

Leonard: Scottish Labour will deliver a fairer and greener country

Richard Leonard MSP

Scottish Labour Leader

Address to party members and climate activists in Ravenscraig

There is a growing restlessness out there and a growing resistance.

Last month, campaigners from the Extinction Rebellion movement also raised their voices some even got out their glue and their padlocks in non violent direct action during a five-day protest camped outside the Scottish Parliament.

They are calling for us to be bold to make commitments beyond words to take action now to halt the damage which humanity has done to our planet.

And our job today in this Party is, as it has always been, to act as a bridge between extra-parliamentary protest and Parliamentary action.

And our job as a Party of labour is, as it has always been to understand and represent the interests of working people.

Because we cannot solve the climate crisis at the expense of those who already have a bad deal.

When we are calling for a green industrial revolution.

We are calling for a decisive social revolution too.

And the fact is that over the last decade.

The standard of living has not increased, real wages have not risen, the working week is getting longer not shorter, inequality has widened, work –related stress has rocketed, and over 900,000 patients in Scotland, that's the equivalent of 23 per cent of the adult population, were prescribed at least one anti-depressant last year.

So our job as the Scottish Labour Party is to show that there is an alternative: to offer people credible hope, based on a workable strategy.

It is to set out not just what we are against but what we are for. A positive vision and a radical programme, based on full employment, based on more co-operat.ive ways of working and living, based on a managed reduction in working time, So a future vision built on the idea of democracy, including economic democracy and the ideal of socialism

I am optimistic that we can make the leap, the transformative change, that we need to make from the limited horizons of the current economic order and from our present way of living with a planned transition.

A democratic transition.

A just transition.

So that the very economic foundations of our society become much more democratic. Much more accountable. Much more sustainable.

Some of the answers to the climate crisis are technological and scientific.

But it is also about the type of jobs and work organisation too which is why the role of trade unions in planning the change, beyond the market is so essential.

And let me be clear as well it is about radical economic change:

saying farewell to the current economic model which has failed workers in towns and communities like this.

Which is failing workers like those at the Caledonian Railway Works in Springburn who after 160 years, at the very point when we should be investing in public transport are facing a strike of capital and the depot's complete closure.

Ask the workers at the Caley and they will tell you that we cannot continue with this industrial system. This is not academic it is existential. It is not abstract theory, it is a practical reality of Scotland in 2019.

We will need in my view to experiment in different forms of ownership, and new institutions, so that we cease to be spectators or victims of circumstances, but participants and common owners.

So for the avoidance of doubt we will not attain the transformative change we need by leaving it to market forces.

Or merely leaving it to the mitigation of market forces, through defensive rescues.

If we are to re-purpose the whole Scottish economy it cannot be done according to the central tenets of neo-liberal economics – the old ideas of privatisation, of austerity, of rolling back the state.

It cannot be done either through a continued over-reliance on imported goods and services, on Foreign Direct Investment, on multinational financial and corporate interests.

Instead we need an innovative state.

That means using the powers the Scottish Government has in procurement, in planning, in licensing – To ensure that low carbon and renewable energy developments bring far greater economic benefit to communities. Like those around the BiFab yards in Fife: where we need an

urgent and decisive breakthrough.

That is the greatest and most pressing challenge which climate change calls on us to rise to, the challenge of a just transition from the old world to the new.

And we must develop a Just Transition Programme so that working people and working class communities are not left behind.

We want to put a Just Transition Commission into law.

And I say to the SNP Government today, Back our proposals for the Climate Bill to do this OR tell us why you are so afraid to bring trades unions into the process?

Because Scotland needs a clear plan for green jobs to send out a message of real hope. Not phoney optimism, but real hope built on radical but credible plans drawn up by workers and industry and driven by uncompromising leadership.

Now we are here today to discuss a Green Industrial Revolution and what that would mean for Scotland.

But we cannot discuss our future plans without recognising the real and present danger posed by the Tories to Scotland's place in the UK.

Particularly the abandonment of Conservatism and Unionism which Boris Johnson represents and their adoption of a dangerous form of English nationalism.

