

Only Labour can protect Scotland from the vicious Tories

24 April 2017

Jeremy Corbyn speech to the Scottish TUC

Comrades and friends, it's great to be in Scotland and it's wonderful to be here at the STUC.

The STUC has a wonderful tradition of fighting for working people in Scotland and influencing public policy debates on behalf of working people.

The STUC and its trade union and trades council affiliates have been at the forefront of progress in Scotland.

It's the collectivism of the trade union movement through working people fighting alongside each other that has always been and always will be the driver of great progressive change in Scotland in the rest of the UK and across the world.

And no more so is that the case than the inspiring young activists involved with the Better Than Zero campaign. Their vibrant and engaging action is a shining example of modern trade unionism, carrying on the historic fight in a system still rigged against working people.

But that fight is one we have all collectively committed to and continue to do so, because friends, it works. And we won't let anyone tell us otherwise.

It is trade unions that have driven up wages and living standards, health and safety in the workplace, and challenged prejudice and discrimination

And it is Unions that have worked with ourselves in the Labour Party to transform our society, to offer the opportunities to our people that so many of our forefathers and especially our foremothers unfortunately did not enjoy themselves.

They are our heroes. It was our predecessors who suffered exploitation in the workplace and wider society, and it was they who were not prepared to stand idly by, who instead chose to fight back and win many of the gains that we enjoy today.

Our NHS, our social security safety net, our education system and so much more were won on the shoulders of these giants in the Labour and trade union movement and none of us should ever forget that.

Friends, that's why I could not be at a better or more appropriate place to start our General Election Campaign in Scotland.

We are standing for the many not the few, and it is through our collective

power in a trade union that we ensure the many , standing together, have the power to stand up to the rich and powerful few.

The Labour Party will always cherish, sustain and protect our relationship with the Trade Union movement and the working people you represent. You are our DNA, you are our family, and we will never, ever apologise for the closeness of our relationship with you.

Friends just like Keir Hardie, I am proud to be a trade unionist and I carry my card everywhere I go.

That is why one of the very first things we will do when forming our Labour Government will be to repeal the vicious Tory Trade Union Act. Giving working people the rights to collectively organise and make their lives better, safer and more content.

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While the timing of the election was unexpected, the choice is clear and the stakes are high.

But let no-one be in any doubt, we are in this election to win it and we will fight for every seat in every corner of these isles.

I said the other day that the dividing lines in this election could not be clearer from the outset. It is the Conservatives, the party of privilege and the richest, versus the Labour Party, the party that is standing up for working people to improve the lives of all. That is the real choice.

Only Labour or the Tories can form a Government , and I implore Scots to fight for the party of progress, and not the vicious Tory Party, who alongside their previous coalition partners, the Lib Dems, unleashed an unprecedented attack on working people in this country.

The choice facing the country at this election is clear, it's the people versus the powerful.

Labour will challenge the rigged system that is holding our country back.

In this election Labour will offer hope to the nurse, the teacher, the small trader, the carer, the builder, the office worker, the bus driver, the factory worker, the farm labourer and the factory worker.

We will provide the change and the transformative policy programme that puts power and opportunity in people's hands.

We will fight this election offering a positive vision for our country. We will present to the British people an economic and political alternative, and a promise that we will make our country work for the many not the few.

We will make jobs better and more secure with a real living wage, and stronger rights at work.

We will end the public sector pay cap that disrespects our committed public servants every day.

We will end the need for food banks.

We will upgrade our economy to create wealth for all our people in the 21st Century, through investment in our infrastructure, helping our small businesses, delivering high skill jobs and ending poverty pay.

We will never put tax giveaways to the corporations and the wealthiest above our vital public services like our social care system and NHS, and those engines of opportunity our schools and colleges. We will give them the funding they need.

The Scottish people are facing a crucial choice in this election. The Tories are trying to use Brexit to turn Britain into a low-wage tax haven, run in the interests of the powerful.

Labour will negotiate a Brexit that will build on the gains won for workers, consumers and the environment in the EU. We will put jobs, living standards and human rights first.

Friends, this is a General Election, it is not a referendum, and only Labour can form a Government and offer an alternative that will transform the lives of Scots.

The truth is that the Tories and SNP are obsessed with their power struggles against Brussels and Westminster, when the energy should be used to change and transform our economy to ensure no-one and no community is left behind.

