

ANDREW MARR SHOW

19TH JUNE 2016

MICHAEL GOVE

AM: As Justice Secretary and as a parliamentarian, what are your reflections on Jo Cox? Did you know her at all?

MG: I didn't know Jo well, but I was fortunate enough to meet her in almost her first week in the House of Commons when we were in the same queue in Commons tearoom, and she'd forgotten her cash at that point, so I lent her a five pound note get a cup of tea.

AM: You lent her money. Did you get it back?

MG: Absolutely. I struck up a conversation with her at the time and a few subsequent conversations, and she is, as so many people who knew her far better than me have said, an amazing and wonderful person. She's the –

AM: She was a very vivid parliamentarian wasn't she?

MG: Yes, she spoke with great passion and effect. She campaigned for causes she believed in with a great heart, and I think she was the sort of person whom all of us would want our, you know, our daughters to grow up to be like. She was an amazing person, and I can only grieve for her and in particular think of her poor children and her bereaved husband, and they're in, I know, the thoughts and prayers of many of us at this time.

AM: Now, I don't know whether you have locus over this as Justice Secretary, but what's your view on the debate we've been talking about already on this programme, about security for MPs? I know all of you want to be out there on the frontline meeting your constituents without anyone in between, but there is an issue now, a lot of female MPs in particular have become worried about the threats, physical threats, rape threats and so on made against them regularly on social media and Twitter. People listen to these threats and sometimes occasionally, tragically, they act on them.

MG: Well, you're absolutely right. There are colleagues, in particular female colleagues, being subjected to the most horrendous abuse on social media outlets like Twitter, and I think of Luciana Berger, the again incredibly impressive and brave Labour MP who has faced horrendous anti-Semitic abuse. Stella Creasy, again a great campaigner. And my colleague Nicky Morgan, who has also been on the receiving end. I do think we need to pause and take a couple of steps back and reflect on what we can do in order to ensure that people in the public eye are kept safe. But I say two other things: it's really important that Members of Parliament remain accessible as Nicholas Soames and Kate Hoey said earlier. We are public servants, we are there to be in touch and to reflect what our voters want us to argue for, and therefore I think that we mustn't try to hermetically seal MPs away from the people whom we serve and whom we represent. And I'd say one other thing as well: there are other public servants who run daily risks, and as Justice Secretary I think of prison officers, those who work in our court system, and police officers as well. You know, while I've been Justice Secretary there have been horrendous assaults against prison officers, and of course there's been the murder of a police officer as well on Merseyside. So –

AM: Don't forget that.

MG: But don't forget, absolutely, that there are so many dedicated public servants whose hard work we need to honour and whose safety needs to be in the forefront of our mind.

AM: Sir Nicholas Soames said a moment ago that the tone of the political debate in this country has become more and more aggressive and perhaps excessive as well. Do you think – I mean, in the course of this referendum debate we all want robust political debate, we want arguments put clearly and robustly, and people do accuse each other of legitimate things. But it has become a little bit over the top, has it not? You know, people on

both sides have been pointing the figure and accusing each other of being traitors and lying and all the rest of it. Has it been a little bit too aggressive, do you think?

MG: Well, I think that of course there have been moments when individuals have said things that I certainly wouldn't endorse. But I'm very strongly in favour of free speech. I think one of the things that is central to a healthy democracy is the belief that people can express themselves and express deep feelings with passion and force. I think that one of the things, not just about this referendum campaign, we've had election campaigns and big political choices, is that people need to hear the arguments laid out and the advocate should be given a fair run. And I certainly think that there have been people on the Remain side and on the Leave side who have made powerful, impressive and passionate arguments, and I think that when we think about what's precious in our democracy, and it is our democracy that we will be voting to decide on on Thursday, when we think about what is precious in our democracy, then free speech, robust debate, that's at the heart of our country and our democracy.

