

For the many, not the few – General Secretary Iain McNicol speech to Labour Party Conference

Iain McNicol, General Secretary of the Labour Party, speaking at Labour Party Conference, said:

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

Thank you, conference and it's great to be back in Brighton.

That's *Labour-run, Tory-free* Brighton & Hove.

Being back in Brighton reminds me of so many Labour movement conferences: TUC, the Labour Party, my union the GMB.

BUT there's someone on my mind this week.

Someone we're missing.

That's Mary Turner.

Mary was the very best of the Labour movement.

Passionate about social justice.

Driven by her values.

We miss her. *I miss her.*

We honour her memory.

Like Mary, I've always believed there is power in a union.

When I was an organiser for the GMB, I saw first-hand that without trade unions, the lives of working people can be hell.

Without trade unions:

no limits on working hours,

no rest breaks,

no paid holidays,

no safety on the building
site or factory floor.

But there's something more.

Mary Turner knew it:

trade unionism can take you
so far, but only Labour Governments can transform the lives of the many.

Our founders in 1900 knew it.

That's why they started the
Labour Party in the first place.

To form governments and
deliver policies.

The welfare state.

The United Nations.

Comprehensive schools.

The Open University.

A national minimum wage. Sure Starts for the children.

And the greatest achievement
of any government:

the National Health Service.

So this week in Brighton let
us focus on what the next Labour Government, led by Jeremy, will achieve.

How our generation will leave
a lasting legacy like the generation of '45, or '64, and '97.

Let us start with the results
of the last general election.

Despite losing the election,
Labour outperformed expectations, and secured 41% of the vote, an increase of
nearly 9 points since 2015.

And whilst we should not forget the six Labour seats we lost, we can be proud of the net gain of 30 seats, mostly from the Tories, in seats such as....

Battersea,

Bedford,

Plymouth,

Cardiff North,

and Portsmouth South.

We won in Canterbury, where Labour took the seat held continuously by the Tories and their like since 1295.

And Labour is back in Scotland.

Winning seven seats, with six gains from the SNP.

Isn't it marvellous to see so many more Labour women elected, the highest proportion of the Parliamentary Labour Party in our history?

More Labour MPs from Black and Minority Ethnic backgrounds,

More Labour MPs with disabilities,

More LGBT Labour MPs.

A Parliamentary Labour Party that looks like the UK: modern, diverse, grounded in reality.

This was an election where our online campaigning came into its own.

Labour had more than 1.2 million shares on Facebook.

We reached over 29 million unique Facebook users.

In the last two days of the campaign alone, 7.3 million individuals viewed our Get Out the Vote message on Snapchat.

We used professional,
targeted, high-quality digital communications to support local campaigns, to
register people to vote, to guide activists to key seats, and to get out the
vote.

It was a brilliant campaign,
and we should applaud all those involved.

Victory next time is in
sight.

The campaign to win started
within hours of the election result.

Over the summer, Jeremy
completed his 50 Seat Tour, campaigning in

Bournemouth, Blackpool and
Bolton

Crawley, Carlisle and
Copeland

From Hastings to Harrow...

From Southampton to
Southport...

Aberconwy to Arfon...

Glasgow,

Rutherglen,

The Western Isles,

Kirkcaldy,

Edinburgh and all points in
between.

Thousands of members have
been out on the doorsteps of Britain.

New members joining with
veterans.

Young with old.

That's what I call real *progress*.

That's what I call real *momentum*.

A united party, on the road

to victory.

Let me turn to the Labour
Party staff.

It is a daily privilege and
honour to work with the dedicated and talented party staff.

They are the best in the
business.

In the smoke and heat of an
election campaign, there is no-one better to have on your side.

In every one of the speeches
I've delivered as General Secretary, I have talked about the vital role of
party members.

Not just cogs in an election
machine, but as year-round advocates, developing policy, changing
communities.

This conference thanks you,
for everything you do.

Today, I am proud to announce
we have 570,000 members, making the British Labour Party the largest
political
party in Europe.

We're picking up council
seats in places such as...

North Somerset,

Thanet,

Suffolk...

and Airdrie.

In Worthing, up the coast
from here, our candidate Becky Cooper won a council seat for Labour for the
first time in 30 years.

And next year we have local
elections across England, with millions going to the polls.

We are working hard to get
our parliamentary candidates in the places we need to win.

We will continue the work of

the Jo Cox Women In Leadership Programme, which has already seen two of its alumni elected to Parliament.

And while I am happy to debate it,

I will not give an inch,

nor make an apology,

for using All-Women

Shortlists to get even-more Labour women into Parliament.

In every one of my reports to this conference, I've talked about the steady improvement in the party's finances.

It has taken a decade of hard work, but we are today mortgage-free, debt-free, loan-free.

So this is today's Labour.

Growing in size and confidence.

Financially secure.

Reaching into the Tory heartlands.

In contention to be the next Government.

Labour has the leadership in Jeremy, and the manifesto, the country is crying out for, on

education,

on health,

on social care,

on crime,

on transport,

on the environment,

on housing, and especially

on Brexit.

And on Europe, let me say how much we value the work of our colleagues in the European Parliament, and the leadership of Glenis Willmott.

Glenis: thank you for your service to our movement, party and country.

The Tories may be in office, but they have no mandate,

no majority,

no unity,

no authority.

But that doesn't stop them.

They think they're born to rule.

So who is going to stop them?

Not the Lib Dems.

Not UKIP.

Not the SNP.

And definitely not the DUP.

Who is going to stop them?

We are.

Since the election, thanks to the surge in our support, we have prevented the Tories from...

legalising fox hunting...

building more grammar schools...

Scrapping free school meals...

Ending the winter fuel payment...

And imposing a Dementia Tax.

Labour has dumped the Tory election manifesto in the shredder, and left Theresa May with nothing to say.

I said at the start how much
I value the trade unions, and value the advances we have made for British
workers.

But imagine if all of these
hard-won gains are flushed down the drain in a Tory Brexit.

Imagine the Britain our
children and grandchildren would inherit.

Only Labour can deliver a
Brexit which looks after the many.

Finally, conference I hope
you enjoy your time in Brighton & Hove.

A shining, diverse, European
city, everything the Tories hate.

I propose only one
improvement.

It's a small thing.

It's not much to ask.

Let's make the trains safer,
more secure, more reliable

and run on time;

Let's nationalise Southern
Rail!

Enjoy conference, and thank
you.

Ends

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