And the present danger posed by the SNP with their prospectus for a second independence referendum, ditching the pound and huge economic shock measures, massive fiscal contraction to pay for that decision. And that's precisely why we are prepared to back a Citizens Assembly not run away from it but to make the case for remain and reform.

Labour is not a Party that stands for the status quo in the UK: economically, politically or constitutionally.

We delivered the Scottish Parliament.

But I recognise that the UK is still too centralised a state.

And that's not just the view from Motherwell or from Edinburgh, or Inverness. It's the view from Manchester and Leeds. And it's the view from Birmingham.

I have set up a working group exploring Scotland's options for change that delivers more devolution. People want to see more decisions being made in Scotland. But don't want to walk away from a successful economic, political and social union that has lasted for more than 300 years.

So we are tapping into an understanding, which is clear to many people that the UK state needs to be reformed.

We want to see the abolition of the House of Lords.

And I want to see stronger regional and national governments within the UK as well.

Later this year, I shall present the interim report.

Despite the Scottish Parliament becoming one of the most powerful devolved institutions in the world, it has failed to tackle some of the biggest issues facing Scotland.

We have huge disparities in incomes and wealth which are reflected in child poverty, homelessness, health inequalities and big gaps in life expectancy between rich and poor.

Many Scottish workers are in insecure work on poverty pay lacking even basic protection against unscrupulous employers.

Those on benefits have been subjected to the vicious Tory austerity with little protection from the Scottish Government.

While the Tories threaten the very future of the UK, we are tapping into an understanding that the UK state needs to change if we are to secure Scotland's place within it.

<https://t.co/LfiHK8I5Lf>

– Richard Leonard (@LabourRichard) [July 6, 2019](#)

Rural towns and villages are losing shops and services and even something as simple as access to cash.

Our manufacturing and service industries are increasingly owned and run by an ever narrowing elite, and more and more from faraway boardrooms according to the short-termism of speculative financial markets. Meanwhile land ownership remains stubbornly concentrated in the hands of a few super-wealthy individuals.

The current Scottish Government has had the powers to prevent or at least mitigate the worst of these assaults but failed.

What a Scottish Labour Government that I lead will do is:

Firstly use the existing powers more effectively.

Secondly we will identify what new powers would make a real difference in tackling the problems I have listed.

We must be able to invest in our manufacturing base to make the Just Transition we need. For this we need borrowing powers fit for a Parliament. In making that investment we will ensure that Scottish people get a stake in any future development, not just giving handouts

to foreign investors who can then disinvest.

We must be able to empower working people with greater employment rights. We should have a real living wage, control of procurement, no public contracts awarded to blacklisting companies, and the right to terms and conditions of work suitable for the 21st century not the 19th century.

The Scottish Labour Government will use the powers it has to improve the lives of people on benefits both in and out of work.

We can go further. Wealth isn't generated in London, but it is all too often sucked into the City of London. Political power should rest closest to the people it will affect, instead of being heavily centralised in Westminster and Whitehall. And even within Scotland it is becoming increasingly centralised in Edinburgh.

We need to break up the centralisation of politics and wealth and distribute power throughout the UK. Power must be shared not only between the nations of the UK but also regions and communities.

We need a new way of working together that shares both political and economic power that is based on solidarity and not on competition between different parts of the UK.

That means that at last the unelected House of Lords should be abolished. It could be replaced by a Senate of the Nations and Regions that could begin the process of shaking up our political system that for centuries has served the political establishment not the people.

Nationalism belongs to a perspective rooted in the past. It is insufficient for the great challenges we face: economic, social, environmental. It holds us back. It inhibits our ability to bring about real and radical change. Which is why we are clear that we need to remain in and reform the UK and we need to remain in and reform the European Union too.

We need a Scottish Labour Government that will do more than simply correct market failure, that is prepared to shape markets, to intervene,

to use public procurement, to tackle climate change, to eradicate inequality, and to change the balance of power to build a different, better, economic future

A Scottish Labour Government that will reinstate full employment as a goal of public policy that will deliver real economic change and a new kind of society.

