

Send the Tories and the SNP a message

2 May 2017

Speaking in Edinburgh today, Kez Dugdale said voters can send the Tories and the SNP a message by electing Labour councillors on Thursday.

The full text of Kez's speech is below

Friends, when I asked Alex to be our local government campaign manager, I knew we would have someone who would lead by example.

But the miles he has clocked up as he knocks on doors in every corner of this country has astounded us all.

Alex, thank you for everything you have done to encourage people across Scotland to vote Labour when the polls open on Thursday.

And let me also thank Ian Murray.

He has taken the fight to the Tories in the House of Commons, and the Nationalists here in Edinburgh South, with the kind of grit and determination that makes me proud to be Labour.

But he hasn't been fighting alone. He has had you, and he has had nearly 230 Labour colleagues from all across Britain, because we are a party that believes in solidarity and working together.

Friends, the election is less than 48 hours away.

That's a sentence I have said an awful lot at events like these over the past few years.

In fact, since I joined the Labour Party in 2003 I have been involved in 12 national elections.

Twelve elections in less than 15 years.

It's no wonder, particularly here in Scotland, that sometimes we get election fatigue.

I am sure I am not the only one who empathised with Brenda, the Bristol pensioner whose angry and outraged reaction to the news of the snap General Election went viral.

But we keep going.

Because elections matter.

And this election is vitally important, because the very future of our local services is at stake.

Who runs our schools and how much we have to invest in Scotland's next generation is at stake.

The level of investment in social care is at stake.

The number of new houses we can build for families is at stake.

Yesterday we marked the 20th anniversary of Tony Blair's landslide election win in 1997.

It serves as a reminder that when Labour is in power, this country is transformed for the better.

That is why we continue to knock on doors, deliver leaflets and make our case for voting Labour.

And the council elections on Thursday and the General Election on the eighth of June are about two things:

Standing up for the public services that we all value, which the Tories want to decimate.

And sending a message to Nicola Sturgeon that the people of Scotland don't want another divisive independence referendum.

So let me say a bit more about those two issues.

After a decade of Tory and SNP cuts, Scottish public services are in a critical state.

There are 4,000 fewer teachers and 1,000 fewer support staff in our schools than when the SNP took office in 2007.

International league tables show a decline in maths, reading, and science.

Too many of our older people can't get the care package they need. And those that do get 15 minute visits – if they're lucky.

That should shame the SNP government.

NHS services across the country – from maternity units to children's wards, and from GP surgeries to entire hospitals – are at risk of cuts or closure altogether.

And yet almost every day of this campaign, Nicola Sturgeon has claimed that we need to vote SNP to protect Scotland from Tory cuts.

What a cheek.

Under the SNP £1.5 billion has been cut from local services since 2011 alone.

That's money taken from our schools and nurseries and care of the elderly.

Money taken from protecting our most vulnerable.

Money taken from services which offer hope and aspiration to those who feel left behind and forgotten.

Money which offers opportunity.

People want their children to get a decent education in good schools.

They want to know that further education is possible.

They need to hope that there will be decent jobs paying decent wages because the government is investing in the future.

The SNP does not offer that.

It might campaign against austerity but the SNP does nothing about it when in power.

The party – the only party – in this election with a plan to invest in public services is Labour.

Every Labour councillor elected on Thursday will fight for better schools and safer communities.

They are the people who will focus on ending poverty in their communities and offer opportunity to all.

They will stand up against the cuts, and work tirelessly to invest in the local services that we all rely on.

The SNP won't stop the cuts.

And the Tories will cut even more.

So to those thinking about voting Tory on Thursday, I want to say this.

Think carefully about what that vote means.

It's an endorsement of the abhorrent rape clause.

It's a vote for a hard Brexit, affecting jobs and workers' rights.

It's a vote for more severe cuts to schools and other valued local services across the country.

Because the more Tories in town halls, the more chance they have of actually getting their hands on local services – and cutting them even further.

So when you are out on the doorsteps over the next 48 hours, tell the voters this:

Don't vote for the Tories as a protest vote. Protest against them.

And don't vote for the SNP. Stop them from taking this country through another divisive referendum.

Nicola Sturgeon has been desperate to convince people that the coming elections aren't about a second divisive independence referendum.

She says that a vote for the SNP is safe, because it isn't really about independence this time round.

