



## Constituency Report (September 2020)

### Tony Abbott's Appointment

On 4 September it was confirmed that the former Australian Prime Minister, Tony Abbott, had been appointed as an advisor to the Board of Trade.

Prior to his appointment, in an [article](#) in The i Newspaper. I said that, if we were assessing Tony Abbott for the job of British 'trade supremo' (as Abbott was referred to by The Sun), any objective interview panel would say that he fails on both a personal and a professional level.

First, his history of offensive statements is so long and repetitive that it speaks to serious defects in his character, which is not one I think should be representing Britain on the world stage.

Second, the fact that he has no experience of detailed trade negotiations, no understanding of Brexit, no belief in climate

change, no concern for workers' rights, and no compunction about killing off Australia's car industry mean, to my mind, that he has no credentials for this role.

He was ousted by his own colleagues after two years in power, and kicked out of Australian politics by his own constituents just last year. They are the people who know him best, and they wanted rid of him – yet here we are, hiring him to be the face of Britain and to negotiate our trade deals around the world. If it wasn't so downright humiliating, it would be almost hilarious.

Tony Abbott is the wrong appointment on every level, which begs the more important question, why on earth have Boris Johnson and Liz Truss given him the job?

### Supporting Human Rights through Trade Deals

I was delighted to attend this year's Tolpuddle Martyrs' Online Festival. On 17 July, I spoke in a session on [Human Rights and Trade](#), chaired by the TUC's Rosa Crawford.

I talked about how the Tories are turning a blind eye to the abuse of workers' rights in their desperation to fill the Brexit trade void. I believe our message to other countries simply should have been- if you don't respect and protect the rights of your workers, then we are not going to do a free trade agreement with you.

The sad reality is that this Tory government has done pretty much the opposite. In its desperation to get Free Trade Deals, to fill the hole that they have created by such bad Brexit negotiations, they have sent a message to every other country which says, 'we want your trade and how you treat your workers is really none of our business'.

I also discussed the fight we've waged through the Trade Bill to stop British farming communities being undercut by

the big US agrifood corporations and remembered how much our movement owes historically to those farming communities in Dorset and beyond. You can view my video clips from the event [here](#).



Speaking at the Tolpuddle Martyrs' Online Festival, 17 July

# Social Care

At the General Meeting in July, IS&F CLP passed a motion on the future of social care and wanted me to share my thoughts on the issue.

At the end of last year, during an interview with Labour List, I said that if I were to re-fight one past battle, it would be Barbara Castle's crusade to fully integrate the NHS with social care services. Social Care has always been an issue particularly close to my heart. I worked in a care home as a young woman, looked after my elderly parents towards the end of their lives, have witnessed, firsthand, the devastating consequences of successive Tory governments and have been a Shadow Care Minister.

Since 2010, budget cuts by central Tory governments have resulted in local councils being forced to take £7.7 billion out of adult social care budgets. Every £10 drop in expenditure per head has been linked to five extra care home deaths per 100,000 of the population. The truth is that the Conservative Party's 2019 pledge of £1bn of additional annual funding for the sector is nowhere near enough to meet rising demand, let alone to increase access to publicly funded care.

As Shadow Care Minister in 2010, I fought tooth and nail in order to safeguard the interests of those with care needs and social care workers. From holding them to account in their handling of the Winterbourne View and Southern Cross Scandals, to conducting a survey of local authorities, which predicted the crisis of care almost a decade ago, I have always advocated the importance of funding social care in this country. In 2012, when the Tories announced the Health and Social Care Bill, along with Jeremy Corbyn and Catherine West, I

presented a petition of 1600 signatures to the Department of Health, calling on them to drop the Bill.

As Shadow Secretary for International Trade, I have continually held Boris Johnson's government to account, ensuring that our NHS is safeguarded from privatisation. Time and again, the Labour Party has pledged to end cuts to healthcare, committing in 2010, 2017 and 2019 to establish the National Care Service. As I said at the Labour Women's Conference in 2017, when we are back in government, I believe we need to combine social care, pensions, retirement, transport, and loneliness under a department specifically for elderly people, with a cabinet minister dedicated to safeguarding their interests. In our most recent manifesto, we pledged an additional £8 billion investment across parliament, in order to address the funding gap.

The catastrophic impact of Covid-19 has exposed the impacts of Tory governments' short-termism. Their failure to protect care homes led to an avoidable crisis of monumental proportions, with 30,500 excess deaths of residents. Never again can the government jeopardise the lives of Britain's elderly population, and never again can they overlook the vital contributions of social care work to our society. Our social care staff have been the backbone of the UK in its response to the Covid-19 pandemic, and they must be treated as such. That is why, the Labour Party has been pushing continuously to ensure that social care is a key focus of the upcoming independent Coronavirus inquiry. Under Labour, social care will be a right, not a privilege, providing both those with care needs and our social care workers with a system which values their dignity, their safety, and their lives.

# The Trade Bill

On 20 July, it was the final Commons vote on the government's post-Brexit Trade Bill.

My Labour colleagues and I argued that the government should add a clause, "new clause 17", stating explicitly that the NHS would be exempt from the provisions of any future trade agreements. We had also proposed an amendment, "new clause 4", which would have prevented trade deals from being signed unless they were approved by parliament.

Ahead of the Trade Bill returning to the Commons, I called on Tory MPs to support proper parliamentary scrutiny of all future trade deals and to protect UK farmers from being undercut by the import of food produced to lower standards. You can read the article I wrote

ahead of the vote [here](#).

We tried hard, but failed, to get our amendments through. There is now no safety net when it comes to future trade deals. Protections governing NHS and food and farming standards are not enshrined in law, so there is nothing to stop this government, or a future Tory government, from allowing those protections to be undermined in a trade deal, whether deliberately or not.

On the night, there was no time for me to deliver my speech, but you can read what I had planned to say [here](#). So many on the government front bench, who have 'talked the talk' over recent years about sovereignty and 'taking back control', were prepared to vote entirely against these principles.

# Diary

## International Trade and Work in Parliament

16 July: Video call with Scotch Whisky  
16 July: Video call with Country Land and Business Association  
17 July: Video call- Greener UK Trade Roundtable  
17 July: Video call with Jamie Oliver's team  
17 July: Spoke at the [Tolpuddle Martyrs' Online Festival](#) with the TUC- "supporting human rights through trade deals"  
3 September: [DIT Questions](#)  
7 September: Spoke at the UACES Virtual Conference- Twitter and Trade  
9 September: Video call with the Bioindustry Association  
9 September: Video call with Cambridge CLP  
11 September: Video call with CBI  
14 September: Video call with the British Poultry Council

## Media

20 July: Article in [Politico](#)- "UK MPs must get a say on post-Brexit trade deals- or everyone suffers"  
20 July: [LBC](#)

22 July: Article in the [Guardian](#)- "The Tories' new trade bill means the NHS is now unquestionably up for sale"  
28 July: BBC Radio 5  
27 August: Article in [the i](#)- "Tony Abbott is confrontational, aggressive, thin-skinned and nasty- I don't want him representing the UK"  
1 September: Channel 7 Australia  
5 September: [Radio 4 Today](#)



*DIT Questions via video call, 3 September*

September does not feel the same without the Labour Party Conference and our important consultation with the Labour family. I hope that we will be back together soon and that Members will take part in our online event, 'Connected'.



*Labour Party Conference 2019*



*My set at the Labour Students disco, Labour Party Conference 2018*