A caring society where the whole economy is a social economy and every job is a green job.

Where there is greater economic self-determination and greater decentralisation

There are no short cuts.

It will be a long revolution.

But it is both an absolutely necessary.

And an absolutely possible revolution.

[Labour would scrap the SNP tax cut for frequent flyers](#)

4th October 2017



We're calling on the SNP to leave plans to cut Air Departure Tax on the runway.

What is Air Departure Tax?

Air Departure Tax is a new tax devolved to the Scottish parliament. It replaces Air Passenger Duty and applies to all passengers leaving a UK airport. The SNP want to cut this tax by 50 per cent.

Why does Labour oppose a cut?

We don't think cutting this tax will make Scotland fairer or greener. It will just mean less money for schools and hospital and would be another tax break for the richest.

It won't make Scotland greener.

The Scottish Government's own analysis has shown that the effect of cutting this tax would increase air travel and associated greenhouse gas emissions by more than 50,000 tonnes.

Cutting the tax would benefit the richest the most.

People on higher incomes are more likely to be paying air departure tax as they are more likely to be frequent flyers.

The Civil Aviation Authority has previously identified that the mean income of those who fly from Aberdeen, Edinburgh, Glasgow, and Inverness is consistently higher than £40,000 – similar to the higher rate tax band.

It would cost millions.

The cost of halving Air Departure Tax would cost **£189 million by 2020/21**. That is:

- More than the SNP spends on the pupil equity fund to close the attainment gap.
- Almost twenty times more than the average budget of the Tackling Child Poverty Fund and the Ending Homelessness Together fund.
- Around six times more than the cost of increasing carers' allowance.

At a time of more cuts to public services, we don't think cutting tax should be a priority. Agree with us? [Spread this message.](#)

[Labour pressure is paying off in Holyrood](#)

3 October 2017



Today highlights the difference Labour is making in the Scottish Parliament. Here are 4 things that happened in Holyrood today.

Labour pressure forced the SNP into extending their moratorium on fracking.

Today the SNP announced an indefinite moratorium on fracking. The Nationalists were forced to finally come off the fence because Labour MSP Claudia Beamish proposed a Member's Bill to change the law in Scotland to ban fracking.

While we welcome this announcement from the SNP, this decision could still be overturned at any time.

We want to ensure Scotland has full protection from fracking and will push for a full legal ban.

The SNP dropped plans for regional education directors

Labour has opposed the SNP's education reforms from the beginning. While there is still a way to go, Labour pressure in Holyrood, combined with Labour councillors standing up for local government, means that the SNP had to drop a flagship plan to centralise education through government appointed regional directors.

The SNP plan would have made these directors answerable to John Swinney, rather than the communities they serve.

Instead, Labour pressure in Holyrood and across Scotland mean local councils will continue to work together to improve education across Scotland.

The Football Act is one step closer to repeal

A range of experts gave evidence at Holyrood's Justice Committee today about the flawed SNP Football Act.

Labour MSP James Kelly is proposing a Member's Bill to repeal the controversial law and Holyrood has already voted in favour of scrapping it. Today was another step forward in the parliamentary process towards repeal.

The Justice Committee's call for evidence saw three quarters of individuals backing repeal, as well as more than half of expert organisations. A survey by Supporters Direct Scotland also found that 74 percent of football fans feel the Bill should be repealed.

Holyrood backed a halt to the rollout of Universal Credit

Today Parliament backed a halt to the rollout of Universal Credit. All parties, with the exception of the Tories, agreed the expansion of the social security benefit should be frozen until fundamental flaws in the system are fixed.

Universal Credit's implementation has been fraught with errors, with the six-week payment delay at the beginning of the process forcing some of the most

vulnerable members of society into rent arrears and leaving many relying on foodbanks.

Today Labour joined with other parties to send a signal to the Tories – halt this rollout.

[Alex Rowley MSP speech to Labour Conference](#)

By Scottish Labour interim leader Alex Rowley MSP

Chair, Conference,

Thank you for that welcome.

This week we gather here in Brighton

United,

Strong,

And determined.