AM: And you don't think it's gone too far in some regard? I mean, Sadiq Khan, who knows a thing or two about robust debates, has been talking about the climate of hatred, poison, negativity and cynicism which he puts down partly to the last few weeks.

MG: Well, first of all I admire Sadiq. I think that he is proving to be, in his first few weeks, a good Mayor of London. And I entirely understand, after having been through a mayoral campaign, why Sadiq will reflect on politics in that way. But I take a slightly different view, and my view is that instead of commenting, commentating on the campaign, it is the responsibility of people like myself, in any campaign, to make arguments. I entirely respect the right of commentators, people like yourself, Andrew, and others, to draw conclusions and to mark our homework, as it were. But I don't think that we politicians should mark our own

homework, I think it's important for us to outline what we believe and then let the people make a judgement.

AM: I don't think I dare mark your homework, Michael Gove. But can I ask you, for instance, I know it was not your poster, but that famous poster which went out just a couple of days ago from the UKIP side of the EU debate, which had a big crowd of migrants, in fact not coming into Britain but on the Slovenian border, most of them brown-skinned, and it just said, 'Breaking Point'. What do you think about that kind of rhetoric?

MG: Well, when I saw that poster I shuddered. I thought it was the wrong thing to do. No, again I must stress, I believe in free speech, I don't want to deny anyone a platform. When I've had the opportunity to talk about migration during the course of this debate I hope I've been very clear, I am pro-migration but I believe that the way in which we secure public support for the continued benefits that migration brings and the way in which we secure public support for helping refugees in need, is if people feel that they can control the numbers overall coming here. In Canada and Australia, two countries I very much admire, they have control and therefore they're able both to welcome economic migrants and refugees.

AM: I absolutely understand that. But let me put to you what the Vote Leave statement said on Turkey - 'Since the birth rate in Turkey is so high we can expect to see an additional million people added to the UK population from Turkey alone within eight years. Crime is far higher, gun ownership,' and so forth. That sounds a bit like that's the other. Those are threats, those people out there. Are you totally happy with the tone of that kind of statement?

MG: Yes, because I think it's important to stress that when we're thinking about the enlargement of the European Union it's the official European Union policy to accelerate Turkey's accession to the EU. And a number of politicians, including Theresa May, have

said that at the moment they don't think that's right. In particular I, in the course of this debate, have pointed out that President Erdogan, the President of Turkey, has been taking his country in a direction which I don't think is progressive.

AM: All absolutely true. But within eight years? I mean, the Prime Minister says that Turkey won't be a member of the EU until the year 3000.

MG: Well, I think that the fact that both the British government and the European Union want Turkey and other countries to join is clear. Nobody denies that. The rate and speed at which Turkey will join will depend on a variety of political factors, but it is the case that during the course of this year the European Union have made it clear that they want to accelerate that process. And I think when Turkey's becoming less democratic, that's not the right thing to do.

AM: But talking about things like birth rates, even if it doesn't make you shudder, does it make you a little queasy?

MG: No. I think it's very important when we're talking about migration to take into account numbers overall as well. And one of the things about numbers, as you were discussing with Jeremy, is that we benefit from migration, if the numbers are controlled. And we know that when Romania and Bulgaria joined the European Union there were predictions on either side about the numbers of people who would come, and those people at the higher end of the estimates were correct. And I think that, as you discussed, it puts a strain on public services and it's important when we're thinking about migration to look at numbers and to make sure that there is a balanced approach.

AM: Michael Heseltine wrote you a letter in which he said, 'the Brexit case relies on fanning fears about immigration. I'm amazed that someone like you,' he's talking about you, 'marches to the drum of Farage, Trump and Le Pen.'

