

Jeremy Corbyn speech to Welsh Labour Conference, Llandudno – 25.3.2017

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against delivery*****

Jeremy Corbyn, Leader of the Labour Party, speech to Welsh Labour Conference, Llandudno – Saturday 25 March 2017

Thank
you for that welcome. It is a pleasure to be here in North Wales again in Llandudno.

Events
in Westminster on Wednesday afternoon showed the brutality that one man can reap.

But
it also showed the humanity, the bravery and the solidarity that really defines
us and that binds us together in times of darkness and adversity.

The
police, the security personnel, the NHS staff; they ran towards danger, put themselves at risk to protect and save lives, they are heroes.

And
we particularly pay tribute to Police officer Keith Palmer who lost his life protecting others.

To
all those who lost loved ones, who were injured, we send our love.

Our
values of unity and solidarity are needed now more than ever. We know from previous occasions that some sick people have tried to sow division and hate.

So
please, look after each other, help one another and think of one another.

I
want to say thank you to Carwyn and Labour Assembly Members for continuing to show the difference that Labour can make in government.

Special
mention too must go to Mark Drakeford, the Chancellor of Wales, who is implementing your programme despite the fact that your budget is being cut year-on-year six per cent in real terms by the end of the decade. That's

equivalent to almost £1.2 billion less for vital public services – a decade of cuts imposed by Tories in Westminster.

Our shadow Wales Secretary Christina Rees is fighting your corner in the House of Commons, working with Gerald Jones, our shadow minister for Wales and I thank them both.

I also want to put on record my thanks to Jo Stevens for the work she did in the brief before that.

Wales has great representation in Westminster. Nia Griffith our shadow defence secretary, who accompanied me recently for the unveiling of the Iraq and Afghanistan Memorial recognising those involved in those conflicts. Whatever our view of those wars, we should always respect those who are sent to fight and risk their lives.

And I also want to pay tribute to that great Welsh Labour campaigner, Carolyn Harris MP, leading an excellent campaign for the Children's Funeral Fund.

It was frankly a disgrace that in the Budget, the Tories again ignored this simple and humane demand. That parents who suffer the loss of a child don't have to then worry about the financial costs of giving them a funeral.

I know that Labour councils like Cardiff and Swansea have already waived fees, as has Co-op Funeralcare, but at a time when council budgets are squeezed and billions are being given away in corporate tax cuts we should be able to find just £10 million a year for this basic measure.

I want to praise another of my good Welsh comrades, although he lives in England, Mark Serwotka, for his campaign to change to a system of presumed consent for organ donation.

In Wales, you have done that and lives are being saved as a result.

I was so proud to speak alongside Mark at the recent NHS demo in London. It was the first speech he had made for several months, his first public engagement since a successful heart transplant. And I'm glad he's one of half a million people who are now members of our party.

Deemed

consent for organ donation is one just one example of the difference a Labour government makes.

As

Nye Bevan said, "The NHS will last as long as there are folk left with the faith to fight for it". And in Wales you have that faith.

The

only country in the UK to show an improvement in ambulance response times.

Improving

outcomes for stroke and cancer patients.

And

the British Heart Foundation says you're a "world leader" for cardiac rehabilitation.

And,

as NHS budgets are cut in England, the Welsh Labour government found an extra £240 million in their last Budget, taking your combined spending on health and social care 6% higher than in England.

And

the Welsh Labour government in Cardiff Bay has achieved so much more.

On

Social care you have protected funding and seen delayed discharges fall, unlike in England where under the Tories they have risen by over one-third.

And

with Flying Start for early years to help children get the best start in life.

And

then there's your childcare offer of 30 hours a week for working parents of 3 and 4 year olds, free breakfasts for primary school children.

500

extra Police Community Support Officers to keep neighbourhoods safe.

Record

rates of recycling, the second best of any country in Europe and the third best in the world. Protecting the environment, and preserving resources, for future generations.

And

when the Tories abolished the Agricultural Wages Board the Welsh Labour government established the Agricultural Advisory Panel for Wales to protect

wages in the farming sector.

On housing, where you are building homes for those affected by the Tories' cruel bedroom tax, investing over £200 million in a warm homes scheme to insulate thousands of homes across Wales. And congratulations to Flintshire Labour council building council homes again.