The Tories are Tories, they will always seek to undermine, dilute or simply eliminate all the gains that we won. That's who they are and that's what they do.

The Tories act for the powerful and the powerful back them. That's what we are up against, that's what our predecessors were up against, it never stopped them and it won't stop us.

Much of the media and establishment are saying that this election is a foregone conclusion.

They think there are rules in politics which if you don't follow you don't win.

So you start doffing your cap to powerful people accepting their parameters so nothing can really change. Comrades, it is when you start doing that, that you really can't win.

Our movement knows it. It is only by us standing together as the people for the many not the powerful few that we really win.

Friends only Labour has the policies that will challenge these powerful interests and transform the lives of working people.

And friends let us remember that the only real Progressive Alliance is the Labour and Trade Union movement working together, it always has been and always will be.

That's why Labour is campaigning to win every seat across the whole country.

The deal we'll do is with the electorate, is to be a government for the many not the few.

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The truth is that the politics and policies of Labour are needed now more than ever as our country becomes more unfair, more unjust and more unequal.

In Scotland 260 thousand children, 40,000 more than last year are living in poverty. Health inequalities stubbornly persist, educational attainment differences are worsening, and the numbers of people working but still considered to be living in poverty are at their worse point since devolution.

That's surely where the focus of all politicians should be.

We will redistribute the wealth in our society to ensure that people are paid at least a real living wage of £10 an hour, transforming the lives of the near half a million Scots who currently earn less than the living wage, wiping out at a stroke the concept of 'working poor'.

We will protect pensioner incomes, by legislating to keep the Triple-Lock on state pensions, protecting the pensions of over 1 million Scottish pensioners, guaranteeing them a basic income necessary to live a dignified life in retirement.

Only Labour will protect pensions.

We will make sure public spending will be used to force a change for good in working and environmental conditions, equal opportunities and fair pay.

We will put conditions on the massive public spending budget with private business to ensure no company wins a public contract if they avoid or evade taxes don't pay their local suppliers on time or don't recognise trade unions.

This will benefit Scottish workers and Scottish small businesses currently contracted by the UK Government to the tune of billions of pounds.

We will create a Scottish National Bank under Scottish control and backed by the National Investment Bank with £20bn of lending power to deliver the funds to local projects and Scotland's small businesses creating work and stimulating the economy.

We will aggressively take on the tax avoiders and evaders starting with having corporations publish their tax returns.

We will ban zero hours contracts giving new protections to the 60,000

Scottish workers currently with no guaranteed hours. How can people plan or just pay the rent when they have no security of income?

Is it right they wake every morning and then wait for a text?

Unlike others, we will set up inquiries into blacklisting and Orgreave ... and we would urge the Scottish Government to set up an inquiry into the actions of the Scottish police during the Miners' strike.

We will give all workers equal rights from day one to stop some workers being exploited and others undercut.

We will introduce a right to own giving workers first refusal when their company faces a change of ownership or closure.

We'll properly fund the Health & Safety Executive shamefully cut back under this Government compromising those great gains that our movement has historically fought so hard for

And we will work with trade unions and industry to reintroduce sectoral collective bargaining across the country.

We will also introduce 4 new public holidays giving people the time to lead better and more fulfilling lives, helping productivity at the same time. And we will ask for the support of the governments of Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland so that the same four holidays can be enjoyed across the United Kingdom.

Friends, our aim is a country where everyone who can has the dignity of work and where everyone has a guarantee of dignity at work

Friends, these are the type of transformative policies that can change people's lives for the better.

Just like always has been it is only Labour that will deliver for working people, small businesses and our most vulnerable people none of the rest would even think of these type of policies let alone achieve them.

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Friends, it is only Labour that will focus on the kind of country we need to have after Brexit.

In the coming weeks Labour will lay out more of our policies that will unlock opportunities for every single person in this country.

We will focus on giving people real control over their own lives and make sure that everybody reaps a just reward for the work that they do.

We will no longer allow those at the top to leach off of those who bust their guts on zero hours contracts or those forced to make sacrifices to pay their mortgage or their rent.

Instead of the country's wealth being hidden in tax havens we will put it in the hands of the people of Britain because they are the ones who earned it.

In this election Labour will lead the movement to make that change.

We will build a new economy worthy of the 21st century and we will build a country for the many not the few.

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