But she said that in 2015, and look what happened.

The day after her party won in Scotland she started her divisive campaign to break up the UK all over again.

And if the SNP win 56 seats at the General Election they will, once again, seek to claim a mandate for another divisive independence referendum.

Like you I am utterly fed up with the duplicitous nature of a party which pretends to stand up for Scotland when all it really wants is to tear the UK apart.

Friends, there is nothing progressive about nationalism.

There's nothing progressive about refusing to ask the rich to pay their fair share.

And there's nothing progressive about breaking up the United Kingdom, ending the very means by which we redistribute wealth across these islands.

Like many of you in this room, my belief in Scotland remaining in the United Kingdom isn't based on ideology.

It's not based on the love of one flag over another.

Rule Britannia! doesn't quite do it for me.

My passionate belief in the United Kingdom comes from lived reality.

From seeing the value of being part of something bigger in our everyday lives.

The UK pension that allows older people to live out their retirement with dignity.

The thousands of jobs that are sustained by being in the UK single market, where firms can trade freely between the four nations of our isles.

The shipyards workers, who are in jobs because of UK defence contracts that would be lost if we went our separate ways.

The schools that are built across this country thanks to tax revenues raised and redistributed across the whole of the UK.

The NHS –created by a UK Labour government, and funded by the contributions of working people throughout Britain.

The millions of people around the world who have been helped thanks to the

work of the Department for International Development in East Kilbride.

In every part of our country there is a reminder of the benefits we get from being part of Britain.

And there isn't just an economic and practical argument for remaining in the UK, important though that is.

There is a powerful emotional argument too

It's an argument that is written into the very DNA of our party.

That we achieve more together than by going it alone.

We are the party of solidarity.

We are the party of working together.

We are the party that knows that sharing resources isn't selling our nation out, it's part of building our country up.

So let the message ring out that together we're stronger.

On Thursday, every Labour councillor elected will fight to make their local community stronger.

A local champion who will protect local services from the Tory and SNP cuts.

A local champion who will be the last line of defence between the services people value...

... and the narrow-minded dogma of two opposing nationalist forces.

A local champion whose priority will always be improving our schools and our social care services, not obsessing about a second independence referendum.

So on Thursday send the Tories a message – tell them that Scotland does not want their austerity.

And send Nicola Sturgeon a message as well.

Tell her to abandon her plan for another divisive referendum and get on with the day job.

You can protest against the Tories and protest against plans for a second referendum on Thursday with one vote.

By voting Labour.

And in return, you'll get a local champion for your community.

Someone utterly committed to investing in the public services your family needs and deserves.

So let's get out there.

Thank you.

Twenty years on: Remembering Labour's 1997 election win

30 April 2017

Scottish Labour has today highlighted the major achievements of the last Labour government.

Tomorrow marks twenty years since Tony Blair's 1997 landslide. The thirteen years of Labour government that followed the 1997 election win transformed the UK and delivered improved public services for all.

Here are twenty key achievements from Labour's time in office:

1. 120,000 children lifted out of poverty in Scotland
2. Introduced the National Minimum Wage
3. Reconstituted the Scottish Parliament
4. Brokered peace in Northern Ireland
5. Introduced the Human Rights Act
6. Equalised the age of consent
7. Lifted 110,000 pensioners out of poverty in Scotland
8. Launched tax credit system for the low paid, children and pensioners
9. Introduced the right to parental leave, extended maternity leave and gave the right to request flexible working time
10. Established the Low Pay Commission
11. Gave workers statutory paid annual leave
12. Winter Fuel Payments
13. Banned smoking in public places

14. Ended ban on LGBT people serving in armed forces
15. Gave LGBT people the right to adopt children
16. Scrapped Section 28 (clause 2A in Scotland)
17. Created civil partnerships
18. Introduced the Freedom of Information Act
19. Tripled the UK aid budget
20. Wrote off 18 of the poorest countries international debt, £30bn, lifting millions out of poverty

Speaking to mark the anniversary of Labour's 1997 triumph, Scottish Labour leader Kezia Dugdale said:

"The historic achievements of the last Labour government are still having a massive impact on the lives of people today.

"Labour choices in government mean workers are now getting a fair wage, despite Tory opposition. Labour choices in government took 600,000 children out of poverty across the UK – 120,000 of them in Scotland – despite Tory claims it was impossible.