And I also commend your decision to end right-to-buy. When the government in Westminster is only replacing one council home for every six sold off then we know what they're doing is taking away good housing.

There is so much to be proud of in Labour Wales.

Even constrained by cuts in your block grant what Labour has achieved in Wales stands as a beacon.

A beacon that shines a light on the Tories' abject failure – socially, economically and morally.

Their never-ending cuts agenda, while giving away £70 billion in the next six years to the rich and big business – that shows their priorities.

Austerity is a political choice, not an economic necessity.

Britain's infrastructure is second rate and falling even further behind other major economies.

This government has an abysmal record; they have failed to modernise the economy whether it's in broadband, energy, transport or housing.

And, at the same time, they have not done enough to make finance available to the innovative small business sector.

That's why Labour is committed to establishing a National Investment Bank with regional investment banks for every region of England.

This year the Welsh Labour government is creating the Development Bank for Wales.

With its purpose to create and safeguard over 5,500 jobs a year by 2022.

Providing
more than £1 billion of investment support to Welsh business over that
period.

This
has not come out of the blue. Labour in Wales has nearly two decades' experience of working with small business and local councils to develop the role of Finance Wales into the Development Bank for Wales.

And
my business team at Westminster will take a keen interest in the launch of the
Development Bank for Wales and the work it does to generate growth and jobs.

Last
week, the Prime Minister twice accused me of wanting to bankrupt Britain by borrowing money to fund investment.

But
as every businessperson knows there is a world of difference between borrowing
for capital spending and borrowing to fund the payroll and day-to-day trading or service delivery.

And
as any homeowner who has ever had a mortgage knows, taking on huge debt can save you money in the long run.

We
should not be afraid of debt or borrowing.

At
the end of the Second World War, the Labour government of Clement Attlee didn't
say "oh dear debt is 250 per cent of GDP let's park those grand ideas about public ownership; a National Health Service, building council homes, or creating the protection of social security".

No.
They built a country to be proud of. They established the institutions that made our country fairer, more equal and stopped people being held back.

But
people are being held back today, despite your best efforts here in Wales.

Disposable
incomes are the lowest in Britain.

Energy
bills are the highest in Britain.

One
in four Welsh workers earns less than a living wage.

An
estimated 90,000 people on zero hours contracts in Wales.

Those
facts are the direct consequence of Tory ideology.

An
ideology that believes;

That
our national assets should be sold off to the highest bidder

That
the only industry that matters is the one in the city of London's square mile

That
trade unions should have the most restrictive laws in Europe

That
if you cut taxes on the rich and big business it trickles down to us all

And
their latest one; you can cut your way to growth and prosperity.

Well
Labour rejects every tenet of that failed Tory ideology.

We
need a new political settlement and a new economic settlement.

As
we leave the European Union, and the process starts next week, it's time for
Labour to set out our agenda, our vision for Britain

So
our agenda is about investment, so that we support industries to succeed and
create the high skill, high pay and high productivity jobs that have been
destroyed in so many communities.

The
Tidal lagoon scheme in Swansea that our shadow Business Secretary Becky Long
Bailey visited last week, this is a huge opportunity.

To
invest to kick-start a whole new industry that will lead to more investment
and
jobs elsewhere around the UK.

To
create tens of thousands of skilled jobs and quality apprenticeships.

To
help keep the lights on in this country and meet our energy needs.

And to help decarbonise our economy, and ensure, as Labour has pledged, that 60 per cent of our energy comes from renewable sources by 2030.

So
I say to the Tory ministers in London; stop dithering and act now to invest in all our futures.

We
know what happens when the government dithers, we saw it with the steel industry last year.

A
foundation industry for our country and one which must be supported by a government procurement strategy too.

Because
how can it be that under the Tories, the Ministry of Defence is commissioning Nordic steel for our defence needs while the Scottish SNP government is using Chinese steel for the Forth Bridge.

Changing
our economy is also about ownership so that we all share in the rewards.

The
privatisation of our utilities and our industries was the biggest ever redistribution of wealth in this country to the very richest few.

