

Students deserve better support

16th September 2016



Students deserve better support.

We support free tuition in Scotland, but the SNP has slashed bursaries and grants – and that means students increasingly have to turn to loans and track up more debt.

Lower bursaries

The average student bursary is £400 less than when the SNP came to power. In 2006-07 the average was £1,760 compared with £1,330 in 2015-16.

Higher loans

In turn the average loan has increased by nearly £3,000.

In 2006-07 the average loan paid per student for living costs in that academic year was £2,310, but by 2015-16 that figure has risen to £5,290.

Students deserve better support

Labour committed to reversing the SNP's cuts at the last Scottish election. We would also lift the threshold that people start paying back their student loan to £21,000 – helping graduates on low incomes.

The SNP said that education was the top priority – but these cuts are saddling students with unfair levels of debt.

Protecting our Fire and Rescue Service

14th September 2017

Labourwould PROTECT FUNDING for the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service



FOR THE MANY
NOT THE FEW

As the public inquiry into the Grenfell tragedy begins today, Alex Rowley raised the issue of cuts to fire services in Scotland at First Minister's Questions.

Alex highlighted figures showing there are 700 fewer firefighters in Scotland since the SNP merged the services.

The SNP's merger, part of their centralisation agenda, has meant the fire service has to pay VAT.

The Nationalists were warned that this was the case, but plowed on regardless, effectively cutting millions of pounds from frontline services.

[.@Alex_RowleyMSP](#) says cuts to the fire service are affecting staff morale [@NicolaSturgeon](#) says budget increased by £20m this year [#FMQs pic.twitter.com/iRYF0N5lx8](#)

– BBC Scotland News (@BBCScotlandNews) [14 September 2017](#)

A report from Audit Scotland has estimated that Fire and Rescue budgets will decrease by 31 per cent from 2012 to 2020 as SNP austerity continues.

The SNP did not commit in their 2016 manifesto to protect the Fire and Rescue budget, nor did a commitment appear in their Programme for Government earlier in the month.

We would protect funding for the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service. [#FMQs pic.twitter.com/PvwCRvrnIh](#)

– Scottish Labour (@scottishlabour) [14 September 2017](#)

Our Fire Service deserves better than this.

SNP cuts to fire services cannot go on. If the First Minister is serious about protecting our public services she must protect the funding for Fire and Rescue.

[Twenty years on: the 1997 referendum](#)

11th September 2017



Today is twenty years since Scotland voted for a Scottish Parliament, which was then delivered by the last Labour government.

Here are some memories from the Labour family from '97.

Elaine Smith, Labour MSP for Central Scotland:

Labour's election victory and the referendum for a Scottish Parliament gave many people in Scotland hope after the devastation of 18 Tory years. I have friends who joined the Labour Party due to our promise to deliver a parliament and they have remained active members. The SNP at the time famously said Labour 'couldn't deliver a pizza never mind a parliament'. Ironically 20 years on and it is an SNP government who are failing to deliver social justice, failing to tackle poverty and failing to address the crisis in health and education. The full potential of the yes/yes vote and our powerful parliament has yet to be achieved and that is very disappointing for those of us who campaigned with such high hopes.



Elaine Smith's Yes/Yes badge.

Paul Sweeney, Labour MP for Glasgow North East:

Although I was only 8 years old, I remember the sense of excitement and of hope in that year and in the two years later during the first Scottish Parliament elections and the opening ceremony, which I remember vividly – particularly the poems and the singing of A Man's a Man. It felt like the new Labour government, with some now legendary figures in Scottish politics at its heart, was leading the progress of our country and doing so in a way that unified people behind a common purpose. A stark contrast to the divisiveness of the 2014 referendum.



The Scottish Parliament chamber

David Whitton, former adviser to Donald Dewar and Labour MSP for Strathkelvin and Bearsden:

There is no doubt that Scotland was very lucky that, when it came to delivering Labour's 1997 election promise of devolution, Donald Dewar was that man.