"And Labour delivered peace in Northern Ireland, ending one of the world's longest-running and most fractious conflicts.

"This is what Labour does in government and what it can do if you vote Labour on June 8."

[General Election 2017 Candidates](#)

[Find your Scottish Labour Candidate here](#)

The full list is as follows:

Aberdeen North	<u>Orr Vinegold</u>
Aberdeen South	<u>Callum O'Dwyer</u>
Airdrie & Shotts	<u>Helen McFarlane</u>
Angus	<u>William Campbell</u>
Argyll & Bute	<u>Michael Kelly</u>
Ayr, Carrick & Cumnock	<u>Carol Mochan</u>

Banff & Buchan	Caitlin Stott
Berwickshire, Roxburgh & Selkirk	Ian Davidson
Caithness, Sutherland & Easter Ross	Olivia Bell
Central Ayrshire	Nairn McDonald
Coatbridge, Chryston & Bellshill	Hugh Gaffney
Cumbernauld, Kilsyth & Kirkintilloch East	Elisha Fisher
Dumfries & Galloway	Daniel Goodare
Dumfriesshire, Clydesdale & Tweeddale	Douglas Beattie
Dundee East	Lesley Brennan
Dundee West	Alan Cowan
Dunfermline & West Fife	Cara Hilton
East Dunbartonshire	Callum McNally
East Kilbride, Strathaven & Lesmahagow	Monique McAdams
East Lothian	Martin Whitfield
East Renfrewshire	Blair McDougall
Edinburgh East	Patsy King
Edinburgh North & Leith	Gordon Munro
Edinburgh South	Ian Murray
Edinburgh South West	Foyso! Choudhury
Edinburgh West	Mandy Telford
Falkirk	Craig Martin
Glasgow Central	Faten Hameed
Glasgow East	Kate Watson
Glasgow North	Pam Duncan
Glasgow North East	Paul Sweeney
Glasgow North West	Michael Shanks
Glasgow South	Eileen Dinning
Glasgow South West	Matt Kerr
Glenrothes	Altany Craik
Gordon	Kirsten Muat
Inverclyde	Martin McCluskey
Inverness, Nairn, Badenoch & Strathspey	Mike Robb
Kilmarnock & Loudoun	Laura Dover
Kirkcaldy & Cowdenbeath	Lesley Laird
Lanark & Hamilton East	Andrew Hilland
Linlithgow & Falkirk East	Joan Coombes
Livingston	Rhea Wolfson
Midlothian	Danielle Rowley
Moray	Joanne Kirby
Motherwell & Wishaw	Angela Feeney
Na h-Eileanan an Iar	Ealasa!d MacDonald
North Ayrshire and Arran	Chris Rimicans
North East Fife	Rosalind Garton
Ochil & South Perthshire	Joanne Ross

Orkney & Shetland	Robina Barton
Paisley & Renfrewshire North	Alison Taylor
Paisley & Renfrewshire South	Alison Dowling
Perth & North Perthshire	David Roemmele
Ross, Skye & Lochaber	Peter O'Donnghaile
Rutherglen & Hamilton West	Ged Killen
Stirling	Chris Kane
West Aberdeenshire & Kincardine	Barry Black
West Dunbartonshire	Jean-Anne Mitchell

[General Election Rally](#)

“This election is about the establishment versus the people ... Labour is the only party that is fighting to ensure that it is the people who win”.

Watch above as Jeremy sets out Labour’s progressive vision for a fairer, more equal Scotland and UK.

[Kezia Dugdale speech to the STUC](#)

Scottish Labour leader Kezia Dugdale today said the General Election is an opportunity to boot the Tories out of office and put a Labour government ‘in power in the interests of working people’.

Speaking to the Scottish Trades Union Congress (STUC), Ms Dugdale said the starting point for a Labour government is ‘making sure that everyone has a decent high quality job that pays a real living wage’.

She said the Tories’ handling of Brexit has ‘shown us the risks they’re willing to take with our country’s economy’.

Ms Dugdale said a Labour Government will end the Trade Union Bill, abolish

the rape clause and ensure fair wages and decent work for all.

Here is Kez's speech in full:

Thank you Helen [Connor, STUC President].

Let me begin by paying tribute to the STUC, to Helen and to Grahame Smith, your General Secretary.

