rot at its core.

A party that desperately grasps for the hands of deniers, despots and dictators.

That sells weapons to human rights abusers.

That puts ‘go home’ vans on our streets.

That has turned doctors and teachers into border guards.

Rotten to the core.

And at that core is a particular type of poison. And it’s called Boris Johnson.

Ok, In many ways he IS a joke. But then you listen to what he’s actually saying.

Let’s not pretend that Boris Johnson’s comments about dead bodies in Libya was an aberration.

It wasn’t.

This is the man who calls Barack Obama “part Kenyan” with “ancestral dislike” of the UK.

Who describes Congolese people as having “Watermelon Smiles”.

Calls Commonwealth citizens “flag waving piccaninnies.”

Uses his Telegraph column to cast doubt on climate change.

Suggests Papuan people are cannibals.

And ran a magazine which accused Liverpool fans of “wallowing in it” after Hillsborough.

This is not new bigotry. It’s old. It’s unacceptable. And it’s time the Conservative Party took collective responsibility for this human wrecking ball and kicked him out of the Cabinet.

Speaking truth to power.

So I have something else I want to say to the Tories.

We are the only country in Europe locking up refugees in detention centres with no time limit.

It beggars belief that in 21st Century Britain, thousands fleeing war and persecution are shut away indefinitely in conditions worse than prison. Right here. Right now.

A few weeks ago I visited one of these detention centres. I heard first-hand the stories of those from Eritrea, Iraq, Turkey, Afghanistan, and China. Of their suffering at the hands of despotic regimes. And now they suffer at the hands of this Government.

In Britain. Three crammed to a cell. Deprived of medical treatment. Abused, beaten and drugged. Solitary confinement used as punishment.

In our prisons there is a suicide attempt every three days. In our detention centres – despite a population thirty times smaller – it happens every day.

Our detention system is a stain on our nation’s conscience, it’s a hallmark of this government’s cruelty. And it must end. Now.

And hear this too. If you want to solve the refugee crisis, then stop creating refugees.

It’s time someone stood up for the UK’s aid budget and made a case for trade rules that are genuinely fair.

Conference, we can use our wealth for good. It can transform lives.

It is, quite simply, a matter of life and death.

We can give communities around the world a chance to develop the resilience they need. The independence they deserve. The freedom and opportunity that is their right.

Let me be clear. I want to see our aid budget expand, not shrink.

I want the UK to make a positive difference in the world. To show leadership by tackling environmental breakdown, conflict and poverty.

And I want to transform the Department for International Development into something new, brave and fit for the future we are forging.

A Department for Peacebuilding and Security.

That’s how we face the future in a global economy.

That’s how we can proudly take our place on the world stage.

That’s how our small island can use its power for the common good.

We have choices. And the choices we make, make the future.

And there is no greater threat to that future than the choices being made now about nuclear weapons.

Today I want to say a huge congratulations to ICAN, the International Campaign to Ban Nuclear Weapons. On Friday they won the Nobel Peace Prize for their work in bringing about the Global Nuclear Ban Treaty.

There’s a cosy consensus in Westminster in support of nuclear weapons. But we’re willing to speak the truth.

The UK refused to take part in talks on the UN’s nuclear ban treaty.

It’s one thing to duck a TV debate. But to boycott the chance to rid the world of nuclear weapons is a reckless abdication of responsibility, a moral outrage, and a gamble with our planet.

The heightened tensions between the US and North Korea have brought us close to the brink of nuclear war. Yet the UK Government turned away from a chance to wage peace and the official opposition stayed silent.

But the truth will be told.

Nuclear weapons belong in the past. They are dangerous. They do not bring peace. And we want a world without them.

Finding our place in the world matters like never before, as we face the prospect of Brexit.

And the truth still matters too.

The government knows that the more people hear the truth about Brexit, the less they like what's on offer.

Britain is still being lied to and that's why we are demanding the Government's 50 Secret Studies into the impact of Brexit be brought into the open now.

That's why we are demanding a ratification referendum once a final deal has been agreed.

And that's why we bravely continue to say our future is better in Europe.

Conference, the truth is that Brexit will make us all poorer in every sense.

And let's be clear. Leaving the single market would be the door to a fresh wave of austerity under the Tories.