A lifelong believer in home rule for Scotland, when to be so was to court unpopularity among the party faithful north and south of the border, allied to a ferocious work ethic and shrewd intellect, Donald Dewar was the ideal choice to pilot such a historic piece of legislation through the House of Commons.

Some in the media dubbed Donald the "Father of the Nation," not a title he would have ever have claimed for himself. Yet, there is no doubt history will record that Donald Dewar was the deliverer of devolution and that cannot be denied.



Donald Dewar, Labour and Scotland's first First Minister.

Lewis Macdonald, Labour MSP for North East Scotland:

I've still got the t-shirt: the one I wore canvassing football fans at Scotland v Belarus at Pittodrie on 7 September 1997 (We won that one 4-1!)



[Labour win in two key by-elections](#)

8th September 2017

Last night Labour won two crucial by-elections in Glasgow and North Lanarkshire.

We successfully defended the Cardonald seat which fell vacant following the untimely death of Alistair Watson. Jim Kavanagh was elected with a ten point increase in the Labour vote compared to the May council elections.

In Fortissat, North Lanarkshire, Clare Quigley gained the seat from the Tories, with the SNP finishing third.

Cardonald is part of the Glasgow South West constituency, where we cut the SNP majority to 60 votes during the General Election, while Fortissat is part of Airdrie and Shotts, which we came within 195 votes of winning in June.

Interim Scottish Labour leader, Alex Rowley, said:

"These are two fantastic results which make clear that Labour is on the way back in Scotland.

"These are seats in areas that the SNP thought were safe for decades – instead the Labour vote increased by ten points in Glasgow and the SNP were pushed into third in Fortissat.

"Clare Quigley and Jim Kavanagh will be tireless fighters for their communities.

"Labour's radical message of hope is winning back Scots fed up of a decade of an SNP government over promising and under delivering.

Fortissat Councillor Clare Quigley said:

"I am delighted that the people of Fortissat have put their faith in me as their new councillor. I'm looking forward to standing up for local people in the council chamber, and joining a Labour group which is defending vital local services from brutal cuts made by the SNP government in Edinburgh."

Cardonald Councillor Jim Kavanagh said:

"This was a by-election no-one in Glasgow wanted, but I will work tirelessly to stand up for the people of Cardonald and honour the memory of Alistair Watson. Only Labour in Glasgow is standing up against austerity and for a city that works for the many, not the few."

[Growing demand for Universal Credit roll-out to be halted.](#)

7th September 2017

There is growing demand for the roll-out of Universal Credit to be halted across the UK.

Today, Interim Labour leader Alex Rowley will lead a debate in the Scottish Parliament supporting calls for the roll-out to be halted.

Alex called for the roll-out of Universal Credit to be halted earlier in the summer.

Scottish Labour deputy leader Alex Rowley has demanded that Tory plans to roll-out Universal Credit are halted...

<https://t.co/YeAVx2JTbH>

– Edinburgh Central (@CentralCLP) [July 31, 2017](#)

Charities and individuals across civic Scotland have also united to call on the rollout to be halted.

Today Scotland's third sector has come together to call for a halt to the roll out of Universal Credit <https://t.co/RpugkG742m>
[#HaltandFixUC pic.twitter.com/BcRVyuBdz3](https://twitter.com/BcRVyuBdz3)

– Citizens Advice Scot (@CitAdviceScot) [August 31, 2017](#)

Universal Credit, which will replace six existing benefits, is supposed to make access to social security payments less complicated. It has been rolled out in parts of Scotland and is due to be introduced in full across the country by the end of 2018 – starting this October. But there are particular concerns about the six-week waiting period for payments at the start of the process.

Since Universal Credit was introduced, Citizens Advice Scotland evidence in initial roll-out areas shows:

- A 15 per cent rise in rent arrears issues compared to a national decrease of 2 per cent.
- An 87 per cent increase in Crisis Grant issues compared to a national increase of 9 per cent.
- Two of five bureaux in impacted areas have seen a 40 per cent and a 70 per cent increase in advice about access to food banks advice, compared to a national increase of 3 per cent.

Read more about our plans for a fairer Social Security system [here](#).