The STUC has always been the voice for working people across Scotland, highlighting injustices and fighting for people's rights, not just in Scotland but right across the world.

In the past, and still today, you have fought for the rights of people at work, and shone a light on racism, sexism and homophobia.

As leader of the Scottish Labour Party, I am proud to have the STUC, and your member unions, as part of our Labour family. You make us stronger, and nothing will ever call into question the historic link between the Labour Party and the trade unions.

Friends, when I accepted the invitation to speak here at your congress, I didn't expect to be facing the circumstances we are dealing with today. In just a matter of weeks, we will go to the polls again to elect a new UK Government.

The stakes at this election really could not be higher.

It's a choice between a hard right Tory Government, intent on pursuing a hard Brexit at any cost.

Or a Labour Government that is offering better and fairer choices, and will put workers' rights and the values of trade unionism at the heart of everything we do.

That is the choice that is on offer on June 8.

And what an opportunity that is.

Think about what this Tory Government has meant for people across this country over the past seven years, and then think of getting the opportunity to boot them out of office in just a few short weeks.

This is the Government of the bedroom tax, which led to tens of thousands of the most vulnerable people in our country being forced out of their homes.

It is the Government of a cruel and unusual sanctions regime which sees the sick and disabled penalised.

And, if we needed a more recent reminder of the cruelty of the Tories, this is the Government of the rape clause.

A policy implemented by Theresa May and defended by Ruth Davidson here in Scotland.

Friends, if the mark of a civilised society is how we treat our sick, our disabled and the most vulnerable, this is a Government that is failing every test.

And that is why this election is an opportunity.

It is our opportunity to bring about the change that this country needs with a Labour Government, led by Jeremy Corbyn.

Our country stands at a crossroads in this election.

More than ever, people here in Scotland, and right across the UK, feel left behind and marginalised.

They continue to feel that politics isn't working and that politicians aren't doing enough to address their concerns.

Our job is to change that.

And, as the Labour Party has always done, our starting point is making sure that everyone has a decent high quality job that pays a real living wage. Because making sure that people have good jobs isn't – as you know – just about creating a stronger economy.

It's about giving people their place in society, and the dignity they deserve.

It's not just good enough to give people jobs, they have to be well paid and they have to come with rights and protections, guaranteed by trade unions. But under this Tory Government, we've seen our country's economy driven to low wages, low productivity and low investment.

Workers across the country have seen their incomes stagnate over the past decade, and even today real wages are 10 per cent lower than they were in 2007.

5.7 million people across the UK are in jobs that pay less than the living wage.

And the productivity gap, that even the Chancellor has admitted is "shocking", still goes without any real solution, and the UK continues to have some of the lowest productivity in Europe.

All of this means that people are working longer and harder for less.

But while people at the very top are getting tax breaks, working families are on average set to be £1,400 a year worse off by 2020.

And the Government now even have to admit that their "National Living Wage" won't hit the £9 they promised by 2020.

Meanwhile, Scotland's economy shrank in the final quarter of 2016 and continues to lag way behind the UK's GDP growth.

Our two biggest industries – finance and oil and gas – which employ tens of thousands of your members continue to go through tough times.

The North Sea has not recovered from its most recent slump, and experts predict that we may be about to lose 20 per cent of Scotland's jobs in the financial sector to automation over the next two years.

Already, thousands of people in administration jobs in Edinburgh have lost their jobs because they have been replaced by machines.

And this is a trend that is only going to increase in the coming years.

So, we need solutions to our economic problems that address both the challenge of low living standards, and the risks presented by the changing nature of the economy across the UK.

That's why we'll start by making the National Living Wage a real living wage of £10 an hour.

And we'll write the real living wage into law so that everyone will have enough to live on.

This change would bring an immediate increase in living standards to people across our country, but it would also provide a much needed economic boost. And we must also guarantee the rights of people at work, and the rights of people to organise and be members of trade unions.

That is why the next Labour Government will stand by its promise and repeal the Tories' anti-Trade Union Bill.

