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AM: In effect, the election campaign has begun and Labour have come out of the traps with one big repeated claim: that an American trade deal with Donald Trump under the Tories would betray the NHS. In Jeremy Corbyn’s words, ‘the NHS is up for grabs in a one-sided Trump trade deal or sell-off.’ John McDonnell, the Shadow Chancellor is here. And the reason I’ve started with that, John McDonnell, is that it’s not true.

JM: Well, from what we’ve seen of the evidence, from the Dispatches programme, of civil servants negotiating with pharmaceutical companies, I think it is true.

AM: Well, let me read you – I mean, we had Nigel Farage on the show a little bit earlier on and he in turn had Donald Trump on his radio show, and then Donald Trump said about this: ‘Not at all, we wouldn’t even be involved in that, no. It’s not for us to have anything to do with your healthcare system. No, we’re just talking about trade.’

JM: And you believe Donald Trump? Because I think you’d be one of the few people in this country that actually does. Donald Trump has been seen to be, on this particular issue, made a number of contradictory statements. We have to go on the evidence. The evidence of civil servants – what was it, on nine or eleven occasions sitting down negotiating to sell our NHS.

AM: Well, let’s not believe Donald Trump. Let’s look at the evidence that we’ve got elsewhere. Trade deals by and large cannot determine the way health services around the world are run. The Americans did a trade deal with Australia – they don’t have our NHS but they have a publicly funded health service, and that was not touched by the trade deal. And in terms of Canada
and Singapore negotiating with the EU, again there are special clauses which ensure that a health service free at the point of need can be aside from these treaties.

JM: Well, why are these meetings taking place then? Because the deals that are being negotiated then means our NHS will be hit with high pharmaceutical costs and will be ripped off. It’s the first wedge. It’s the first foot in the door for selling off our NHS. I do not believe Trump’s assurances and I don’t think many people do. There is a risk here and I believe nobody, nobody would want our NHS put in the hands of Donald Trump. It’s not even safe in the hands of Boris Johnson.

AM: But a trade deal is something different, is what I’m saying. The implication of what Labour is saying is that if the Tories get in next time round, then in a few years’ time, the next time I’m going to my NHS hospital I’ll be asked for money. And that’s not going to happen.
JM: No, I agree. What we’re talking about is privatisation of the NHS on a scale we’ve not seen so far. Although this government is privatising the NHS. Billions have been put out to private companies. We believe that what’s happening now is the first step in selling us out to American pharmaceutical companies and other private companies. And I do not believe Donald Trump, because he’s made contradictory statements. The evidence is before our eyes. The meetings are taking place already.

AM: About seven per cent of our health service at the moment is run by private companies, right at the moment. Something that New Labour was part of and has carried on for years and years and years. And American companies are also involved and they’re allowed to be involved because of EU regulations giving them the access. So again I ask, what really is going to be different?
JM: Our argument is that when those contracts run out we will want to in-source this provision, because we believe it’s better
under democratic control and actually better provided and better integrated, the NHS, and at the same time you are not then shelling out for shareholders’ profits. And that way we get a better service and actually more cost effective.

AM: Would a future Labour government, if you were elected in this general election, would you get rid of all privatisation inside the NHS?
JM: Yes, our argument is that –
AM: Yes?
JM: Yes. Our argument is that as these contracts run out they should be brought in-house, because we believe in a democratic NHS and we believe actually we shouldn’t be allowing people to profiteer from the NHS.

AM: So at the end of a Labour government no commercial involvement in the NHS, period.
JM: We’ll see how those contracts run out and we’ll protect the patients and we’ll get a better service. But I think the general public feel as though we shouldn’t be pouring money into the pockets of profiteers.

