

Jeremy Corbyn speech – Stepping up for Britain

**Jeremy Corbyn speaking
in east London today, said:**

This morning I'm going to say a few words about you. And even some about me. But if you don't mind, I'll come to that later.

First I want to say that this general election more than any I have previously fought will define our times.

Last week, I said the dividing lines in this election could not be clearer.

I pointed to a clash of interests between working people on the one hand, and the privileged and super-rich on the other.

This is not about a government getting its priorities muddled. And it's not simply a case of saying one thing and doing another.

It's about presiding over a rigged system that shapes all our lives.

Of course that's not something the Conservatives want to talk about. It's why, I think, they're so desperate to make this general election all about Brexit.

Don't be taken in.

The Conservatives would much rather make incredible promises about Britain's future outside the EU than talk about a scorecard of broken promises and neglect stretching back seven years.

Even their approach to Brexit betrays what they're really about.

Unlike Labour's jobs-first plan, it is both reckless and rigid. And entirely in keeping with their record in government.

Make no mistake; a Brexit for the few is being cooked up by this government.

One where any money
saved is handed out as tax cuts to the super-rich and their corporations.

Where new trade deals
with the US and elsewhere are used to drive down our working conditions,
environmental regulations and food standards.

I think you can guess
what is likely to happen to the many in a rigid and reckless Brexit. But what
about the Conservatives themselves, and their friends and backers?

Do you think their
personal prospects will suffer? Do you think their lives will get harder as
wages slide and jobs become even less secure?

Unlikely, I think you'll
agree. And that's because the Conservatives and their backers can afford to
opt
out when things go wrong. They've been doing it for decades.

They already send their
children to the most exclusive schools and universities. They already
dominate
the upper rungs of every career ladder.

In truth, they have a
get out of jail free card when the Conservatives are at the controls.

So I have a message for
you all today: Unless you too have a get out jail free card, it's time to
Step
Up.

And when I say Step Up,
I mean register to vote. Claim your future.

You have till 22 May!

Over 2.4 million young
people are missing from the UK's electoral register. Barely 40 percent of 18
to
24-year olds turn out to vote.

The Conservatives are
more than happy with this state of affairs. Apathy and resignation will
secure
them seats on election day.

I ask you to Step Up
because when I talk to people all over the country, I'm struck by something
troubling.

It's not

that our young people don't have the energy and talent to succeed. Our country is full of potential.

But something hangs in the air. It typically goes unspoken.

It's the unheard story of why so many of us are scaling back our hopes and dreams in favour of just getting by.

It's the reason why this country is unable to unleash its potential.

Because as families, communities – entire regions – we are all being held back.

If you're young – like many here today – it's a familiar feeling:

If you feel trapped in a job that barely covers your rent.

If you feel anxious about keeping on top of credit cards and loans.

If your heart sinks each time you see the prices of homes displayed in estate agent windows.

Then you're being held back.

In a Fairer Britain, government would be bending over backwards to unleash your potential.

You're our future after all.

You'd be supported to be confident and equipped for higher paid and secure jobs.

You'd be able to look ahead without mounting debt taking away your choices.

And you'd be able to enjoy the security and rewards of one day bringing up a family in a home of your own.

Being held back means we can't provide the life that we want for ourselves and those closest to us.

And it hurts. It makes

people angry and worst of all resigned to the idea that nothing can be done about it. We end up blaming ourselves or each other.

This is life in
Conservative Britain.

It's why a Fairer
Britain has to be the choice at this election.

It's also why Labour
will unveil plans to upgrade our economy.

Because unless we move
from a rigged to an upgraded economy, there can be no Fairer Britain.

That is what June 8th
is all about.

Don't let the
Conservatives hold you back.

Don't let the Conservatives
Hold Britain Back.

And now for a sentence
I've yet to utter in my political life: Enough about you, what about me.

I've just laid down the
gauntlet and asked you to Step Up.

Each and every one of us
must Step Up for Britain. Including me.

In the 34-years since I
became a MP, I have been attacked for what I believe in. But it has not
changed
my core values – and sadly many of the problems we faced then are still with
us.

In 1983, I
stood up in Parliament for the first time and used my maiden speech to
condemn
deeply damaging cuts in public services and the NHS.

It's a tragedy that I
could make a very similar speech today and it would once again hold true.

Between then and now I
learned first-hand how the privilege of being an MP could help achieve
change.
Profound and lasting change.