Trade Unions don't need more restrictions on your ability to organise. You need to be able to organise in even more workplaces, and be recognised for

the benefits you can provide to employers as well as employees. Employers like Lidl, who I have lobbied recently after USDAW highlighted the difficulty they have been having trying to organise there. It's the responsibility of all of us to show the benefits that unions can bring and the real difference they can make. We also need to get to grips with the structure of our economy. For too long, London and the south east of England has raced ahead of the rest of the UK, while too many other nations and regions have fallen behind. If our country is to be successful, it needs to be firing on all cylinders. And that means every part of the United Kingdom working at full capacity. That is why the next Labour Government would establish a National Investment Bank and Regional Investment Banks across the UK, to help unlock £500 billion of investment and lending, including a £20billion Scottish Investment Bank. That's the real change that's on offer with Labour at this election. And, friends, with Brexit around the corner it is more important than ever that we begin to think about the kind of country we want to build after the UK leaves the EU. With the Tories it's absolutely clear what that will look like. Theresa May has already made it clear that she's willing to turn Britain into a bargain basement tax haven if she doesn't get a deal on Brexit. We can't allow that to happen. The Government's handling of Brexit has shown us the risks they're willing to take with our country's economy. Threatening to walk away from the EU without a deal is no worse than Nicola Sturgeon's threat to walk away from the UK with independence. Both the Tory approach and the SNP approach would lead to job losses and even more austerity than we're already facing. And the UK Government's refusal to take EU nationals off the table as bargaining chips is just another example of their lack of compassion. That's why I'm proud that Labour's Shadow Brexit Secretary, Keir Starmer, made absolutely clear yesterday that we would unilaterally guarantee the rights of EU migrants on day one of a Labour Government. Why? Because, friends, it is the right thing to do. These are people who have chosen to come to the UK, to make their lives here, to raise families and contribute to our economy here. We shouldn't then make them bargaining chips in our negotiations with the EU. Ruth Davidson must now commit the Tories to providing the same guarantee in her party's manifesto. Anything else would add to the growing evidence that she isn't a different kind of Tory after all. In our approach to Brexit, Labour would take a very different direction to the Tories, putting the rights and protections we have gained by being part of Europe right at the heart of our country's future. But it also provides us with an opportunity here in Scotland to build on the rights we already have. Earlier this year, at our party conference in Perth, the Scottish Labour Party endorsed federalism as our preferred constitutional model. This would mean putting power closer to people in every nation and region of the UK – providing an answer to people who feel that politics is too detached and too remote. For us in Scotland, this would mean considerably more powers for the Scottish

Parliament.

These aren't power for the sake of it.

When Labour has argued for more power for Scotland in the past – right from the early days of devolution – it has been about giving us powers for a purpose.

There is no point in hoarding power in Holyrood. They have to be used.

Our starting point is that any powers returning to the UK that are already devolved should not be re-reserved. That means that powers over things such as agriculture, fisheries and development programmes should come straight to Holyrood, along with their budgets.

But I don't think we should stop there.

Brexit provides us with the opportunity to go even further.

With the application of the social chapter ending in the UK, now is the right time to think about where power best lies over other areas such as employment law and immigration.

I believe the UK should guarantee a minimum set of rights across the whole country, but the idea of allowing nations or regions of the UK to build upon this is a strong one.

So here in Scotland, we could choose to extend employment rights or top up the minimum wage.

We would want to consult fully with all trade unions before making such a change, but the argument is compelling.

Similarly, the UK will now have to develop and design a new immigration system fit for a post Brexit UK.

Here in Scotland, we have long had different migration needs from other parts of the country. That is why it is right that we should now look at devolving powers over who is able to come in and out of the country.

This would allow us to create a fair and flexible system to meet our needs.

I'm pleased that the STUC have also endorsed these calls earlier in the week, and I'm looking forward to working with you and hopefully making them a reality in the future.

Friends, the next six weeks are going to be a crucial time in the life of our country.

This is when we will decide the direction we will take, and with it the character of the decisions that will be made about Brexit and the future of our country.

My message to you today is this:

We have a chance to get rid of this Tory Government.

And you can only do that by standing with the Labour movement, and supporting the Labour Party.

Clause One of the Labour Party's rule book says that the purpose of the Labour Party is 'to organise and maintain in Parliament and in the country a political Labour Party'.

In this election campaign over the next six weeks, I will do all I can to make sure we have a Labour Government.

A Labour Government that will end the Trade Union Bill, abolish the rape clause and ensure fair wages and decent work for all.

A Labour Government, led by Jeremy Corbyn, with real compassion.

A Labour Government, friends, that puts our principles into practice in the place where Labour should be: in power in the interests of working people

Thank you.