AM: You’ve said that this election campaign, this election manifesto is the most radical one ever. Last time round you said to people thinking about income tax and wondering how much they were going to pay, that if you earned less than £80,000, basically Labour would lay off you. Is that going to be the case this time?
JM: I’m trying to maintain that only the top five per cent will pay a bit more, and we’ll be honest about that. And as you know, the last general election we provided a fully-costed manifesto. It’s interesting the Conservatives are now going to say the same thing, but we’ll see how fully-costed theirs is. But what I’ll do is, in terms of income tax we said very clearly the top five per cent will
pay a bit more, 95 per cent of the population of the earners will be protected.

AM: And in terms of people trying to think of the numbers, the top five per cent’s 125,000, roughly speaking. And they pay a 45 per cent tax.  
JM: Those ones above £80,000 will pay 45p. That’s what we said. And 50p above. The figure then was 123,000. That’s what we’re aiming for in this election. But you’ll see as we do the full costings of our manifesto exactly where we stand about all these issues.

AM: You’re trying to stay roughly speaking where you were in 2017.  
JM: Yes.  
AM: And is the same the case for corporation tax?  
JM: Yes. And I’ve said, as before, we will restore some of the tax cuts that have been given away to the corporations and we’ll use that for investment in skills and training. Exactly as actually a number of those corporations are calling for.

AM: It doesn’t sound like it’s going to be a lot more radical than the 2017 manifesto.  
JM: Well, you’ll see when we publish the manifesto.  
AM: Alright.  
JM: We always publish now. I’m the only person, Shadow Chancellor to have actually done this, the first person to do it. Alongside the manifesto we’ll publish what we call the grey book, which will be fully-costed..

AM: Okay. And now, for an awful lot of people watching there is one issue which is bigger than Brexit, bigger even than inequality or taxation, and it’s climate change.  
JM: Yes.  
AM: This is the single biggest thing facing the Labour Party. Now, you said a little while ago that you would like Britain to be a
carbon neutral country by 2030, but you didn’t think it was practical. Since then the Labour conference has passed a motion calling for us to be carbon neutral by 2030. Can you deliver that? JM: It’s the objective that we’ve set ourselves. I’m really working hard at the moment – well, we’re working right the way across all our teams, with the scientists and others, and technicians to see how fast we can go. I think we might be able to but it’s going to be tough and what we’ve got to do is look at every area of course, which will enable that to happen. The future for us now is actually when we go into government – I know Brexit’s important and we’ll deal with that - but actually our number one priority must be the survival of our planet, and that will be key to all our policy making. And that includes within the Treasury itself. We’re rewriting the rules upon which investment will be made. Number one, priority is climate change, the second is inequality, individual and regional, and the third is the fourth industrial revolution. Of all of those, they will set the agenda for us in government.

AM: And you’ve made a big announcement today about warmer homes, with huge numbers claimed of extra jobs. They seem widely out of kilter. Hundreds of thousands of extra jobs from insulation.

JM: Well, look, we’ve got 27 million homes we’ve got to insulate, introduce solar power them, introduce heat pumps as well. That’s a huge task, a massive programme. You’re talking about 200,000 jobs to do that. That’s actually calculated on us working with companies and with trade unions and others. It’s a huge training effort. In the supply chain there’s a calculation there’s another 200,000 jobs that would be available.

AM: So that’s, if I may say so, that’s –

JM: These are skilled jobs and well paid jobs as well. And secure.

AM: That’s a popular warm announcement. Let me turn to a slightly tougher area, which is aviation. According to the
committee on climate change the projected rate of increase in aviation around the country is more than twice what it needs to be if we’re going to meet our targets – not by 2030 but by 2050. It follows from that, that a future Labour government on day one must cancel the Heathrow expansion.

JM: You know my personal view on Heathrow.

AM: I was asking about the Labour government.

JM: Well, let me just say we set ourselves criteria, one of which is environmental impact, the other was also the economic impact and social impact. On the current criteria we’ve said very clearly Heathrow expansion doesn’t qualify.

AM: So you will cancel the expansion of Heathrow?

JM: At the moment it does not qualify on the basis of criteria we set out.

