

Child poverty growing to horrendous levels under the SNP and the Tories

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Child poverty growing to horrendous levels under the SNP and the Tories – Gordon Brown

Shameful new figures show that child poverty in Scotland is projected to rise to unprecedented levels by the year 2022, Gordon Brown revealed.

In just five years' time, **320,000** girls and boys will be living in hardship, figures based on Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) forecast.

And the former Prime Minister says that the 'horrendous' statistic should be a defining issue of the General Election on June 8, not the Brexit nationalism v Scottish nationalism intransigence which is sidelining real issues such as poverty.

Mr Brown said: *"There were 220,000 children in poverty in 2014-15 then 260,000 in 2015-16 – the biggest single rise in one year for an entire generation.*

"Do not forget this figure – 40,000 more children in poverty in just 12 months.

"Then look at what is being reliably forecast by the IFS and Rowntree Trust for the year 2022:

"In less than five years' time 320,000 children living in Scotland – that is one in every three – will officially be in poverty.

"The total number of Scots in poverty in 2015-16 was 1,050,000. But under this Government that number is set to increase by 150,000 – to 1,200,000 by 2021-22.

"In Scotland, we have also seen a dramatic rise of the working poor: 70 per cent of Scottish children affected by poverty have at least one parent in work.

"This means that out of the 260,000 currently in poverty, 180,000 of them are in families where at least one parent is actually employed. By 2022 this figure will rise – and there will be 220,000 children in poor working families.

"It is a horrendous projection – the biggest rise in poverty and child poverty since the bleak Thatcher/Major years and it begs two questions: Exactly what kind of country are Theresa May's Tories attempting to create? And why are the SNP doing nothing about it if child poverty is on course to reach such shameful record levels?

"This election on June 8th must not just be about Conservatives standing up to Europe or nationalists standing up to Britain but it should be about all of us standing up to injustice, standing up to poverty, standing up to deprivation and standing up to inequality.

"With the Tories' Brexit nationalism and the SNP's Scottish nationalism offering no answers to the real hardships poverty poses, the only party that can really build and deliver social justice in Scotland is Labour.

"The Tories want to fight the election in England on being anti-European and in Scotland on being anti-independence. The SNP belt out the same old song for an independent Scotland.

"But who will fight for those girls and boys whose fathers or mothers work all week and still can't keep their kids out of poverty?

"If housing benefit no longer covers rent, if a giro cheque no longer covers food and basic necessities, if the heating allowance no longer cover the cost of fuel, if the social fund does not exist and no one covers basic essentials such as cookers....then no wonder poverty is rising.

"In their manifesto the Tories will do nothing but make things worse. And don't expect that the SNP will come charging to the rescue. For a long time they have had the powers to act but continually refuse to do so.

"I believe, on June 8, we are not just casting a ballot but we are setting the direction of our country for years to come.

"But the Tories seem hell-bent on dividing it – socially and economically – and to be waging a war, especially against the people they claim to be helping – those who are simply working hard to make a living.

"Change it now. Children have to be on the ballot paper, education has to be on the ballot paper, poverty has to be on the ballot paper an inequality has to be on the ballot paper.

"Surely every single candidate standing in this General Election has to be asked where they stand on this critical question: How do we stop child poverty rising further and how do we start to bring these record figures down? Is there anything more important?

"I am speaking about the right of every child to escape poverty, the right of every boy and girl to have a chance and the right to bridge the gap between what they are today and what they have it in themselves to become.

"Let's be honest, seven years of UK Conservative government and now 10 years of the Scottish government have not made poverty less widespread but made it more widespread.

" At the moment Scotland is seeing no progress on what matters most – social justice, because politics is frozen between two extremes of Scottish nationalism and Brexit nationalism.

"This is why the Labour Party is needed – not just to deliver social justice in Scotland but to deliver economic prosperity for all ."

Key Scottish exports must be protected from Brexit disaster

Key Scottish exports must be protected from a Brexit disaster, Labour said today.

Speaking ahead of a visit to Stornoway on the Isle of Lewis, Scottish Labour leader Kezia Dugdale said the Tories' reckless approach to leaving the European Union (EU) will put at risk the protected status of food and drink products such as black pudding, Scotch beef and lamb, Arbroath Smokies and whisky.

A number of food and drink products in Scotland and across the UK have protected status under EU law. This protects the products against imitation throughout the EU.

Labour has asked the UK Government how it will protect the brand status of UK products registered under the EU's Protected Designation of Origin (PDO), Protected Geographical Indication (PGI), and Traditional Speciality Guaranteed (TSG) schemes.

Scottish Labour leader Kezia Dugdale said:

"The Tories' reckless Brexit gamble has put key Scottish exports like black pudding, Scotch beef and whisky at risk.

"Food and drink exports are a key part of the Scottish economy, particularly our island economies. They secure jobs, grow the economy and are essential to the distinctive nature of Scotland's Highlands and Islands.

"Any post-Brexit trade deal must protect the status of our key food and drink products. The Tories would sell our islands' economies down the river. Only a Labour government will fight to keep the protected status of key British food and drink products.

"With one vote for Labour on June 8, Scots can reject both Theresa May's plan for a hard Brexit and Nicola Sturgeon's plan for a divisive second independence referendum."

DARLING AND McDOUGALL: VOTE LABOUR TO SAY NO TO INDEPENDENCE

11 May 2017

DARLING AND McDOUGALL: VOTE LABOUR TO SAY NO TO INDEPENDENCE

Former Better Together leaders Alistair Darling and Blair McDougall have joined forces to urge Scots to reject another divisive independence referendum by voting for Labour.

Former Better Together chairman Mr Darling has written to tens of thousands of voters in East Renfrewshire on behalf of Labour General Election candidate Blair McDougall, who was Better Together's campaign director.