Let me honest about something else:

Freedom of movement has been good for Britain and we will never turn on our neighbours, our friends, our families. Never deny them their rights.

We are now the only party standing up unequivocally for Freedom of Movement. The only Party that true internationalists can call home.

We are not afraid to embrace a future that protects migrants' rights, rejoices in diversity and shares the benefits of free movement fairly and equally.

We are not afraid of the truth. And we are not afraid to stand up to those spreading lies. Those pedalling hate. And those putting up walls.

And a Green voice of truth is essential when it comes to climate breakdown.

Because that is what we already face.

The lethal hurricanes battering the Caribbean last month are a deadly reminder of what that means.

Of what happens when those most able to tackle climate change refuse to

protect those who will face its worst effects.

And Sir Alan Duncan. When you stood up in the House of Commons and accused Caroline of lacking humanity for talking about climate change, you exposed your own inhumanity.

We'll take no lectures from you or any Conservative about 'compassion'.

27 million people are already fleeing climate disasters each year.

Drought and famine in Chad causing starvation.

Sea levels and floods in Bangladesh threatening livelihoods and lives.

Conference, we are all citizens of the world and each one of us has a right to a safe home.

That's why I am proud to support organisations like Hidden Voices, asking the UN to give climate refugees the long overdue recognition they deserve.

The climate crisis needs vision and brave leadership

Instead we get Theresa May and Donald Trump. Denying, dithering and fiddling while the planet burns.

But in the next few decades there may be no Maldives, no Seychelles.

Miami, New Orleans, and Atlantic City have little chance of survival. Many scientists assume we'll lose them within the century.

Climate change threatens nearly every aspect of human life on this planet.

It won't wait for us to wake up and it definitely won't wait for the media to face facts.

It beggars belief that those with their heads in the sand are still given air time.

2017 must be the year denial and complacency ends.

They wouldn't give a platform to the tobacco lobby.

They wouldn't give a platform to flat earthers.

The BBC won't even give a platform to Jeremy Clarkson.

So why give airtime to climate change deniers?

The Government has allowed a public health crisis to unfold right under its nose. Its own plans to clean up our air are so bad they are illegal.

The truth is we need a rapid transition to zero emissions: electric vehicles, streamlined public transport, and investment in cycling and walking.

And we need it fast.

That’s why today I am proud to launch the Green Party’s Breathing Cities campaign to secure zero emission pledges from five of our dirtiest cities within five years.

Reclaiming our cities as places to live, work and play. Free from the threat of air pollution.

Putting in place the infrastructure we need to face the future squarely. A future where the environment is at the heart of all we do.

And conference, that’s the biggest truth we speak – and which other parties deny.

The environment is the food we eat. The water we drink. The air we breathe.

And any economy that does not redress the imbalances that are irrevocably degrading our environment is doomed.

We want an economy that sustains our life giving planet.

That nurtures people’s aspirations.

That redistributes not just wealth but the sources of that wealth.

An economy where success is measured not in terms of growth but in terms of the quality of the lives we live.

An economy for a larger, fairer and braver future.

As my friend and colleague Andrew Cooper says: “Try holding your breath while you count your money”.

I’d like to see the environment secretary Michael Gove attempt that one.

Conference, did you know that last week Gove claimed he was a member of the first and most ambitious green party?

Well, I went and checked our membership records, and I couldn’t find his name in there anywhere…

Astonishingly, it seems like he might have actually been talking about the Conservative Party.

But the environment is not something to bolt on – it’s got to be an intrinsic part of the economy of the future.

So I have just one word for Gove – and that word is Hinkley.

Owned by a Chinese company. Run by the French. Subsidised by the British taxpayer.

Running a technology that has never worked. Anywhere in the world.

And all with the blessing of the Conservatives, the Liberal Democrats and Labour.

If Hinkley ever gets off the starting blocks it will generate power 20% more expensive than offshore wind.

Friends, the sun is the only nuclear reactor we will ever need.

Hinkley makes no sense economically.

Hinkley makes no sense environmentally.

So let’s make sense and let’s make Hinkley history.

Hinkley is a white elephant and so too are HS2 and the plans for a new runway at Heathrow.

They are symbols of the past and have no place in a future in which people and planet thrive.

You don’t get a renewable energy revolution while sinking subsidies into dirty nuclear power stations and fossil fuels.