It
gave the privatised industries the green light to hike prices, cut staff and cream off higher profits at all our expense.

Across
much of Europe energy and water are being brought into public ownership, whether nationally, regionally or locally.

And
when things are run in public ownership then the profits don't just go to a few wealthy shareholders, they go to us all.

We
have to put back minimum standards too, from the labour market to the housing market, the injustice and insecurity have to stop.

Work
must pay a living wage. A home must be the bedrock of security for everyone, whether renting, buying or owning.

Security
at home – and security at work – are the foundation stones of the good life.

They
will underpin Labour's promise to the country.

The
Tories never have and never will promise that because fundamentally they're
on
the side of the rogue landlord and the bad employer.

In
Westminster last year the Tories voted down a Labour amendment to the Housing
Bill that simply would have required homes for rent to be fit for human
habitation.

Where
Labour councils bring in landlord licensing, the Tories oppose it.

When
Labour brought in the minimum wage, the Tories opposed it.

And
they continue to attack trade unions because they know that unity is
strength.
They know that by acting collectively, workers can stand up to bad bosses.

So
very simply here's three things a Labour government will do:

We'll
build the homes that people need to live, not that investors need to make a
profit.

We'll
make the minimum wage a real living wage – at least £10 per hour by 2020.

And
we'll repeal the Tories' Trade Union Act.

Our
vision is all the more important as we head towards the uncertainty of
Brexit.
Uncertain because of the recklessness of Boris Johnson, David Davis and Liam
Fox. And uncertain because of the complacency of Theresa May and Philip
Hammond.

Businesses
need reassurance on investment, but they also need, as the Welsh Labour
government has demanded "full and unfettered access to the single market".

The
Foreign Secretary says it would not be apocalyptic to leave the European
Union
without a deal. It would be "perfectly OK", he says.

Tell

that to the Ford workers at Bridgend. Tell that to the Steel workers at Port Talbot. Tell that to the Airbus workers in Broughton.

Their

jobs depend on our European exports – to our “full and unfettered access to the single market”.

I

know that our shadow Brexit Secretary Keir Starmer and our shadow International

Trade Secretary, Barry Gardiner will be working alongside Carwyn, Mark and the

team to ensure Labour stands up for people’s jobs, the economy and investment.

The

Labour Party has been most successful when we have been at our most united.

Whatever

our differences we all know that what unites us is so much more and so much stronger.

And

we know that our communities need a Labour council, a Labour mayor and a Labour government.

In

Wales this May, Labour is defending over 500 seats in 22 unitary authorities. We lead 12 of those councils -10 outright – and I know Carwyn and all members of the Labour Party in Wales will be united in not only defending those council, but fighting to make gains too, including in Denbighshire.

Whether

it’s at the town hall, in Cardiff Bay, or at Westminster- Labour being in power means having someone who is standing up for you.

United

we stand, divided we fall.

And

united I believe this great party can do great things, together.

Thank

you.

West Park Road – street sign

Residents have contacted me regarding the fact that street sign in West Park Road at its junction with Perth Road (west side) is very faded :



I have therefore asked the council's Roads Maintenance Partnership if it can be replaced.

Equipment collapse kills 9 at China power plant

Nine people died and two others were injured when an operation platform collapsed at a power plant in south China's Guangdong Province Saturday, local authorities said.

The accident happened at around 8 a.m. at No. 7 Thermal Power Plant in the provincial capital Guangzhou, said sources with the local government of the

outer Conghua District.

The plant, located in Conghua, is still under construction.

The government has launched an investigation.

On International Day, UN chief Guterres calls on all to stand in solidarity with detained staff

25 March 2017 – On the International Day of Solidarity with Detained and Missing Staff, United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres highlighted the challenges that UN staff face and urged everyone to ensure that they have the safety they need to help those most in need around the globe.

“We are still awaiting news of the fate of two members of the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo, a sanctions-monitoring body established by the Security Council,” said Mr. Guterres in a message.

“We are doing everything possible to find and help them.”

Michael Sharp and Zaida Catalan, of the Group of Experts, went missing in the Kasai Central region in the DRC on 12 March along with four Congolese nationals.

