

THE ANDREW MARR SHOW

INTERVIEW:

DAVID CAMERON, MP

PRIME MINISTER

19th APRIL 2015

- PM insisted that an outright Conservative majority was ‘within reach’.
- He declined to rule out any post-general election deal with UKIP.
- Claimed the SNP wants to come to Westminster to ‘break up our country’.

ANDREW MARR (AM):

And I'm joined now by the Prime Minister. Prime Minister, I'm told that your private pollsters are telling you that it is now very difficult for you to win a majority. Is that true?

DAVID CAMERON (DC):

No. we are 23 seat short from a majority and that...

AM:

As long as we don't lose any seats to any other party.

DC:

Well, and we don't intend to, but the facts of these elections is there is only one party that can achieve that overall majority and continue with the plan that's working, the millions of jobs being created, the taxes that are being cut, the houses that we're building so people can buy and own them, and that is the Conservative Party. I mean, the fact of this election is that Labour is facing wipe-out in Scotland, and something very important just happened on your programme, which is Nicola Sturgeon saying that she would want to alter the course and the direction of the government vote by vote, and I think that is...

AM:

... right to do, she'd have a lot of elected MPS and those... but you asked her...

DC:

Think about what this means, this is, this would be the first time in our history that a group of nationalists from one part of our country would be involved in altering the direction of the government of our country, and I think that is a frightening prospect, for people thinking in their own constituencies is that bypass going to be built, will my hospital get the money it needs? Frankly, this is a group of people that wouldn't care about what happened in the rest of the country. The rest of the United Kingdom, England, Wales, Northern Ireland, wouldn't get a look in and that's the prospect that we face if we don't get the majority Conservative government that is in our reach.

AM:

You talk a great deal about what would happen if Labour had to form some kind of coalition. So it's fair for me to put the question to you, would you do a deal with Nigel Farage is you have to?

00:01:30

DC:

Well, we're not planning to do deals with anybody, because we're 23 seats short from a majority government.

AM:

But you may not get, you may not get...

DC:

Also if you look...

AM:

I can't see how you're going to get them, you're going to have to do a deal with somebody, would you do a deal with Nigel Farage?

00:01:41

DC:

Well, look at the opinion polls; looks like UKIP will be lucky if they have even one seat, whereas the...

AM:

... in the main opinion poll you're behind Labour this morning, this campaign is not going as you would want it to go, you cannot be happy with where you have reached half way through this campaign.

DC:

Well, I'm happy that we're fighting the strongest and most positive campaign...

AM:

But not winning it.

DC:

... based on a...

AM:

But not winning it, Prime Minister.

DC:

Well, we'll wait, there are seven million people will be voting this week, postal votes will be hitting people's doormats, and what I'm saying to people is let's stick to the plan, just delivering the growth and the jobs and the livelihoods that's turned this country around, and I'm quite happy that...

AM:

So you would ...

DC:

... we're getting the very positive message across, and this was the week we launched...

AM:

So you won't talk about any kind of arrangement with UKIP? That's not what's going to happen under any circumstances?

DC:

I'm not going to talk about anything other than winning an overall majority because that is, that's what I am campaigning for...

AM:

... and yet you reserve the right to talk about the Labour Party having a coalition...

DC:

Well, there is a fundamental, there's a fundamental difference, which is the SNP is a party that doesn't want to come to Westminster to contribute to a government, it wants to come to Westminster to break up our country, and so the prospect of...

AM:

And UKIP wants to make us leave the EU, which you don't, so there's potential chaos on either side.

DC:

No, but there is a fundamental difference when you have a group of nationalists that want to be involved in the government of a country which they don't want to belong to. So you have to ask yourself, if you're a voter in England or Wales or in Northern Ireland, would these people care at all about what happens in my life and my constituency? And the answer is, no, and frankly we've already seen lab our cancelling ant infrastructure projects in the south of England, in the southwest of England, the A27...

AM:

But they haven't been in power.

DC:

Yeah, but they've said, we wouldn't go ahead with those because we...

AM:

So they can't have cancelled anything...

DC:

Well, they said we don't care about these things because they don't matter to us politically, imagine what it would be like with SNP MPs backing up...

AM:

You are starting to sound, if I may say so, like an English nationalist politician.

DC:

No, I'm a fundamental believer in our United Kingdom and we're fighting...

