



Immigration at the Party Conferences 2013

Summary

Immigration was the dog that prowled but didn't bark. As expected, UKIP majored on it but did not make any policy announcements. Labour put forward a series of relatively trivial policy suggestions but there was little recognition of the mass immigration that they had triggered in government and no commitment to any significant reduction. The Conservatives claimed credit for the reductions achieved so far and renewed their commitment to net migration in the tens of thousands. The Lib Dems said as little as possible.

Liberal Democrat Conference 2013

- Nick Clegg made only passing mention of immigration in his speech. He took credit for ending the detention of children in the immigration system and made clear his opposition to the "Go Home" vans campaign launched by the Home Office.
- The party held a session entitled "*Consultative Session on Immigration, Identity and Asylum*". The Speakers were Sir Andrew Stunnell MP and Louise Higgins. The consultation document for this event can be read here: <http://www.libdems.org.uk/siteFiles/resources/docs/conference/2013%20Autumn/Policy/115%20-%20Immigration,%20Asylum%20and%20Identity.pdf>
- Sir Andrew Stunnell mocked the Lib Dems' regional immigration policy that was part of their 2010 manifesto. He said that regional quotas would not have worked without an identity card system. He also criticised the Conservatives' net migration target and claimed that it had been undermined by the economic recovery, which had led to less people emigrating.¹
- David Laws, at a fringe event organised by the *New Statesman* also criticised the Conservatives' immigration target, saying it was meaningless because it did not include EU migration.²
- He also said that there was far more agreement about the economic benefits of immigration between the three main parties than people realised and that there were some low skilled jobs that natives would never do because they were too "aspirational".³

1 <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-24109632>

2 Ibid

3 Ibid

- *The Guardian*, in conjunction with Bright Britain held a fringe event "Universities and Growth." Vince Cable who attended the event said that UK voters' opinions made it "difficult" for the Government to make an "economically rational case" for immigration. He described public opinion on immigration as "toxic".⁴
- He also said that international students who would have come to Britain were now going to the United States and Australia, where they would receive a "warmer welcome."⁵ He supported the Home Secretary's decision not to cap the number of student visas, but criticised the restrictions on post study work.⁶

Labour Party Conference 2013

- Yvette Cooper, the Shadow Home Secretary, said that it was right for Labour to talk about immigration. Labour had set out practical policies on immigration but they would not join 'an arms race of rhetoric on immigration'. Although immigration would play an important part in Britain's future, the system needed 'controls and proper limits'. She accused the right of wanting mass migration for cheap labour.⁷
- Yvette Cooper admitted once again that Labour should have kept transitional controls longer on the A8 and accepted that the pace of change had been too fast. She also committed Labour to keep the cap on work permits as 'long as the evidence supports it.'
- She promised greater enforcement on illegal immigration and attacked the language used by the Conservative Party to describe immigration as well as the "Go Home" poster campaign.
- Ed Miliband, did not say much about immigration in his speech but did say that Labour would stop the 'race to the bottom' in terms of wages, would stop recruitment agencies only hiring from abroad and would prevent landlords squeezing too many people into accommodation.⁸
- Labour also released the policy document 'One Nation Economy' which contained numerous references to immigration.
- It pledged enforcement of maximum transitional controls on all workers from future accession countries and maintenance of the existing controls on non-EU work visas, including the cap on 'Tier 2' workers.

It also promised to

- give UKBA officers powers to inspect premises unannounced and undertook to close down the "loophole" that allows abuse of 'student visitor visas'.
- Increase the maximum fines for those who deliberately pay below the minimum wage to £50,000.
- Ban recruitment agencies from excluding local workers.
- Extend legislation on gang masters to further sectors where exploitation is common.
- Require firms to offer apprenticeships in return for hiring 'Tier 2' migrants and use procurement rules to ensure that large firms offered government contracts offer apprenticeships.
- Introduce mandatory sector action plans where the Migration Advisory Committee found evidence of dependence on low skilled migrants.

