

Jeremy Corbyn speech at the Royal College of Nursing Annual Conference

*****Check
against delivery*****

**Jeremy
Corbyn, Leader of the Labour Party**, speaking at the Royal College of Nursing Annual Conference, said:

I
want to say thank you.

Thank
you to the nurses gathered here today.

And
thank you to everyone in the nursing profession.

And
to all National Health Service staff across Britain.

Our
National Health Service, of which we are so proud, would be nothing without
you.

Our
politicians owe you a duty.

A
duty to ensure you can work with dignity.

A
duty to ensure you are not held back from providing the best possible
standard
of service to all your patients.

That
is what Labour offers.

And
let me make it clear today – Labour is ready to step in and save the NHS from
cuts and privatisation.

Every day our General Election team is reminded of the central
importance of this.

At our headquarters in London, the walls are decorated with the
original poster from the 1940s saying 'Labour's health service covers
everyone

– Tories voted against it.’

Nothing embodies our campaign theme – ‘for the many not the few’ – better than the NHS.

Universal,
life-long health care, free at the point of need.

However it is being dismantled by stealth.

Over the past seven years, our NHS has been driven into crisis.

A&E departments are struggling to cope. Waiting lists are soaring and, as we saw last week, Tory cuts have exposed patient services to cyberattacks.

I would like to pay tribute to how all NHS staff have responded to this terrible cyber-attack. The stress you must have faced trying to keep patients safe must have been intense, this was just another example of the extraordinary lengths you go to every day to keep our country healthy.

And we know our NHS is under threat from privatisation, brought in by the Health & Social Care Act. The Tories are forcing through NHS privatisation on a huge scale – £13 billion of taxpayers’ money was handed over last year to private companies to profit from NHS services.

Nye Bevan once said of the NHS:

“It will last only as long as there’s folk with faith left to fight for it.”

Be in no doubt that there are those folk.

I am one of them.

And in hospitals, health centres, and communities all across the land there are thousands of us.

People for whom working for the NHS is a privilege and a pleasure.

Like so many in public service everywhere.

People believe in the founding principles of the NHS.

A service like no other.

Not a service which checks your bank balance before it checks your blood pressure.

A service for the many not the few.

But Britain is not being run for the many, for the majority.

Across our country people are being held back.

If you're a student nurse without a bursary, doing a second job to make ends meet; you're being held back.

If you worry about your children because they can't get together the deposit for a home or afford the rent; then you are being held back.

If you manage a ward and can't free up beds because of the cuts in social care; the Government is holding you back – stopping you from doing properly the job you were trained to do.

In Britain – the sixth richest country in the world – this cannot be right.

It cannot be right that trained nurses are leaving the profession for other jobs.

It cannot be right that tax giveaways for the rich and big business have been put before funding for the NHS, Social Care and fair treatment of NHS staff.

The RCN has found that nursing shortages have doubled in just four years.

We could have 40,000 fewer nurses than we need by 2026.

Your pay has fallen 14 per cent in real terms since 2010, but you don't work any fewer hours.

That is the Tories' record.

I wish there could be a public debate on this record with Theresa May.

Did you hear her on a radio phone in last week?

A doctor from Leeds called Romena told her that she was considering quitting after 12 years of service – because of 'crippling frontline staff shortages which have worsened as a result of the government's failure to invest properly in the NHS'.

Romena asked why Jeremy Hunt was reappointed since he'd demoralised the entire workforce.

Theresa May simply dodged the questions.

She doesn't want to recognise the truth.

Or the real scale of the crisis.

Theresa May isn't listening and doesn't care.

She herself called the Tories the nasty party.

And now she's trying to masquerade as someone who cares about working people.

She's taking us for fools.

Theresa May and her Tory Government have failed to stand up for the hundreds of thousands of workers not being paid the minimum wage

She has failed to tackle zero hours' contracts and employment agency malpractices.

She's done nothing for the thousands of workers who have been unfairly treated but can't afford to pursue a claim because of tribunal fees – introduced in the first place by the Tories.

They are still the nasty party.

And if they win this election, the people of Britain are in for some nasty surprises.

Imagine what would happen to the NHS if the Conservatives under Theresa May were to have another five years in power.

It would be unrecognisable: a national health service in name, cut back, broken up and plundered by private corporations.

Only Labour will put the NHS back on its feet. To move towards a National Social Care Service to give everyone the care and dignity they deserve and finally make parity of esteem for mental and physical health a reality.

Today we are pledging an extra £7.4 billion a year for the NHS throughout the next Parliament, including £2 billion annually to modernise buildings and IT systems.

This funding settlement will allow Labour to:

- Guarantee access to treatment within 18 weeks, cutting one million from NHS waiting lists by the end of the Parliament.

- Ensure those needing A&E services are seen within four hours, helping another million people each year.

- Deliver the Cancer Care Strategy for England in full by 2020, helping 2.5 million people living with cancer.

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Create a new £500m Winter Pressures Fund to protect patients from the problems we saw earlier this year.

This is Labour's New Deal for NHS Patients.

It will give NHS staff the support they need – and deserve – to give the best possible service to patients.

And we will guarantee that level of service.

We will ensure the standards the Tories have failed to deliver – and to which patients are legally entitled – are met under Labour.

But Labour also recognises that great services depend on retaining staff by rewarding them properly.

You go above and beyond every day, and your ballot result yesterday showed how angry and frustrated your members are after a 14 per cent cut in real pay under the Tories.

Labour will not put you in that position.

We will lift the public sector pay cap.

And hand back decisions on pay to an independent review body.

Labour wants nurses to be paid a decent wage.

And we will fund training. We will restore the bursaries for nurses – the vital funding that the Tories chose to end.

This election will define the future of the NHS as no other.

You can't trust the Tories with our NHS. It's too much of a risk to take.

Labour founded the NHS and we will restore it to good health.

This is central to our plan to transform Britain – our plan to create a fairer Britain for the many not the few.

We will set out our policies in full in our manifesto tomorrow.

The scale of our ambition will be clear – it will be inclusive, fair and costed.

We are going to transform Britain, together, for the better.

Only a few weeks remain to take that message to the people of Britain

To show how we will hand power back to you.

So that everyone in this country has a stake in their future

A future, a Britain, for the many, not the few.