

ANDREW MARR SHOW

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THERESA MAY

AM: Can we agree, to start with, that the one thing that voters deserve in what you yourself have said is going to be a very, very important election, is no sound bites?

TM: Well, it is absolutely crucial, because this is I think the most important election that this country has faced in my lifetime. That when people look at this election and when they hear what politicians are saying they think about the national interest. That should be what drives people when they go to vote.

AM: But no slogans? We can agree.

TM: Andrew, you know that we will all be talking as we go through this election, every party will be talking about what they think is important. I'll be talking about –

AM: Strong and stable leadership –

TM: Well, there's a reason for talking about strong and stable leadership and having a strong and stable government. It's precisely because this is the most important election the country's faced in my lifetime. It's about the future of the country. It's about the national interest.

AM: It's just that people can listen to that kind of thing and think it's a bit robotic.

TM: No, it's – when I talk about leadership and when I talk about the strength of the government for the future, I do it for a reason. The reason is this: We are facing a moment of change in this country. We're facing a moment when we have the opportunity to take this country forward, to make it an even better place to live for people, for their futures, a more secure future for people. But part of that, part of doing that, is about getting the Brexit negotiations right. And it's important when we go into those negotiations – and we've already seen some of the comments that

have been coming out of Brussels, which show that at times these negotiations are going to be tough. So in order to make sure that we get the right result, the best deal for this country, the deal that's going to work for people across the whole of this country, we need to ensure that we've got a strong hand in that negotiation. And that's what I'm talking about when I say to people – I want people to go out and vote, I want everybody to go out and vote on June 8th because this is such an important election. Of course, I ask them to vote for me, but I want to make sure everybody goes and casts their vote.

AM: I'm going to come on to the Brexit issue in a moment. But the other big thing about this election is that you are standing for the first time asking for your own mandate in your own name. And one of the questions people are asking, is this going to be as it were continuity David Cameron and George Osborne or is the Conservative Party taking a subtly different direction under Theresa May?

TM: Look, I served in David Cameron's Cabinet, I served as Home Secretary for six years, and I was very proud to serve with David. If you look at what he did in government, he took a country from the brink of bankruptcy to a point where we had growth and where we see the deficit coming down by two thirds. And it's because of the decisions that government took that we now see, for example, 1.8 million more children in good or outstanding schools. But of course I'm my own person.

AM: So what is the different direction that we should be looking for?

TM: Issues that I think we need to address in this country. First of all of course the circumstances have changed, so we do need to deliver on Brexit, that's what people have asked us to do, and that's what I'm determined to do and get the best deal for this country. But also I think that there are long-term issues that we need to address, long-term issues about the impact of the aging

population, for example. Long-term issues about what sort of economy we want to be in the future.

AM: Exactly, because meanwhile we have in this country a huge number of working people, particularly in public sector workers, who have now had seven years of below inflation pay increases. A really tough freeze on their pay. That can't go on, can it, in the next few years? Or is it vote Tory and get more public sector pay freezes?

TM: No. We've had to take some tough decisions about the public sector, about public spending. We did that because of the state of the economy that we were left by the Labour Party when we came in in 2010. Now we need to look to the future and we need to address the longer term issues that the country, the longer term challenges the country is facing. We need to ensure that we are getting decisions in the public sector right, but also that we have a strong economy. Because you're talking about pay in the public sector, and you can only ensure that we're putting the money that we need into the public sector if you've got a strong economy to pay for it. Now, you will only get that with strong government. You would only get that with a government that understands the importance of growth in the economy, and ensuring that government is doing what it needs to encourage that growth.

AM: Let's pluck out a specific example. Lots and lots of young people do a job that I wouldn't do and perhaps you wouldn't do. They decide to become nurses and give something back. Now, according to the Royal College of Nursing they had had a 14 per cent pay cut since 2010. And we now get stories, again from the RCN, of lots of ordinary nurses by the end of the week having to use food banks because they can't afford to pay for food. That is not the kind of country that you want to run is it?

TM: I want a country that works for everyone, not just the privileged few.

AM: Well it's not working for these people –

TM: If we look at what is happening in relation to pay within the National Health Service, in fact when you look at basic pay together with progression pay, actually for around half of NHS staff they have an increase of around on average three per cent, rather than just the one per cent basic pay. But I come back to the key question, which is we have – and if you look at the National Health Service and funding the National Health Service, we're putting £10 billion extra into it.

AM: I'm sorry, Prime Minister, we have nurses going to food banks at the moment, that must be wrong.

TM: We have, and there are many complex reasons why people go to food banks. And I want to develop an economy where, yes, we have a strong economy so that we can pay for the public services that people need, but also we have an economy where we're creating secure jobs and well-paid jobs and higher paid jobs for people. But you're only going to do that –

AM: But the problem they have is that they haven't got enough money to eat at the moment.