4 <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/politics/liberaldemocrats/10316504/Vince-Cable-attacks-Britains-toxic-views-on-immigration.html>

5 <http://www.theguardian.com/higher-education-network/2013/sep/17/vince-cable-international-students-not-welcome>

6 Ibid

7 <http://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2013/sep/25/tory-immigration-language-national-front-yvette-cooper>

8 <http://labourlist.org/2013/09/transcript-ed-milibands-2013-conference-speech/>

Conservative Party Conference 2013

- David Cameron used his speech to reiterate his commitment to the immigration target of net migration in the tens of thousands by the end of this Parliament and affirmed his pride in the reduction achieved so far. He outlined the content of the upcoming Immigration Bill- restrictions on migrants' access to the NHS, ensuring illegal immigrants cannot rent properties, speeding up deportations of foreign prisoners and reducing the number of appeals under the Human Rights Act.⁹
- The Home Secretary, Theresa May, said in her speech that the next Conservative manifesto would include a commitment to scrap the Human Rights Act and to consider also withdrawing from the ECHR if that proved necessary to expel undesirables.
- The forthcoming Immigration Bill will cut appeal rights from 17 grounds to 4 which should reduce the number of appeals by a half. Deportation would take place before appeals were heard in cases where there was no risk of harm.
- She mentioned the impact of immigration on jobs, wages and services.
- She also referred to the Modern Slavery Bill which will consolidate existing legislation.¹⁰
- At a Conservative Home fringe meeting, Chris Cummings, the Chief Executive of The City UK said that stricter immigration controls meant that American universities were 'cleaning up' at the expense of British ones.¹¹
- At an event organised by British Future Alok Sharma MP said that, in order to attract support from ethnic minority voters, the party should point out that the party shares many values with ethnic minorities such as admiration for hard work, business, family and aspiration. Conservative Home's Paul Goodman said that long term planning and campaigning that targeted ethnic minorities would benefit the party in the future.¹²
- Boris Johnson, in his speech to conference, supported Jamie Oliver's view that young British people probably didn't have the work ethic to take to take on the low paid jobs done by migrants.¹³

UKIP Conference 2013

- Peter Whittle, a UKIP candidate for the European elections, said that the doctrine of multiculturalism was increasingly being questioned, but remained entrenched, especially in the public sector.¹⁴ He outlined a number of measures to challenge this, such as reducing the number of multilingual services offered by the state and a large reduction in immigration levels.
- Gerard Batten MEP and UKIP spokesman on immigration, reiterated that UKIP is in favour of 'some' immigration, but is opposed to the scale of recent years and the freedom of movement accorded within the EU.¹⁵
- Amjad Bashir, UKIP candidate, stressed that the scale of immigration in recent years was unprecedented and had resulted in a number of negative consequences. He said that the labour market, infrastructure and public services had been negatively impacted.¹⁶

9 <http://www.newstatesman.com/staggers/2013/10/david-camerons-speech-conservative-party-conference-2013-full-text>

10 <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-24335368>

11 <http://www.conservativehome.com/thetorydiary/2013/10/fringe-report-britain-needs-business-visitors-we-should-stop-calling-them-immigrants.html>

12 <http://www.britishfuture.org/articles/conservative-conference-fringe-how-to-win-in-a-changing-britain/>

13 <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/conservative-party-conference-boris-johnson-backs-jamie-oliver-over-british-youth-who-dont-work-as-hard-as-eastern-european-migrants-8851356.html>

14 http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8_KC93unB0

15 http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X9_gDndfSsA

16 http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X9_gDndfSsA

- Nigel Farage mentioned immigration extensively in his speech to conference. He described it as “the biggest single issue facing this country.” He said that it affected the economy, Health, Education and Public Services in general.
- He said that more people had come to Britain in 2010 than in a thousand years before it.
- He was in favour of some immigration and spoke as much for established ethnic minorities as for anyone else. The scale of immigration was unsustainable.
- He accused all the main parties of posturing on immigration, including the Conservatives whom he accused of continuing to allow half a million arrivals a year. (Comment: This confuses net immigration with the total number of arrivals).
- He forecast that the ending of transitional controls on Romania and Bulgaria would mean that next year’s European elections would be dominated by the issue of immigration from Eastern Europe, especially from Romania and Bulgaria.¹⁷

9 October, 2013

17 <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f9FDdbCllxQ>