

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 .”