

Ian Lavery MP speech to Labour Party Conference

Ian Lavery MP, Chair of the Labour Party, speaking at the Labour Party Conference in Brighton today, said:

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Conference, colleagues, brothers and sisters. We nearly did it! Who would have thought this time last year that we would be here, having been a hair's breadth away from having the keys to Downing Street?

The snap general election, that Mrs May said wouldn't happen. saw us do something that political pundits said was impossible.

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Winning the support of nearly 13 million people – our best vote for 20 years.

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Achieving the biggest increase in Labour's share of the vote since 1945.

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Denying the Tories an overall majority.

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Turning the tide in Scotland and gaining six seats

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Achieving our best share of the vote in Wales for 20 years

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Achieving our highest share of the vote in England since 1966. And winning some seats we have never won, and only imagined winning in our wildest dreams.

Conference,
we achieved something special with an unashamed message of hope

Just over a year ago Theresa May was swept to the leadership of the Tories and the country without being elected – even by Tory Party members. So emboldened was Mrs May, that the architect of Tory austerity, George Osborne, was kicked out of cabinet like a dog in the night.

What a contrast to now – denied a mandate by the great British public. So embattled is Mrs May that she is being led a merry dance by bungling Boris. And so chaotic is the Tory Party that its members believe the best choice to replace Mrs May is Jacob Rees-Mogg.

Can you imagine Jacob Rees-Mogg leading this country? It would be funny if it was not so serious. But the danger is the people of these countries will pay for the Tory chaos with their jobs, and we can't let it happen. And that's why it's so important that we build on the achievements of our election campaign.

And that's why we must continue to campaign – so when the next election is called. We are in pole position in the race to Downing Street. This is no pipe dream; this is political reality

In April, the Tories and most of the media expected Labour majorities to crumble and for the Party to be destroyed as an electoral force. On election night, Andrew Marr said “no one expected Corbyn to be such a good campaigner.” Really Andrew? No one? Where have you been? But Jeremy would be the first to say the campaign was not a one-person show.

What a great campaign Labour waged. From the members who went out knocking doors and handing out leaflets, to the staff and volunteers who came together as one team at Southside. From the trade unions who mobilised their members, to the teams in our offices in Wales and Scotland and every region. Everyone deserves to give themselves a pat on the back. And a special thanks to those who came along to our rallies, across the UK.

Who made politics exciting again and contributed to an atmosphere of change? The statistics speak for themselves. They're in the report. But I'll mention just a few.

Huge increases in our social media reach – for example, Labour's Facebook 'likes' increased 44% to nearly a million and Jeremy's rose 31% to 1.2 million. We came of age digitally in this election. A fantastic voter registration campaign that saw more than two million visit the electoral commission's voter registration site. Four million visitors to Labour's website. Eight

million people watching our Party-political broadcast on the NHS on TV – that's two million more viewers than the Great British Bake off!

And none of this could have been done without cash to match the Tories. In just six weeks, our supporters gave nearly £5m in donations, averaging £19 – that's more than a quarter of a million donations. And that's on top of £4m donated by our trade union affiliates. It was a truly amazing campaign. Positive, hopeful, funded by the many.

And what a contrast with the Tories. Theirs was a campaign funded by a handful of super-rich donors. With a leader who was hiding from the voters. And a manifesto that failed even to give the electorate the courtesy of some costings. And, as the polls narrowed, the bankruptcy of the Tories was plain to see – all they could do was escalate their scurrilous personal attacks – above all, on Jeremy, on John, and on Diane.

Diane – let's take a moment to consider what you had to put up with. According to Amnesty International, you were the target of 45% of all the twitter abuse directed at female MPs. The Tories have questions to answer – they deliberately targeted you and spent a fortune smearing you. But you responded with dignity and discipline and your own constituents in Hackney North and Stoke Newington rewarded you – with a thumping 35 thousand-plus majority.

Conference, the Labour Party has had a massive impact since the election. Two weeks after the election, on the back foot, the Tories' Queen's Speech made no mention of:

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Scrapping the winter fuel allowance for millions of pensioners.

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Of ditching the triple lock protecting the value of pensions.

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Of a dementia tax on social care.

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Of taking free meals away from younger primary school children.

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Of new grammar schools.

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Or of unbanning fox hunting.

If this is what we can achieve in opposition,
imagine what we could achieve if we had the keys to Downing Street

We
would start building a Britain for the many not the few, by:

- Introducing
a £10 living wage by 2020.
- Banning
zero hours contracts.
- Introducing
free schools means for all primary school children.
- Scrapping
tuition fees and reinstating maintenance awards.
- Giving
the NHS the money it needs.
- Tackling
the crisis in social care.
- Scrapping public sector pay
cap.
- And putting trade union rights
at the heart of our agenda.

Unlike the Tories, everything we promised in our
manifesto was fully costed. And, unlike the Tories, we also had a plan for
rebuilding the economy, a plan for investing in sustainable growth, for
investing to create the wealth and decent jobs that would underpin a fairer
society.

The Tories have been – and continue to – giving
away tens of billions of pounds through cuts in corporation tax, capital
gains
tax and other tax breaks for big business and the very wealthy. They
say it's to incentivise investment. But
that hasn't happened. In every single year of the last seven years under
the Tories, capital investment as a percentage of GDP has been lower than the
average under the last Labour Government. So, the Tory tax breaks for the
rich are not only
unfair. They are also not working.

Conference, this is why we cannot afford to rest on
our laurels. Denying the Tories a majority was a great
achievement, but it's no substitute for winning power. 13 million people
voted for a message
of hope in June. Millions more can be won over to our cause.

It doesn't
have to be like this, there is always an alternative. By stepping up our
campaigning and mobilising our
membership. We can take our
message of hope to every city, every town and every village across this
country. A united Party, living
our own values of solidarity to transform society. It is high time we
invested in people and began to instil
hope and aspiration.

Conference, together we will build an
economy that works for all, a country where no one is held back.

A society for the many, not the few