Determined to expose how this Tory Government is failing working people.

Strengthened by the size of our movement.

And United around our leader.

The person who will be Labour's next Prime Minister – Jeremy Corbyn.

Conference,

I was elected to the Scottish Parliament in Cowdenbeath in 2014.

And since then I've experienced great highs and lows.

There is no doubt that we have seen tough times in Scotland.

But we are back on track.

And I want to pay tribute to the woman that saw us through after our defeat in 2015.

Kezia Dugdale.

Friends, Kez stood up for the Scottish Labour Party in the toughest of circumstances.

Both as Deputy Leader and Leader of our Party.

Conference, let us send her our thanks today.

The work that Kez did, and the result that she and Jeremy delivered alongside our members in June, shows that the Labour Party is once again connecting with communities across Scotland.

This year, we won back constituencies from the SNP that people thought were lost for generations.

Coatbridge, Chryston and Bellshill

Rutherglen and Hamilton West

Kirkcaldy and Cowdenbeath

Glasgow North East

East Lothian

Midlothian

Along with Edinburgh South

All now represented by Scottish Labour MPs.

They will ensure Scotland's voice is heard in Westminster.

And let's welcome each of our new MPs to Conference today, led by our Shadow Scottish Secretary, Lesley Laird.

I know we have asked so much of you – our members, activists and supporters – over the last few years.

But we are so close in so many constituencies.

And we should set our sights high.

Being a strong opposition should never be enough.

Our aim must be to win the next election in Scotland.

Because let me be absolutely clear.

Scotland can make that difference at the next election.

The choice will be between a Labour Government that will tackle poverty, increase family incomes and raise the standards for all.

Or more decline, decay and drift with a Tory Government.

Conference, it's not the SNP who can deliver an end to the Tories.
It's the Scottish Labour Party.

Friends, we will win because we will have the best candidates, the better ideas and the bigger vision.

That's what our manifesto this year gave us.

A plan for the many, not the few.

In England, people saw straight through Theresa May's hollow words.

Because this is what a 'strong and stable' status quo means to working people across this country:

Cuts to public services, to schools and hospitals, pursued by the Tories in England, but also for ten years by the SNP in Scotland.

The loss of jobs that provided the backbone of communities and their replacement with low pay and insecure work.

And the disgrace of the people who suffered because of austerity, being asked time and again to pay the price for it.

Conference, this is an affront to every decent hardworking person in our country.

Scotland is a rich country.

There's no reason why children need to go hungry,

why foodbanks should be appearing in our communities

or why men and women should be forced to spend their nights sleeping on the streets.

Conference, austerity is a choice, and these are its consequences.

And this is what the Labour Party will stand against now and always.

Conference, changing our country has to start with changing the Government.

The election result in June has energised us and shown that the chance to serve again in Government – in Westminster and Holyrood – is within our reach.

Labour's manifesto showed what we will do if we get there.

It will be a Government for the many, not the few.

We'll take industries that used to belong to every one back into public ownership, and put people – not profits – first.

We will oppose a Tory right wing hard Brexit.

We want a jobs first Brexit that keeps our access to the single market.

And, over the next year, under a new leader in Scotland, we will start to lay out what change with Labour would mean.

Our party has not been in Government in Scotland for ten years, and that has to change.

Whenever the SNP leave Government, they will leave having divided our country.

Our first job will be to bring our nation together again.

And, just as Labour has always done, we will bring people together around a vision of the future.

In 1945, Labour under Clement Attlee gave us the vision of the NHS and the Welfare State.

Through the 40s and 50s, Tom Johnstone brought power to rural Scotland and pioneered hydro-electricity.

In the 1960s, Harold Wilson saw a future powered by the White Heat of Technology.

And in this century, Gordon Brown, a son of Fife and a son of Scotland, ended the scandal of pensioner poverty, made Keir Hardie's vision of a minimum wage a reality, and lifted a million children out of poverty.

Conference, that's the difference a Labour Government makes.

And that's why we will never stop fighting for the Labour Government this country needs.