AM:

In which case, are you suggesting that SNP MPs elected to the Westminster parliament after the referendum which you urged Scots to stay inside the United Kingdom, are in some sense second class citizens, and not legitimate?

DC:

They are, they were full members of the Westminster Parliament and I want...

AM:

And their votes are legitimate?

DC:

Andrew, you didn't interrupt your other guests in this way, let me try and make a point. They have every right as members of Parliament, but they do have a fundamentally different approach to any other

Member of parliament, which is they don't believe in the Westminster Parliament, they don't believe in the United Kingdom, they wouldn't be coming to Westminster to help our country; they're coming to Westminster to break up our country and what Ed Miliband needs to do is rule out any sort arrangement because otherwise you're not only putting not only about the money...

AM:

Hold on a second, you're asking him to rule out any possibility of them supporting him from the outside even if he hasn't had any kind of conversation or negotiation - that's unreasonable, isn't it?

DC:

Why is it unreasonable? Nicola Sturgeon very clearly...

AM:

He's saying don't you dare come through my voting lobbies. He can't do that!

DC:

Well, he, he at the moment he is saying that the only way he can become Prime Minister, because of the wipe-out of Labour in Scotland, is by being supported...

AM:

But he's not saying that.

DC:

... by the SNP, but he refuses to rule it out. He's been asked many, many times, and it is a very frightening prospect for the rest of the country. But frankly, Andrew, I want to talk about the positive case the Conservatives have, I want to talk about the childcare we offer families to help working mums and dads, I want to talk about...

AM:

...Well let's get on to policies...

DC:

... the houses we're going to allow people to buy, the taxes we're going to cut to give people more of their money to spend as they choose, because there's a reason we are where we are, which is for five years we've taken long-term, difficult decisions to get the economy back on track, and from that strong economy flows everything else that we can do as a country. And it's not a negative point to make clear that we wouldn't be here if we'd listened to Ed Miliband, because he opposed every single decision we took...

AM:

...Let's...

DC:

... every saving, every...

AM:

... Let's come on to...

DC:

... and all the things, it's no accident we have a strong economy, but we could lose that economy by accident if we get the wrong government...

AM:

Let's come onto the policies then...

DC:

... after the election.

AM:

Let's talk about housing. Now, in your announcement this week you are using the power of government to intervene in independent private organizations - housing associations - to force them to sell their properties at up to 70% discounts to people and putting themselves in a much more difficult financial situation. Now that may make sense politically, and the may even make sense if you have a huge house-

building programme to replace those houses, but you don't and you haven't in the past.

DC:

Well, I think you're wrong on every count. I mean, I will go through, I will go through, first of all.

AM:

2011, you re-launched the right to buy.

DC:

Well if you ask me a question Andrew you've got to give me at least thirty seconds to ..

AM:

I am just trying to help you Prime Minister.

DC:

Well when you are ready.

AM:

2011, you re-launched the right-to-buy and for every house that was sold you have replaced one in ten so you've gone nowhere near replacing, the social housing stock is falling and it's going to fall quite

fast with this policy.

DC:

We've built more council houses in the last five years than Labour built in thirteen but let me address very directly why I think it's right to allow Housing Association tenants to have the right to buy. I believe people should have the right to own their own home, we gave that right to council house tenants and we want to do it on the same basis to people in Housing Associations. Now we will build the extra houses for two good reasons, one is every house sold is a receipt that the Housing Association can then build a new house with but crucially we're saying to local councils that they, they should sell off their most expensive properties when they become vacant, there are houses in London where we are now, council houses worth over a million pounds. You can sell one of those and build eight or nine or ten flats or houses, it's a very sensible approach it will lead to more houses and frankly what I am in this for.

AM:

The housing industry doesn't agree with you.

DC:

Well you know often the housing industry run by people happily living in houses that they've bought and they're happy to be - I want that for

everybody, that's what this is for, sometimes we talk about the details and the facts, who is this for? why are we doing it? We're doing it because I want more people to have the security of a good job, of keeping more of their own money, owning their own home, having a good school to send their children to. That is what I want from all the things that we've been doing over the last five years and what we will do in the next five years.

AM:

When you were talking to Evan Davis you said nothing made you angrier than the allegation that the Conservative Party was the party of the rich. Why do you think people feel that? Because looking at the polls, that's what the polls say too.