Noting that the latest case highlighted the perils that UN staff and partners often face while serving the world’s people, the UN chief said that last year, seven UN staff were abducted by non-state actors and four were kept as hostages.

“Fortunately, all were ultimately released safely,” he said, but added that more than 20 UN civilian personnel remain in detention, of whom, six are being held without the UN having received any explanation for their arrest.

“The Department of Safety and Security and I continue to monitor all of these cases and seek the immediate release of our colleagues,” he added.

Mr. Guterres also noted that only 92 UN Member States are party to the 1994 Convention on the Safety of UN and Associated Personnel, and that only 30 have ratified the 2005 Optional Protocol, which extends protection to UN personnel delivering humanitarian, political or development assistance.

Urging all countries that have not joined these instruments to do so without delay, the UN chief called on everyone to stand in solidarity with all detained staff and to “pledge to work together to ensure that all UN

staff have the safety they need to help the world's most vulnerable”.

The International Day of Solidarity with Detained and Missing Staff Members is marked each year on 25 March, the date of the abduction of Alec Collett, who was taken by armed gunmen in 1985 while working for the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). His remains were finally found in Lebanon's Bekaa Valley in 2009.

Happy Birthday to the EU

I wish the EU well on its 60th birthday. The exit of the UK gives the EU a real chance to complete its currency union, and its borders union, two central features of the EU project that the UK under all parties in government was unwilling to accept. Freed of UK scepticism and reluctance, maybe the EU can now press on with building its vision of an integrated continent with a single economic policy, a single budget and more powerful Treasury at federal level, and common citizenship with external policed borders. Or maybe they will discover that the people of the other countries of Europe do not buy into that wider vision either.

It should also be time for the EU to reflect on why the UK left, why many parties on the continent are now pressing for their countries to leave the currency or even the whole Union, and why there are persistent and intense problems including high unemployment, migrations, a lack of agreement on the next steps in the Union, and a lack of proper opposition to EU policies within an EU level democratic framework.

Why, for example, has someone like me been such a critic of the EU? After all, I belong to many of the groups that are meant to be believers in the project. I am a globalist. I believe in an outward going foreign policy, freer trade where possible, democracy and tolerance, and the pursuit of peace. These are meant to be the values of the EU leaderships as well, so why didn't they carry me with them?

The answer is two fold. I watched their actions, and saw that so often they did not follow their own stated aims. I also saw that where they thought they were following their aims, they often chose policies which achieved the opposite of their stated ambition.

The biggest disappointment was their wish to build a large one size fits all bureaucracy seeking to control every aspect of life. This was never compatible with the wider ideals of liberty and democracy. It made creating a single demos even more difficult than it was going to be. With so many different languages and levels of economic development it was never going to be easy to get people to believe in a new European state.

They never followed the aim of building democracy into the EU properly. The

Parliament was added, but it does not provide the government nor control the government. Too much power rests in the unelected and often unaccountable Commission. These full time officials can manipulate the member states and play them off against the Parliament. There is no organised opposition to the EU government suggesting an alternative programme or approach, or ready to take over when people have had enough a particular EU government. In practice all the new laws are usually Commission ideas brokered with fluctuating factions of member states and the Parliament. The whole development is a ratchet to greater Union, even where past steps have demonstrably failed or proved unpopular.

They never followed the aim of promoting prosperity. Their currency scheme was bound to produce wild booms and busts in differing member states economies, as Ireland, Spain, Greece and others found to their cost. It was all entirely predictable – as I wrote often. After all we had seen the damage the European Exchange Rate Mechanism did. The Euro was just the version of that you could not easily get out of.

Their austerity policies which followed the boom bust entry of the Euro into many economies has created resentments and confined a whole generation of southern young people to unemployment.

They never worked out how to decide who could be a European citizen, and how to run orderly borders. Instead of the tolerance they wanted, they have created hostile attitudes to new arrivals in many parts of the continent.

Their birthday party should be a meeting for reappraisal. Do less, and do it better. Or get consent to the grand vision. Above all, try being democratic for a change. I saw from the beginning that the EU would not be to our liking. I read the Treaty of Rome which was never a Treaty for a free trade area as advertised. It was always a country in the making, where ambition far outran practicality.