You don’t transform access to public transport with a mega railway that rips through local communities.

You don’t get clean air while expanding airports and roads.

And you don’t get a healthy economy while you are addicted to growth.

Conference, we know it’s time for something different. Time to reimagine everything.

We must start by asking who the economy is for.

We need a new economy with people at the centre and in balance with the natural world.

And that will need a real shift of power – and fundamental structural change.

The challenge before us is to collectively design an economy where we all thrive.

Regeneration and redistribution built in from the start.

A future that’s smart. Where we can work together not against one another. Where we do more with less.

One that rejects stale binary choices.

That opts instead for the strength that comes from diversity. Where the state and the individual have a role alongside the household and the commons.

All focussed on one clear objective: a world in which every person can lead

their life with dignity, opportunity and community

That future is already being written.

By the neighbourhoods generating their own solar power.

Taking over local pubs as valuable community assets.

Setting up local produce schemes to give the poorest residents subsidised fresh food.

Like the Library of Things in South London. A social enterprise, where you pay a small charge to borrow everything from DIY equipment to kitchenware.

Now imagine one in every community. On every high street. Cutting the cost of living. Giving us more choice. Giving us more space. Liberating us from the need to own.

Together we can redesign the way we think about work too.

Of course not everything that comes from new technology is good.

The changing world of work and the rise of automation can be scary.

The challenges they pose will be overcome not just by ending exploitative zero hours contracts, but by a shorter working week.

We want to give people longer with their families, in their communities, doing what makes them happy.

And we know many employers want this too.

And we won’t stop there.

With the rise of the gig economy we want to see all workers given more flexibility with basic rights like holiday leave and sick pay. And we want those rights to be extended, too.

Let’s deal too with the exploitation by companies like Uber. The workers, many from Black, Minority Ethnic groups, many EU nationals, once again finding themselves pawns in a high stakes game. This time between Transport for London and Uber bosses.

But we could have a mutually owned, publicly regulated, Uber equivalent in every city in the UK. With accessible vehicles for the disabled. Powered by renewable electricity. Safety and security assured. Where every worker gets flexibility and fair pay.

The sharing economy taking cars off the road and tackling congestion.

That’s what a Green economy looks like.

That’s what elected Greens up and down Britain are working to achieve.

That’s what we stand for and that’s why we are the Party of the future.

For education and welfare too we need to imagine something radically better.

Expanding horizons for our young people not limiting them with endless testing.

Not just ending poverty but creating a future where everyone is liberated to fulfil their potential and their dreams.

Scrapping SATS, abolishing Ofsted and replacing universal credit with a universal basic income.

Putting trust in one another, in people’s enormous capacity to create.

Where I live in South London, the community is doing just that. And it wants to take control.

At Cressingham Gardens in Tulse Hill the residents have come up with their own scheme to regenerate their estate. One that would create warmer, securer homes. And more housing than the council is proposing through its reckless demolition programme.

When we trust the people, they can come up with the solutions they need.

Together we can co-produce the future.

We can shape our public services with meaningful community ownership.

We can pioneer a future in which we all have a stake.

The Green Party would give local people power to decide what happens to them and what gets spent where.

Participatory budgeting. Putting financial power in people’s hands.

With regional banks that invest in the kinds of bonds and shares and trusts that hold communities together.

Creating strong resilient economies to withstand the winds of globalisation.

Conference, the Green Party is the party of small business.

Of creators, givers, sharers and contributors.

Of the little guy. The social entrepreneur. The activist. The creative coder and the brave builders.

The Party for anyone who has a dream.

For everyone that wants an economy working for them, not against them.

The need for the Green Party has never been greater.

Because the consequences for tomorrow of what we are doing today have never been greater.

We don’t just need a technological shift. We need a paradigm shift.

That’s the truth we are speaking. Everyday. By being here, by standing up and doing the things that no one else will.

Our business is change. Looking to the future not a mythical past.

So, if you want a party that will tell it how it is. A Party that won’t shut down debate or duck questions. That is brave enough to make the right choices and stick by them.

Then the Green Party should be your home.

If you want a party that believes in democracy from the bottom up, not centralised control. That speaks truth to power and is not afraid to use its power to empower others.

Then the Green Party should be your home.