DC:

Well what makes me so angry about it is I remember what we inherited, I remember who Labour hurt. Through their recession, they hurt the low paid the people who lost their jobs. And because they are still addicted to the extra spending and the welfare and the debt and the borrowing, they'd hurt those people all over again and that's what makes me angry because what we've done in five years with difficult decisions is taking three million of the lowest paid people out of debt, created two million jobs - that's two million more people with a livelihood, with a chance to say to their families I can provide for you

and build a better life. We've delivered and want to go on delivering for hard working people who do the right thing, who put in, who are the back bone of our country. And that's why I get so angry and animated about this.

AM:

OK, OK. Well you also talked to Evan Davis about the twenty two billion pounds of welfare cuts you've made so far as if that was easy. Do you accept that has hurt a lot of poor and vulnerable people?

DC:

Well it has involved difficult decisions. But of course as we've done that we've been getting two million people into work, nine hundred thousand people...

AM:

Difficult decisions for you; a lot of real pain and suffering for people out there.

DC:

Well, we have protected for instance the pension, we've protected benefits for the lowest paid, we've always made sure that we've increased spending on disability benefits rather than reduced it. But crucially the nine hundred thousand people we've got off welfare and

into work that has actually saved money but it's also been good for our country and crucially good for them: a job is the best route out of poverty that there is.

AM:

What about the million people depending on food banks?

DC:

Well obviously I want a country where people don't depend on food banks, we did something.

AM:

But why are more people depending on food banks.

DC:

One of the things we did was that Labour, because they didn't like the PR of this, they didn't advertise or promote the existence of food banks through job centres. We changed that because we thought that was, that was basically sort of selfish and shortminded...

AM:

And according to the Trussell Trust who run these banks that accounts for just three percent of people using food banks at the moment so it's not a significant thing. But can I take you to an individual case, James

Clapson who was a former soldier worked very hard for a long time then was on benefits, failed to turn up to two job centre interviews, had his benefits removed for a month, he was diabetic, his insulin couldn't be refrigerated and he died two weeks later. Now that is the kind of case that is coming up again and again and again and shows that the welfare cuts have been agonisingly painful for real people out there.

DC:

Well we have hardship funds and councils have hardship funds for exactly those sorts of tragic cases but if you're asking me.

AM:

It didn't work.

DC:

If you are asking me is it right that people who are asked to turn up for interviews or asked to fill in a CV or asked to apply for a job should have to do those things before getting benefits then yes it's right that we do have that system in place but we always, as I put it on the steps of...

AM:

But the system has been very very aggressive another case of a man who had learning difficulties and filled in his form by hand rather than

by computer and was refused benefits, there is lots of these cases as you won't have a review, you should have a review of the system surely?

DC:

I look at all of those individual cases and all of those cases can be addressed by the hardship funds and by the flexibilities that are there in the system but we have sanctions for a reason, people watching this programme.

AM:

You don't get the hardship fund for two weeks.

DC:

Hold on a second.

AM:

Alright.

DC:

People watching this programme who pay their taxes, who work very hard, they don't pay their taxes so people can sign on and show no effort at getting a job, as I put it on the steps of Downing Street those who can should; those who can't we always help - that is the principle

that should always underline a compassionate benefits system.

AM:

Why are you getting rid of the independent living fund? It's going in June.

DC:

Well what we've done is we've given that responsibility to local councils as the last resort and local councils have that funding available to help.

AM:

One year.

DC:

They have it there for the difficult cases.

AM:

For one year.

DC:

The crucial thing here Andrew is how do you help people out of poverty? How do you help people get a job? And what we've done is two million more people in work, two million more apprentices, nine

hundred thousand people off welfare and into work and that is connected to all the difficult decisions that we've taken as a government. There is no accident, we have this economic recovery but we could put it all at risk if we get the accident of a wrong government.

AM:

You've found two million people jobs, do you know what proportion of those two million people are foreign nationals?

DC:

Recently, about two thirds of the people getting jobs have been British nationals - that is a huge contrast...

AM:

A third are foreign.

DC:

It was, when I became Prime Minister, ninety percent were foreign nationals. What we have done as a country is we've improved our education system, we've trained apprentices, we've reformed welfare - there is a connection between these welfare reforms we've made that have helped British people into work. So the people who say the new jobs are all foreigners, wrong, the people who say they are not full

time jobs, wrong. About eighty percent of them are full time jobs and also these jobs are coming right across our country, in fact growing fastest in the North West not in the South East or in London.