At the time, young

protesters were being shot dead on the streets by the racist apartheid regime in South Africa – Nelson Mandela and hundreds of ANC leaders were in prison.

The Conservative

Government refused to impose sanctions, entertained the leaders of the regime and banned protests outside the South African embassy in London.

Being an MP helped bring attention to that ban and the wider cause of South Africa's liberation – and got a group of us arrested.

But the space for people in Britain to organise in support of freedom in South Africa was defended and strengthened.

And I realised then that political leaders can, if they want to, create and preserve the space for others to organise and transform countries.

My role is different now but there is a common thread: we should act together, to overturn unfairness and create a better society.

It became my yardstick for measuring the performance of governments going back three decades, Labour and Conservative.

In that time, I've seen Prime Ministers and Leaders of the Opposition come and go.

But for all their achievements and failures, what I didn't see was a sustained attempt to rid this country of what really holds people back.

I never heard a clear invitation for everyone in the country to work together and create a real alternative to our rigged economy.

So when I was asked to put my name forward in Labour's 2015 leadership election, I felt I should step up.

I didn't expect to win.

But under my leadership, we have forced the Conservatives into one U-turn after another: over cuts to tax credits, disability payments and their recent attempt to increase national insurance for the self-employed.

And I respect my critics when they make a reasoned case. They are doing what I have

often tried to do – and that is to challenge leadership.

It reminds me of the 1990s when the political mainstream bought into Conservative ideas about markets, finance and the economy. It ultimately left us with no defence against a global financial crisis that had its roots in another country's housing market.

Again, it taught me that if leaders go unchallenged, they can make some of the most damaging mistakes. And if party leaders put themselves ahead of serving the people, they stop listening and even put our country at risk.

Barely nine months into Theresa May's premiership, there are clear warning signs that she and her closest advisers are slipping into that presidential bunker mentality.

Whereas it is the job of leadership to hold open the space for dissent, new thinking and fit-for-purpose policy.

So while it might not be the stuff of soundbites, I have always believed in standing firm and empowering others to make up their minds and come on board when they are ready.

It is the mind-set that gets community centres and nurseries built. And increasingly defends them from closure.

It is the mind-set that negotiates hard for better conditions in the workplace.

It is the mind-set that serves the many not the few.

For many years, I couldn't see much beyond how so many political leaders manipulated us while giving in again and again to vested interests.

I didn't want to be like that. And it wasn't clear to me there could be another way.

But I've learned there is.

Whereas insecure leaders want to feel stronger by asking you to give them more power.

I recognise strong leadership as equipping you with more power.

And that starts with

encouraging you to Step Up and register to vote – as part of a wider engagement with your community.

Because there's no doubt that these are anxious times.

Individually, more of us face uncertainty at work.

Nationally, we wonder how we will make the transition out of the EU in a way that protects jobs and living standards.

And globally, we wonder how safe we are as extreme right wing movements and violent conflicts spread.

I hope you can see now that there is more than one way to respond.

We could seek a fragile calm. And hope someone in power knows what they're doing and will guide us through.

That means looking to whoever's in charge and welcoming their reassurance. We don't look further, we don't ask questions.

It's the response the few have bet on the many settling for.

I'm in this job because I believe there is a better way to respond.

It's about rejecting fake reassurances or simple slogans from government.

It's about sharing ideas and deciding upon real and lasting answers.

We are not going to have free thinking shut down by a hostile media or an elite that scoffs at anyone who dares to step out line.

No, each of us has a contribution to make. We have ideas for a better tomorrow and we are going to respond together.

We are a party that wants to bring together people and ideas, and harness the thirst for real and lasting change.

If you agree our times

demand a response from all parts of our society and all corners of our country,
then I am proud to be your leader.

And if you want someone
to hold that space open for you to help change the direction of your life and our country, then I am proud to be your leader.

Because it's only
through unleashing our talent that Britain will succeed on the world stage.

Since its foundation,
the Labour Party has believed we are richer together. Seven years into Conservative government, we are poorer for being apart.

Across the country,
people are being held back like never before.

Unless we change course,
expect more insecure work for less pay. More stress for less time with our families.

It's gone too far and
the country knows it.

Quite simply, only the
Labour Party can deliver a Fairer Britain.

But we need your help to
do so.

Please register to vote.

Step Up for Britain and vote
Labour on June 8th.

ENDS