

Jeremy Corbyn speech at the International Convention Centre in Birmingham

***Check
against delivery***

Jeremy Corbyn, Leader of the Labour Party,
speaking at the International Convention Centre in Birmingham, said:

Over the last week the dividing lines in
this election have got much clearer and sharper.

The two parties have published their
manifestos. Set out their visions.

And in the case of Labour – but only
Labour – published our sums too.

We don't just have a vision, we have
costed it too.

By contrast, the Tories are offering
blank cheques made out to misery.

But the contrast is more substantial
than that. I believe that the difference is this:

Where the Tories look to divide, Labour
seeks to bring people together.

The Tory manifesto must be the most
divisive for many elections past.

They are now pitching young against
old.

Their manifesto is a typical nasty party
attempt to set generations against each other.

For pensioners they offer a triple
whammy of misery:

Ending the 'triple lock' which protects
pensioner incomes, means-testing the Winter Fuel Allowance and slapping a
'compassion tax' on those who need social care by making them pay for it
using
their homes.

Some claim that cutting support for the elderly is necessary to give more help to the young. But young people are being offered no hope by the Tories either – loaded up with tuition fee debts, with next to no chance of a home of their own or a stable, secure job.

Labour stands for unity across all ages and regions in our country. It is simply wrong to claim that young people can only be given a fair deal at the expense of the old, or vice versa. We all depend on each other.

That is why we are calling on the Tories to drop their anti-pensioner package immediately – older people should not be used as a political football.

And we promise that a Labour government will make education free at all levels and build the homes young families need, offering the security of a home for life.

Only Labour stands for the many against government by, of and for the few.

We say that if we all stand together we can build a fairer Britain.

There is no trade-off between young and old – and there should be no trade-off.

Society should not be setting the future of our young against security for the old.

We have the wealth to offer a decent, secure life for all.

Labour's proposals will ask the top 5 per cent of earners and the big corporations to pay a bit more, to help address these problems.

That way we can make sure that young people can get homes and pensioners can heat their houses in winter.

That way students can leave college without a huge burden of debt and older people can have their income protected through the "triple lock" which only Labour will guarantee.

I believe that this message is getting through.

The ink wasn't dry on the Tory manifesto

before some of their own MPs and candidates were inching away from the attack on the elderly.

They know it's not right and it's not fair.

They may even suspect it's not much of a vote-winner.

So Theresa, please end the anxiety for millions of older people and do a U-turn now. You will end up facing the right way.

Let me now say a word about young people.

And it is right that I do so in the youngest city in Britain, where forty per cent of the population is under 25.

But also a city where nearly ten per cent of young people are out of work, more than twice the national average.

In a region where poverty is increasing. Here in the West Midlands one child in three is living in poverty.

Sure Start was one of the best achievements of the last Labour government. We must build on that, instead of cutting back on school meals. A free school meal, without stigma, is the right of every child.

To make things still more difficult for the young, here in the West Midlands house prices have risen by five per cent over the last year, while wages are still lower than they were in 2008.

It all adds up to the worst thing for young people – loss of hope.

Hope for a decent, secure job.

Hope that you will be able to get a home of your own.

Hope that you can enjoy an education without fear of crippling debt.

We speak, rightly, of left-behind communities. There are many, alas, in the West Midlands.

But there is also the danger of creating a left-behind generation, enjoying few of the chances and none of the advantages of their parents.

As I said when launching our manifesto on Tuesday, Labour's approach is based on hope.

And that is our offer to young people.

Labour will scrap tuition fees and lift the shadow of debt from students. The Tories won't.

Labour will invest in jobs, skills and training across all regions, including here in our traditional industrial heartland. The Tories won't.

Labour will build more than one million new homes over five years, with more than half being social housing for rent. The Tories won't.

This is the sort of policy our young people have a right to expect from politicians.

After all, in offering the next generation free education and the chance of a job and a home we are only offering what should be regarded as basic human rights.

In return, we have the right to ask just one thing of young people today.

Register to vote.

This weekend is your last chance to register – the last chance to make sure you can vote Labour on June 8.

Let me be clear to all young people:

I want you to vote Labour.

But above all I want you to vote.

It is a right the working people of this country fought for.

It is a right that some in the establishment would diminish or take away.

So let's dispel once and for all the myth that young people are apathetic about society by everyone getting on the electoral register and then getting down to the polling station on June 8.

I know that young people did not leave politics – politics left them. Now we are bringing politics back to the rising generation.

Young, old or somewhere in between, we are all in the same country, the same communities.

Labour knows that we sink or swim together.

When the Tories offer tax cuts to their rich friends, we say let's make life livable for the many first.

When the Tories want to balance the books on the backs of the vulnerable, we say let's tell the wealthy and big corporations to start paying the tax they owe.

Simple choices. But ones that make a difference to millions of people.

And there is a simple choice before the country in this election:

The Labour way of working for the good of the entire community, or the Tory way which is perpetuating the grotesque level of inequality that already exists in our society.

I know which one I've chosen – the Labour way, for the many not the few.

Ends.