AM:

Now the eight billion that you've got, you've found somewhere - under a desk or whatever it is - for the NHS over the next few years, I had a conversation with your chancellor about that, I am not sure we got very far but can I have the same questions to you, is that money that you are going to borrow that eight billion.

DC:

That is money from within our spending plans which we've set out.

AM:

So you are taking it from somewhere else?

DC:

Well Andrew let me explain something and please just give me a second to do it. In the last parliament we had to reduce public spending by a hundred billion, we also cut taxes by ten billion and we increased spending on the NHS by seven billion. In this parliament we are being less ambitious, we only have to take another thirty billion pounds of savings that is much less than the hundred billion, we need

eight billion for the NHS, a tiny bit more than the seven billion.

AM:

I don't know any of these figures I have to say to you.

DC:

Well they are not complicated and our plans for tax cuts are seven billion rather than ten billion.

AM:

The IFS figures are very very different.

DC:

So what I am saying is we have a track record, a track record of protecting the NHS, investing in key services, getting the deficit down and cutting people's taxes. Elect us and we can continue with that balance and sensible plan. Go with Ed Miliband backed by the SNP and all of this is at risk.

AM:

OK now your big announcement this morning is that you are giving people up and down the country the right to buy Lloyds shares when Lloyds is sent, put back into private ownership. A lot of people will say that a) this is something you have announced many times before

and b) that it is in effect yet another conservative bribe.

DC:

Well, first of all, we haven't announced it before. We've said we want to see Lloyds back in the private sector but we haven't said there will be a retail offer to individuals so they can own shares in healthy successful British banks. But the crucial point about this is it's more of clearing up the mess that Labour left us. We had tax payer put twenty billion pounds into these banks and I want to get the money back and that's what we're doing, we've already recovered billions and this will help us to recover billions more to pay down the national debt but at the same time I think that having people in our country being able to own shares in healthy successful British banks is a sort of country we should be building.

AM:

Mr Cameron we are both enjoying this conversation very much indeed and we will start it again after the news which we'll go to Sian for now.

NEWS

AM:

The 1910 general election I think. Now, the Prime Minister is still here, you also said to Evan Davis that if he didn't get those twenty three seats you would regard that as a failure, in those circumstances would you step aside and let somebody else do the job?

DC:

I am going to spend the next nineteen days because that is what is left fighting for the overall majority that I think this country would benefit from because it's the only way to continue with the plan that's working with the jobs, the tax cuts, the houses we're building and frankly it's the only way to stop this alarming prospect of a weak Labour leader propped up by the SNP. If I fall short I will come back on your programme and..

AM:

And resign.

DC:

No you can ask me the question.

AM:

Alright. OK but let's be serious, we've had three weeks now of the polls just not moving, you've thrown so much of this and the polls have not shifted at all, time is beginning to run out and many people

see this campaign as stuttering somehow, is it not time to think of John Major go and get your soap box out and up the ante, and up the vim.

DC:

Well I've already upped the tempo, I spent Friday night speaking to forty five thousand Christians in the Excel Centre, I was out at a fifteen thousand Versaki Parade yesterday.

AM:

Don't you need to hit the streets?

DC:

Yes I will be in the next few days taking to the streets and taking this message about how we should continue with the plan that's working and avoid this calamitous prospect of.

AM:

Get away from the stage management, mix it up a bit, take some risks with real members of the public.

DC:

Well as far as I can see I am about the only person who has done a walk about in this election.

AM:

And there are plenty more to come.

DC:

Plenty more to come and you will see that because this is such a vital election for our country and we are at an absolute cross roads where one route is stick with what's working and build on it for people and the other is this calamitous prospect of Ed Miliband propped up by the SNP who don't even want our country to succeed I mean that is why it is so serious.

AM:

OK you told the Countryside Alliance Magazine recently that your favourite sport was fox hunting, is that really true?

DC:

NO I am a believer in.

AM:

You said it's my favourite sport which I love.

DC:

No I love walking, I love fishing, I love all sorts of sports.

AM:

And Shooting but fox hunting is a favourite sport?

DC:

I haven't taken part in it for many many years.

AM:

If it was made legal again would you like to fox hunt again?

DC:

I am only focused on one thing Andrew which is winning this election.

AM:

WE are not talking about leading it we are talking about the other kind.

DC:

No but I am only interested in, I am only interested in winning the election and serving the country that is the only thing I am focused on and it doesn't give you much time for other things.

AM:

Alright Prime Minister thank you very much indeed.

END