AM: Now it’s not just Heathrow of course, because all around the country there’s the same thing. Manchester, currently has 28 million passengers going through it and they want to move to 55 million passengers every year. Leeds, Bradford wants to move from 4 million passengers to 7 million. East Midlands from 4 million to ten million. All round the country there are very, very ambitious airport expansion programmes going on. I’m saying if you are serious about climate change and really changing the direction of travel you have to stop them all.

JN: Well, the same criteria will be applied to all the expansions, whether it’s aviation or any other expansion of our transport system and we’ll make judgements on that basis. In some areas expansion does actually help on climate change because people are then not travelling for example to one central hub like Heathrow. So all of them will be determined on that basis, on the basis of environmental impact, economic impact and social impact.

AM: I guess this is quite an important issue about who has the most influence inside the Labour party and on John McDonnell. Is
it the climate extinction protesters out on the streets or is it the unions, because Len McCluskey and five other union bosses are very in favour of Heathrow expansion because they say it means 180,000 jobs. Have you got the spine to say to Len McCluskey and the big figures in the union movement, terribly sorry, you can’t have it, there are more important things?

JM: Look, I think that’s a wrong depiction. These unions are campaigning alongside us to tackle climate change.

AM: But they’re in favour of Heathrow expansion.

JM: There’ll be difference of view on individual issues, but they adopted the same criteria as us, and don’t underestimate that the very trade union members who are working within the Labour Party and campaigning alongside have as equal concern as us on climate change and they’ll want to balance the issues around climate, economic impact and social impact.

AM: But they say, Heathrow expansion will grant them another 180,000 good unionised jobs and therefore must go ahead. I want to be absolutely clear that a Labour government would say to them, no, it’s not going to go ahead because of climate problems.

JM: What we’ve said so far, exactly I’ll repeat, it does not meet the criteria we set, simple as that. But you know those jobs also can be expanded within the climate change programme we’ve put forward. 400,000 new jobs, both on this warm homes programme and the supply chain and they’ll be good jobs and they’ll be unionised jobs as well.

AM: A year ago we talked about anti-Semitism in the Labour Party, Rabbi Sacks had just made his - and you shook your head and you said it’s terrible and something must be done and we’re on top of it. Can I just show you the front pages of the three biggest Jewish newspapers in this country this week.

‘Vote to stop Corbyn, urges rabbi.

The nightmare before Chanukah and
Prime Minister Corbyn? He’d harm the Jewish way of life.’

And that is Rabbi Jonathan Romain. Now you know, I know that the party slogan if ‘for the many, not the few,’ but there is one community in this country who feels they are not represented by the Labour Party.

JM: I’m so sad. I know, I am so saddened by this. I just want to reassure them, we’re doing everything we can. Everything I said we’d do we’re doing in terms of the Labour Party, eradicating anti-Semitism from the party. We’re also doing everything we can to educate our own members, we’re doing education courses. All the things that they’ve asked us to do we’re doing and that will enable us then to reassure the Jewish community that actually the Labour Party will ensure our society creates a safe and also a decent environment for them and for everybody else.

AM: But you said zero tolerance and so far there’s been 146 warnings to people about anti-Semitism. It doesn’t sound like zero tolerance.

JM: Well, the issue of that is we looked at the gradations of the impact of what people have done, kicked people out. Other aspects are about what - well many of our Jewish members have said, these people actually need re-educating, that’s why we’ve set up an education course. And in that way we’re actually tackling - we’re doing everything asked of us. I’m saddened by the statements that have been made, but I will just give this commitment to the Jewish community. We’re doing everything we possibly can and we will work with them.

AM: Does this feel like a winning campaign this time?

JM: It does actually. I think the polls are coming our way. I think they’re beginning to move in our direction. We know how far we are behind in the polls. Not as far behind in 2017. I just think we’re addressing the right issues. We’re sorting Brexit out to bring the country back together again, tackling the main threat to our
very existence in climate change, but also we’re ending austerity and tackling inequality in our society on a scale that we’ve not seen before and I think that’s inspiring people.

Ends