In his letter, Mr Darling – the former Chancellor – endorses Blair McDougall as the best candidate to take on the SNP in East Renfrewshire and urges voters not to risk letting the Nationalists back in.

Scottish Labour candidate for East Renfrewshire Blair McDougall said:

"I am delighted with Alistair Darling's endorsement. He and I brought together voters from across the political spectrum to stop the SNP in 2014 and I can do it again in East Renfrewshire.

"East Renfrewshire is home for me. I was raised here and I'm raising my family here. I want to be a campaigning local MP focused on making our home better rather than on dividing us from our neighbours.

"I won't go to Westminster to back a hard Brexit or to cheer lead for independence. If voters want to send Nicola Sturgeon a message to drop her plans for a divisive second independence referendum, they must vote Labour on June 8.

"A vote for any other party simply risks letting the SNP back in, and increases the risk of another unwanted referendum.

"Voting Tory won't send a message to Nicola Sturgeon, it will only send Theresa May back to Downing Street to deliver a hard Brexit that gives the Nationalists the excuse they are looking for to call another divisive referendum."

The text of Alistair Darling's letter is as follows:

Blair McDougall ran the winning campaign against independence. On June 8th he's standing to be your next MP.

I retired from frontline politics after the independence referendum but I'm sending you this letter because your vote at the General Election on June 8th can send a strong message to Nicola Sturgeon that our No vote should be

respected.

Blair McDougall and I brought together Labour, the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats to form the Better Together campaign. Blair led the fight against the SNP and we won. Now we need your help to bring together the votes of the majority again.

In East Renfrewshire the No vote was one of the highest in the country, but despite that result today you are represented by the SNP who want to force another divisive referendum.

Why? Because at the last General Election the votes of the No-voting majority were split, letting the SNP win in East Renfrewshire. Too many people who voted No in the independence referendum voted for the Conservatives, who finished in a distant third place, and Labour was narrowly defeated.

Please don't risk that this time. Use your vote to elect an MP who will oppose Nicola Sturgeon's plan for another divisive referendum and will tell her to focus on the day job of fixing our schools and hospitals.

A vote for the Conservatives won't stop another divisive referendum. It will simply let the SNP win again.

Regardless of what is happening across the country, and regardless of what the opinion polls say, we know what the real result was here last time.

Please don't risk it. Use your vote for Labour this time, to say No to independence and to elect Blair McDougall as your next Member of Parliament.

Yours sincerely,

Alistair Darling

SNP literacy figures are “an absolute disgrace” – Gray

By Scottish Labour Education spokesperson Iain Gray MSP

The official Scottish Survey of Literacy and Numeracy 2016 (Literacy) published yesterday has revealed slipping standards in reading and writing in our schools.

These figures are the education legacy of ten years of SNP government and they are an absolute disgrace. Standards in both reading and writing have fallen since 2012 and the gap between the richest pupils and the rest has not closed.

No child should have their life chances determined by their background – yet that is exactly what is happening under a Nationalist government obsessed with the constitution.

For John Swinney to suggest that the answer is centralising school budgets is ridiculous. The answer is to stop the SNP's cuts to schools.

The SNP has starved our schools of £1 billion in recent years, and a generation of children has paid the price.

There are 4,000 fewer teachers, 1,000 fewer school support staff and 700 teacher vacancies that will take three years to fill under the SNP.

Class sizes are among the biggest in the developed world.

Labour is the only party standing up against SNP cuts that put the life chances of our young people at risk.

A vote for Labour on June 8 will tell Nicola Sturgeon to get on with the job of running our schools – and to stop trying to divide us with an unwanted second independence referendum.

NURSES ARE £3,400 WORSE OFF UNDER THE SNP

10 May 2017

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Scotland's nurses have seen a real terms pay cut of £3,400 under the SNP, Labour can reveal.

Visiting the Royal College of Nurses today, Scottish Labour leader Kezia Dugdale and health spokesperson Anas Sarwar will reveal the analysis showing how the average nurse is worse off as a result of the SNP pay cap on NHS staff.

UK Labour has committed to scrapping the one per cent pay cap – and Scottish Labour will challenge the SNP to meet that pledge in a Holyrood vote on Wednesday.

Previous research from Labour revealed that the number of long-term unfilled nursing posts in our NHS has increased by more than 300 per cent under the SNP, leaving Scotland's NHS staff overworked and under increasing pressure.

The choice in this election is now clear: Labour MPs who will stand up for working people or SNP MPs who will fight for another independence referendum.

Scottish Labour leader Kezia Dugdale will say:

"Our NHS staff are the foundation of our health service, but they aren't getting the support and they resources they need from the SNP government.

"In fact, nurses in our health service have faced on average a real terms cut of £3,400 as a result of the Nationalist pay cap.

"The first step in delivering an NHS that delivers the care Scots needs is to give staff the pay they deserve. Labour would scrap the 1 per cent pay cap to give our NHS staff the pay increase they deserve.

"The choice in this election is clear – Labour MPs who will fight for better wages and a stronger NHS, or SNP MPs who will fight for another independence referendum that Scotland doesn't want."

RCN Director Theresa Fyffe will add:

"Budget savings achieved through pay restraint are being used to meet efficiency-saving targets for the NHS. The result is that NHS staff pay has fallen way behind the cost of living and many nursing staff are now struggling to survive on their pay packet.

"Nursing staff are facing mounting challenges – dealing with an unprecedented increase in demand and patients with increasingly complex needs – as well as chronic staff shortages and intensified workloads.

"The situation is unsustainable. The RCN is calling on politicians from all parties to show that they value nursing staff by ending the 1% pay cap and paying them a fair wage."