

# Carwyn Jones speech to Labour Party Conference

**Carwyn Jones AM, Leader of Welsh Labour, First Minister of Wales**, speaking at the Labour Party Conference in Brighton today, said:

**\*\*\*CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY\*\*\***

I want to begin by extending my thanks to Christina Rees, our Shadow Secretary of State for Wales. Sadly she can't be with us this week as she's nursing a broken foot.

I don't think there's any truth in the rumour that she broke it kicking Alun Cairns around Parliament in the first week back, but we'll ask her when we see her.

We all wish you a speedy recovery, Chris.

Secondly, let me say thank you to Jeremy for his continuing friendship and leadership.

Thank you, Jeremy for the dignity you showed in a tough general election campaign.

The Tories came after you in a personal and offensive manner, and you stood up to that onslaught and led the party with great determination and defied the odds.

This time last year, the Tories thought they were marching to a 100-seat majority. Right now, they're scared of their own shadows, let alone another general election. What a turn around that is.

Conference, when I heard Theresa May was giving a speech in Florence, I thought how apt. Not so much in relation to the Renaissance, but more with a thought to the works of that great medieval poet, Dante. It has been clear to me for some time that the Department for Exiting the European Union regard the "Divine Comedy" as some sort of instruction manual. That masterpiece imagines in glorious detail the dark and terrifying journey through the nine circles of hell.

Well,  
we've been going on our own journey for 15 months and still remain in the first  
circle of hell – limbo – a remarkable achievement. But, then Dante did have  
Virgil as his spiritual guide.

David

Davis has got Nigel Farage. The book really is worth a read as Brexit  
re-interpreted. At one point, at the  
close of chapter XXI, Dante witnesses a demon mobilising his troops by using  
“an ass as a trumpet.” Which goes to  
show that every century has its own Boris.

Conference,

this week in Wales we marked the 20th anniversary of the vote to establish  
devolution in our country. It was a  
turning point for Wales, and a turning point for our Party. The list of  
achievements  
is one of which we can be proud – and it belongs not just to Welsh Labour,  
but  
to the whole Party and movement who made devolution possible.

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Unemployment

in Wales – routinely lower than the UK average. More jobs, better jobs –  
Welsh  
Labour delivering in Government.

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Wales,

the first country to move to a deemed consent model for organ donation in the  
UK. People owe their lives to that change in the law. Better laws, saving  
lives, Welsh Labour delivering in Government.

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Free

school breakfasts in primary schools. Giving children the best start to the  
day, giving parents a helping hand, giving teachers the attention they  
deserve  
in the classroom. Welsh Labour delivering in Government.

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The

attainment gap between better off and poorer pupils in England and Scotland  
continues to grow – in Wales it continues to shrink. A fair start to everyone  
in Wales, no matter where you're born – that is Welsh Labour delivering in  
Government.

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Our

university students in Wales getting the best deal anywhere in the UK.

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And  
who gets the best deal of all? Those students who can least afford university  
–  
that is Welsh Labour delivering in Government.

But,  
it isn't just about policy. It's also about having a voice and someone to  
fight  
your corner. This week I gave a cautious welcome to the news that Tata Steel  
and ThyssenKrupp entered the first stage of a merger deal. A deal that  
should safeguard sites and  
thousands of jobs in Wales.

Does  
anyone honestly think that without devolution, without a Welsh Labour  
Government determined to take measures to save that industry, putting money  
on  
the table when others looked away, that those steel jobs would still be in  
Wales today?

Would  
the Tories have knocked down walls for the people of Port Talbot, Shotton,  
Newport or Llanelli? We all know the answer to that.

With  
our colleagues in the trades unions, our MPs, our AMs and local councillors,  
Welsh Labour stood up for the steel industry – and we did what those banners  
and badges asked us to do – we saved our steel.

Conference,  
we are proud to work with our trades union colleagues in Government.

Together  
we have built a genuine social partnership and together we are making Wales a  
Fair Work Nation.

And  
Conference, earlier this month our Trades Union Act received Royal Assent.

That  
means that the pernicious attempts of the Tory Government to attack workers'  
rights in Wales have been dis-applied, and, once again, workers in Wales have  
the protections we fought so hard to achieve. Protections everyone deserves.

That's  
Welsh Labour delivering in Government.

Devolution  
has given Wales a voice. And with Welsh Labour that voice speaks the language  
of social justice, fairness, good work, decent pay and thriving communities.

Devolution

has given us something else. A new-found confidence. It is something I see every day in young people in work, and in our schools and colleges. So where has that confidence come from? If you could personalise it, you'd have to give credit to my predecessor, Rhodri Morgan. As you know, Rhodri passed away earlier this year, leaving behind a fantastic roller coaster of a political career, a wonderful family and an ocean of anecdotes. In May the Welsh Parliament held the closest thing Wales will ever have to a state funeral, and we gave Rhodri the perfect send off.

It started late. It finished even later. In between there was a fantastic mix of poetry, politics, sport, laughter and tears. And at the end, no-one really thought about Rhodri the politician, but Rhodri as a big-hearted, intelligent and inquisitive man who loved his family above all else. A fine role model, who we all miss.