MG: Well, I hugely admire Michael Heseltine and the immense contribution that he's made to Britain's national life. But I don't think that our campaign is as he characterises. I think that our campaign – which I must stress is a cross-party campaign which has the support of people like Frank Field and Kate Hoey from the Labour Party, and people like David Owen, who's an independent Social Democrat – is a campaign that's been characterised actually by the breadth of voices. The people he mentions are not the people who have been leading the Leave campaign. It has been people like Kate, Frank, Gisela Stuart, David Owen, myself and Boris Johnson, who are not cut from the cloth that Michael refers to.

AM: Thank you very much. Let's move on to the economic side of the argument, if we may. Now, what is going to happen is inevitably some kind of a gamble. Even if you say that the Treasury's kind of warnings are far too extreme, and that some of the stuff we've heard from other organisations about economic Armageddon are going way, way over the top, nonetheless going from where we are now to a new place does involve a jolt. You've talked about bumps in the road. Michael Howard has said he doesn't know what's going to happen after we vote for Brexit. So for all those people watching who are really worried about their jobs, maybe listening to their bosses saying, 'be very careful, I want to keep investment in this country, I'm not sure whether I will', surely you have to accept that is a gamble they'll be taking if the vote to leave?

MG: I wouldn't use the word gamble. No. But I do want to be absolutely clear and direct about this. Whether we vote to leave or remain there are risks to our future. There are challenges in the global economy. My view is that those challenges will be easier to meet, those risks will be less, if we vote to leave. Because we will have control of the economic levers. We'll have control over money that we currently send to the European Union, we'll have control over our own laws. And as a result we'll be able

to deal with whatever the world throws at us, because the people making decisions on our behalf are people who are emotionally invested in our future, not people in Brussels or in Strasbourg who are making decisions based on other factors.

AM: Millions of people are casting around, perhaps vainly, for some kind of unimpeachable authority. But if you're working for Hitachi, whose bosses have said that if we vote to leave they will look again at investment in this country, or Rolls Royce, the same thing, or John Lewis or indeed JP Morgan, who are threatening jobs in the West Country, they're going to listen to their own bosses aren't they? And rightly so. Those are the people who know about their own industries, their own case.

MG: What's striking is that there are so many bosses and corporate leaders who've said that whatever happens they will continue to invest in this country because the educational achievements, the generosity of spirit, the hard work and the creative genius of the British people makes them believe in this country. But more than that, there have been a number of very important business people, Anthony Bamford, one of our leading industrialists, Sir James Dyson, a great British inventor -

AM: Who was pro the euro of course.

MG: He was, but he's learned from experience, and he and Anthony Bamford and Simon Wolfson, the chief executive of our great retail company, Next, all of them are very clear that we would be better off if we left the European Union.

AM: So if you wouldn't use the word 'gamble' about taking the choice to leave – and it is a big change in our national destiny, the national – the way we've been organising things, it's a big, big change, what word would you use?

MG: I think that what it would be would be an affirmation of faith and hope in Britain. And I think that Britain would be taking its place alongside countries like Australia, Canada and New Zealand

and America as a self-governing democracy. Democracy's one of the great gifts that we gave the world. And other countries which emulated our approach have prospered, and that is a wonderful thing. And I think that if we voted to leave what we would be doing we'd be saying that the British people, in their wisdom and in their generosity have the ability to not just govern themselves well but to be a progressive beacon to the world.

AM: Now, you mentioned Australia there. That is part of – the Australian points system on immigration is part of what now looks like a very, very detailed manifesto to be handed to whoever's Prime Minister after the result of the referendum. Is that on that ballot paper? You've made various, what sounds like promises about lots of things – you listed bills, The European Union Law, Emergency Provisions Bill, the Special Finance Bill, the National Health Service Funding Target Bill – and on and on it goes. This looks like a manifesto.

MG: What it is is a clear outline of things we could achieve if we voted to leave. So everything that we've talked about are policies that we could embark on, changes that we could make which would be beneficial to this country if we voted to leave. One of those, for example, is VAT on domestic fuel. Our membership of the European Union –

AM: I absolutely understand that.