Friends, Labour's mission was about building a lasting legacy and giving people the opportunities they needed to succeed.

Today, we have that vision in Scotland again.

We need to set out a plan for our major industries – for oil and gas, for shipbuilding, for finance, food and drink.

And we also need to attract the jobs of the future – in advanced manufacturing, in renewable energy and in science and technology.

We need to provide this next generation of Scots with better opportunities than the last by investing in education, training and skills.

And we need to renew our commitment to the public services that look after us from cradle to grave – the welfare state and the NHS.

That means being honest about what we have to do to pay for these services and, as Labour, making the argument that our duties to each other mean that we can afford to pay a little more.

Not like the Tories in Scotland, or like the SNP Government that only has one tax policy.

A tax cut for the airlines that will benefit the richest the most.

The SNP cannot have a serious debate on tax if its only policy kicks off a race to the bottom against a UK Tory government propped up by the DUP who are desperate to see that tax abolished.

The SNP face a choice – work with Labour to use the tax powers to protect public services – or give Philip Hammond and Arlene Foster the excuse they are looking for to give the richest yet another bonus.

Conference, the Scottish Parliament's new powers do not end with tax.

As powers over the welfare state come into force, we need to think about how we can use them to show the kind of society we want to build.

And that is why I renew my calls today for the Scottish Government to use their new powers to add £5 to Child Benefit – a move that would lift tens of thousands of children out of poverty.

This would send a clear signal that in Scotland we are willing to pay so that every child can get the best start in life.

Conference, we can afford this change and we should make it, for this generation and generations to come.

Conference, if we are to build a better society, we also need to think about how we run our country.

Scotland has been divided for too long by the question of independence.

And, now the UK is divided by Brexit.

Our nation faces the greatest political change of our lifetime.

When power returns from the EU, maintaining the status quo should not be an option.

Because how we run our country isn't just an abstract discussion for politicians and academics.

It's about how we enable working people across our country to have power as close to their hands as possible.

That is why I am proud that Scottish Labour supports federalism, and why I believe this points the way for the future of our country.

With the Tories and the SNP, we have two Governments with no interest in reforming how the UK works, and making it work better.

That is why it must fall to the Labour Party.

And why I renew my call today for a Constitutional Convention, convened by the Labour Party, to determine how our country can be renewed for the future.

And, Conference let me be very clear. We will resist at every turn the Tory Brexit power grab.

In Government, Labour will defend Donald Dewar's devolution settlement – Labour's devolution settlement – so that the powers of the Scottish Parliament are never diminished.

For many who voted yes in Scotland, Jeremy has provided them with real hope of an alternative.

He has shown that change is possible inside the UK.

That should now be matched by a commitment from Labour for a Constitutional Convention and a federal solution for the United Kingdom, with Scotland as a full and equal partner.

Conference,

The challenge ahead of us now is straightforward.

To restore Labour to Government in Scotland and across the UK.

Whoever wins our leadership election in Scotland will be our candidate for First Minister and we will all get behind them to make that happen.

And in Jeremy, we have a leader who is a Prime Minister in waiting.

So let us leave this conference later this week, united, determined and strong.

Let's win the next election for working people.

Let's win to stand against poverty and inequality.

Conference, let's win for Labour

This speech was delivered on September 25 2017. Please check against delivery.

£500 – that's the cost of the Tories

24 September 2017



£500 – that's the cost of the Tories.

The average household in Scotland is £500 worse off since the Tories came to power.

The average household income today stands at £24,336. Back in 2009/10 – the last year before the Tories came to power but in the immediate aftermath of the global financial crisis household income was £500 higher at £24,846.

The Tory economy isn't working for Scottish families.

Tory tax cuts for wealthy individuals and big business have ensured that any economic gain has been focused in the hands of the privileged few.

Labour will create a Britain for the many, not the few. Find out what we will do for working people. Share ↓
pic.twitter.com/uIxsY75f6C

– The Labour Party (@UKLabour) [3 June 2017](#)

We would do things differently.

A Labour government would ensure those at the top pay their fair share, and create an economy that works for the many, not the few.