Rhodri always said that Labour did best when it managed to mix together the mushy peas of old Labour with the guacamole of New Labour. Now, I've been in Rhodri's kitchen and I can tell you that when it came to culinary combinations, Rhodri was not always the person you would go to – but on the politics, he, as so often, was absolutely right. He was absolutely right about the need for our Party to reflect all sections of our membership, and all parts of this country.

That was the key to our success in Wales in the last three elections.

When the Party at UK level was under serious pressure, our unique and united Welsh Labour identity meant we remained relevant and competitive in the Assembly and local elections, when sadly others struggled. It was the unity that gave us success against the odds. And when in the last days of the general election the whole party surged, it meant we, in Wales, were starting from a higher base-line and, as a result, achieved 50% of the vote for the first time in 16 years.

Our identity as a Party is robust, authentic and complementary to the UK Party as a whole. And, just as a country we will not countenance a roll-back of our devolution settlement; there can be no question of Welsh Labour's long fought for, and hard won voice being diluted as we look to the future of our Party. I know that both Jeremy and Tom understand this, and I welcome their unwavering support for Wales. Thank you, both.

Because

Conference, we know Labour works best when we work together. Together, we fought a hugely successful general election campaign – not just holding on to what we had, but winning back seats for Labour.

Vale

of Clwyd – according to the bookmakers, Tories were 1/5 on to win. Result? Labour Gain. Gower – according to the bookies, Tories were 1/9 on to win. Result? Labour Gain. Cardiff North – Tories were 1/9 on. Result? Labour Gain.

Working

together we have exposed the Tories on broken promise after broken promise.

On rail electrification in the north and the south – and we know what's coming next – they'll axe Swansea's Tidal Lagoon.

But,

because Welsh Labour is in Government – there are things we can do. We are already delivering on our manifesto promises.

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100,000  
new good quality, all-age apprenticeships.

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The most generous childcare offer for working parents anywhere in the UK.

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And  
20,000 more affordable homes.

We

can also deliver on priorities for the future of our NHS.

There

is no privatisation of the NHS in Wales – and whilst we have a Welsh Labour Government there will be no privatisation of the NHS in Wales. Only in Wales are ambulance crews hitting their targets – because we've worked with the service and designed a better way of working. And next week, the Welsh Government will publish new guidance for our pioneering legislation on safe nurse staffing levels in Wales.

Conference,

Wales is the first country in Europe to legislate on nurse staffing levels. I am proud that Wales has taken the lead in this area, empowering nurses and ensuring the resources are there to care sensitively for patients.

Legislation

that the Party promised in the UK manifesto in May, already being delivered by a Labour Government in Wales.

And

working together we are making our communities better, fairer places to live.

When

Carolyn Harris MP began her brave and dignified campaign to end child burial charges in the UK, we in Wales did not wait for the Tory Government to act.

We

said, yes, that is the right thing to do, and, as a result, the Welsh Labour Government has announced the abolition of all child burial charges in our country.

That is what we can do when we work together.

And

the country needs us to work together more than ever before, as we fight the fundamentalists pursuing a hard Brexit. We are fighting tooth and nail against

the Tory power grab, dressed up as the EU Withdrawal Bill. It shows up their Government as simply incapable of listening to other people's views, or respecting their legitimate interests – in other words, as lacking the basic skills needed to negotiate successfully.

And

looking at the way in which they are failing the country in their negotiations

with the EU, I guess we shouldn't be surprised.

I'm

delighted at the support we are receiving from Labour colleagues in Parliament

at fighting this real threat to devolution as we have known it for the past 20 years.

I'm

also incredibly proud of the work we have done together already – our team in Cardiff Bay has worked hand in glove with Keir Starmer and the front bench in developing our Brexit policies. As a result of that work, in Labour we now have

a sensible, evidence-based, economically sound set of principles and ideas that

can see this country through Brexit in an orderly manner.

Contrast

that with the spectacle of the Tory approach. Sorry, correction – the various Tory approaches. Does anyone really know who speaks for them on Brexit anymore?

Where

has the Prime Minister of this country gone? If, before the general election, the country felt

as though it had a robot for Prime Minister, we'd now be forgiven for thinking

we have a hologram.

She

went to the country and asked for the support of our communities for a hard Brexit, the country said no. The country said no to some other things as well

—

our older people said no to being taken for granted. Wales said no to being short-changed. Scotland said no to independence. And crucially, our young people said no to being ignored. They said, through their votes, what we all feel — Britain deserves better than this. This country deserves a Labour Government in Westminster.

A

Government that actually cares about the future.

I

know that the people of Wales need that more than ever. Under the Tories, we have had to take £1 billion out of our public services in Wales. That's the annual budget of the entire North Wales health board. Our communities are resilient, but they're being unfairly punished. And with Theresa May and the Tories they will be asked to give yet more. To give up. To give up their livelihoods, their libraries, their leisure centres, and their right to a fair deal. To give up hope. Enough is enough. It is time for hope.

It

is time for Labour, in Wales and in Westminster. Standing up for Wales. Working for fairness.

Working, together. Winning, together. That's a future the country hopes for and

that's the country we can deliver. Together for Wales. Together for Britain.