MC: - means that we can't remove VAT. If we voted to leave that is something that we could do, and I think it would be a good thing, it would help the very poorest in our society.

AM: But is this, as it were, on the ballot paper? People voting to leave the EU should expect those kind of things to happen?

MG: People voting to leave the EU should know that these things can only happen if we vote to leave.

AM: And so what's the status of those, do you then go to David Cameron and say, 'David, Prime Minister, here are the list of things you must now do?'

MG: I would say to David and so my colleagues in government now that we have left the European Union and there has been a clear vote – an instruction from the electorate to us as a team to implement it, now is the time for us to implement these proposals and give people the – both the tax reduction that they hoped and believed that we could receive only outside the European Union, and also the boost to the national health service.

AM: He believes that leaving the single market would put a bomb under the economy – his words – he doesn't believe in the Australian points system and so forth. If he stayed on as Prime Minister, as you want him to do, would he not simply be a hostage Prime Minister to people like yourself? He would be a kind of puppet Prime Minister doing what he was told by the Brexiteers in the Tory Party, not a real Prime Minister at all?

MG: Absolutely not. One of the things –

AM: It's a humiliation for him.

MG: Absolutely not. One of the things about the Prime Minister is that he is a democrat and a patriot, two of his strengths. When we had a vote in the House of Commons on intervention in Syria in the last parliament the vote went against what the Prime Minister argued for and what I believed in, but he, as a democrat and as a patriot, respected that vote and then sought to follow the instructions that the House of Commons had given. On this occasion the Prime Minister, if we voted to leave, I know will respect that instruction. He's been very clear about it. But it's also important to stress that we were elected on a manifesto of which a referendum was one part. There are many other things, including reform of our prisons, further reform of our education system, support for the national health service, which are at the heart of what David Cameron wants to ensure and guarantee, and I'm 100 per cent behind all of those.

AM: What about the so-called punishment budget that George Osborne came up with a week ago, and 60-odd Conservative MPs, including yourself, said we would vote it down in the House of Commons if it came to that? How could he have authority as Chancellor after this?

MG: I was very clear, I said that I didn't think the situation would arise. I think that George has been an outstanding Chancellor and I think he has rescued our economy from the difficult circumstances that we inherited in 2010. Of course during the course of the campaign different sides, the Remain side will make political interventions, and I disagree with the nature of that political intervention, but it doesn't in any way remove my admiration and respect for him.

AM: But you couldn't sit inside a Cabinet and vote down the budget of the Chancellor of that Cabinet.

MG: I explained that I didn't think that the situation would arise. I don't believe -

AM: He won't dare do it?

MG: Well, I think that the argument that was made was that on the basis of a speculative report, that the country might lose a significant amount of money if we were to leave. I think that speculative report was wrong. I think that our economy would be stronger if we voted to leave the European Union, and so the situation doesn't arise.

AM: Alexander Temerko, a very leading Tory donor, you probably know him well, said that, 'business has lost trust in the Chancellor because of the big manipulation of figures in the referendum and the very strange arguments, so aggressive and without proper evidence about what would happen if we leave the EU. For the political unity of the party we definitely need to think about a new Chancellor.'

MC: Well, I completely disagree with Alexander Temerko on that. Again, as I mentioned earlier, I'm a free speech guy, and I respect the right of people to put their cards on the table. But I think that our economy is stronger with George Osborne as Chancellor, I also think our economy would be stronger if we voted to leave. We'd be able to spend the hundreds of millions of pounds that the European Union currently spends on our behalf on our priorities like the NHS.

AM: Very, very quickly. Final disobliging quote. John Major says that on the NHS it's like a small hamster, you're a hungry python and you can't be trusted with the NHS because you want to privatise it.

MG: Again, I have enormous respect and affection for John Major. He served this country well. I also have enormous respect and affection for the National Health Service. It's served my family well.

AN: Alright. Michael Gove, thank you very much indeed.
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