

Rowley: We must use tax powers to make Scotland a fairer place

By Scottish Labour deputy leader Alex Rowley | February 20, 2017



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Tuesday will be a historic day in Scotland's devolution story.

For the first time, the Scottish Parliament will decide how to raise, as well as spend, money.

We have a chance to choose a different path from the Tories.

For Scottish Labour, that means turning our backs on austerity and delivering a progressive budget. We would use the new tax powers of the Scottish Parliament to make sure the richest in society pay their fair share.

That would mean raising the top rate of tax for those on £150,000 a year or more to 50p.

Scottish Labour would also change income tax levels by just 1p more than the Tory Chancellor Philip Hammond. With the extra money raised, we would invest in valued local services such as schools and care for the elderly that face being decimated under the SNP.

Nicola Sturgeon might have spent her career in politics arguing for more powers for the Scottish Parliament and against austerity – but in this historic vote she will show the only power she is really interested in is the power to pass-on Tory cuts. I believe that our Parliament here in Scotland must be about more than simply being a conveyor belt for Tory austerity and that is why we must use the powers of that parliament to defend communities and invest in the future of Scotland.

Many people have become more aware of the failure of the SNP to do anything about austerity, but progressive voters will rightly be even more disappointed in the Scottish Greens, who are propping-up SNP cuts. By supporting this budget, Patrick Harvie's party has sold out those who put their trust in them through the ballot box.

The SNP/Green budget will deliver £170million of cuts to our valued public services. On this historic day, Scottish Labour will choose a different path. We will vote against austerity and continue the fight to ensure the Scottish Parliament uses its new powers to improve the life-chances of our children and the most vulnerable in communities up and down Scotland.