If you want a Party that believes in making the desirable feasible.

Then the Green Party should be your home.

We are pioneers and we are sharers. We are creators and we are insurgents

We are the only future possible

We are the Green Party

ENDS.

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Conference approves policy for Windrush Day Bank Holiday

9 October 2017

At its Autumn Conference in Harrogate the Green Party has agreed a new policy calling for the introduction of a Bank Holiday to mark the contribution migrants have made to Britain.

The policy was passed overwhelming by delegates at their conference.

Co-leader Jonathan Bartley said:

“In a political climate that has become increasingly hostile towards migrants, it is more important than ever that we speak up, cherish, and recognise the enormous contribution they have made to this country. Nothing can be done to completely right the historic wrongs that were inflicted on the travellers, the slaves, and the refugees who have come to Britain but we can use our influence today to make Britain a more welcoming and inclusive society tomorrow.”

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Green Party: We will be the most influential party

9 October 2017

Jonathan Bartley, co-leader of the Green Party, will say his party will be the most influential in 21st century politics as he addresses members at autumn conference.

Bartley will point to how Greens have set the agenda on issues from a Living Wage to refugees and climate change.

Bartley is expected to say:

“Where we lead, others follow. Our London Assembly members forced a Living Wage. Our MEPs stood up for refugees when others stood back. And in Parliament, we have consistently kept climate change on the agenda.

“And you know what. I believe we will be the most influential party in twenty first century politics.”

After the financial crash seven years ago Greens stood against the establishment consensus that austerity was necessary. In his speech Bartley will say anti-austerity is now mainstream.

He will also set out a vision for a new economy, with an ambitious plan to tackle air pollution, and calling out the damage a hard Brexit will inflict on Britain.

Bartley is expected to say:

“We warned that the system was unsustainable. And then there was the financial crisis. In 2010 we were told by the Tories, by Labour, by the Lib Dems – that austerity was the only answer. We said no. And we kept saying no. We joined UK uncut on the streets. We marched to Downing Street. We bravely dared to be different. And seven years later the agenda has changed.

“We have changed the minds of other parties on fracking and we are changing the debate about a universal basic income. Other parties might flirt with changing the economy. Or the welfare system. But we are the only Party that is honest about how much things need to change.

“We are the only party who will collectively design a future where we can all thrive – and have a larger life.”

Notes:

1. Green Party Autumn Conference runs from Saturday 7 October to Tuesday 10 October, 2017 at the Harrogate International Centre, Entrance 3, King’s Rd, Harrogate HG1 5LA.

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Green Party Autumn Conference: Speaking truth to power

7 October 2017

This weekend Greens will gather for the party's autumn conference [1] to ask big questions about the issues facing Britain and the world.

At the conference, which runs from Saturday 7 to Tuesday 10 October, members will explore how climate action can be at the heart of all policy, how Greens can fight the worst effects of Brexit, and how the party can pioneer a new vision for the economy.

Jonathan Bartley, Green Party co-leader, said:

"At Autumn Conference this year Greens will say the things others won't. So when we have a failing economy with stagnating wages and people working all hours to make ends meet, we'll say it's not enough to tinker with things. When there is an establishment consensus on leaving the single market, we'll say that's incompatible with ending austerity. We're at a turning point – and we need to be asking big questions about our future."

Caroline Lucas, Green Party co-leader, said:

"Only the Green Party recognises the scale of the challenge we face and the need for bold and fundamental reform so we can build a better future for all. We get to the heart of the issues – and ask who our economy is meant to serve. We stand up to the Government's callous policies towards migrants and refugees. And we are unafraid to politicise climate breakdown and set out the urgent policies we need to address it. We will always speak truth to power."

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Caroline Lucas: Britain's boycott of nuclear ban is 'scandalous'

6 October 2017

Caroline Lucas, co-leader of the Green Party, has welcomed the awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize to the International Campaign to Ban Nuclear Weapons (ICAN).

Lucas said: “This shouldn’t come as a surprise. ICAN’s work on the international treaty to ban nuclear weapons is groundbreaking, and needed now more than ever.

“The fact that Britain has been actively boycotting this process is scandalous. Ministers should be hanging their heads in shame for working against this Nobel Prize winning movement.

“The majority of the world’s nations are behind this ban. Britain must now join them.”

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