TM: But you're only going to be able to do this if you have a government that understands the importance of that strength in the economy. If you look at the proposals that the Labour Party are coming forward with, they're nonsensical proposals which simply don't add up. And would actually lead to less money being available for the National Health Service, less money being available for public sector pay and higher taxes on people.

AM: Under the Conservatives, under your government, the record number of food parcels last year has been handed out according to the Trussell Trust. 1.2 million food parcels in this country. You said that on the Number 10 doorstep that you were going to be out there for the ordinary working people, those are people who are really, really suffering. And I've asked you, under your

government if people vote Conservative again is that going to carry on? And the answer seems to be yes.

TM: No, I haven't said that, Andrew. What I have said is that if I'm elected as Prime Minister, if a Conservative government is elected, what we will be doing is working to create a strong economy in this country, an economy which ensures that we're creating secure and higher paid jobs for people. I want people to have security for their future. But to do that we need to get the Brexit negotiations right. To do that we need to ensure we're developing our economy. That's why I've introduced a modern industrial strategy. It's about firms growing and prospering, but it's also about making sure that prosperity and growth is around the whole of the country and not just confined to certain parts of the country.

AM: Let's talk about the whole of the country, and again about working families. There are lots of benefit cuts in the pipeline. If they were introduced now, then three million households in this country would be on average £2,500 worse off. Again, if they vote Conservative that is what is going to happen.

TM: We have made changes to welfare, as a Conservative government, and there's a reason for doing that, which is we want to ensure that of course there is a welfare system that gives people support when they need that support. But I also want to see a welfare system that is helping to encourage and see people getting into the workplace. I think work is the best route out of poverty. And as we do that we need to ensure also that we are being fair to working families, to the taxpayers who are actually paying for those benefits. That's why we have made a number of changes to the benefits system, to ensure that there are more incentives in the benefit system for people to get into work. But yes, if we are talking about working families what is important is ensuring that we have the economy that is developing those higher paid jobs and also that we provide people with the skills to

take those jobs. And that's where what we're doing, for example, for young people on technical skills is so important.

AM: Looking at what's happening in the real economy this sounds very much like continuity of austerity is Theresa May's message. Do you ever pause and wonder whether you've got it wrong?

TM: No. What I want to do is to ensure that we look at the circumstance we're in at the moment, because things have changed and life will be different in the future. We won't be in the European Union any longer. We need to get those Brexit negotiations right. I want a strong hand in those negotiations if I'm Prime Minister. The means –

AM: Let me give you another example then, if I may.

TM: Can I just finish, can I just finish this point? It's about those Brexit negotiations but it's also about enthusiastically embracing the opportunities that Brexit will give us as a country. That's an opportunity to develop our economy, to develop those higher paid jobs and to develop the skills that people need to take those jobs.

AM: Would that include an opportunity to properly fund schools? Because in England primary schools are facing a three billion pound cut by 2020 and lots of parents watching this programme are well aware that parents are having to come in and fill in for classes where there aren't enough teachers to be provided. There are raffle sales for books. Education, in England in particular, is badly under-funded and I ask you again, is there any prospect of change if people vote for Theresa May as Prime Minister?

TM: Let's look at actually what is happening in education. We said that we would protect the core schools budget and we have done that. In fact the level of funding going into schools is at record levels. It's something like £41 billion this year. What we're also looking at – yes, and as the number of pupils increases, the money going into schools increases, but what we're also –

AM: But core funding is falling and it's going to carry on falling till 2010.

TM: We have protected that core schools budget. But what we are also looking at is introducing a greater degree of fairness in the way in which schools are funded. Everybody across the political spectrum has accepted that the current way that we allocate funding to schools is unfair. We want to bring in a much fairer system of funding for schools. We've made some proposals, we've consulted on that, and obviously we'll be responding with our final proposals in due course.

AM: If you don't accept my figures, Prime Minister, here's the National Audit Office: 'mainstream schools have to make £3 billion in efficiency savings – that's cuts – by 2019-20 against a background of growing pupil numbers and a real-term reduction in funding per pupil.' And I say to you again surely you have to rethink what's going on in schools?

TM: What we need to look at in schools is to make sure that we have a fair funding system that is ensuring that the way that money is allocated to schools is fair and is fair across the country.

AM: One of the reasons that the Conservatives have had to oversee so many cuts in so many areas is that under the last government you made an absolute clear, and to many people ridiculous, promise to never raise income tax, VAT or National Insurance. The so-called triple tax lock. Are you going to repeat that?

TM: We have absolutely no plans to increase the level of tax. But I'm also very clear that I don't want to make specific proposals on taxes unless I'm absolutely sure that I can deliver on those. But it would be my intention as a Conservative government and a Conservative Prime Minister, to reduce the taxes on working families. And if you've got strong and stable leadership, that's absolutely what you can do.

AM: You would accept that that tax lock was going too far. Your Chancellor thinks it tied his hands a little bit too tightly.

TM: Look, when people come to look at this decision at the next election on June 8th they will have a choice between a Conservative Party that has always been a low tax party, that actually over the last few years has taken four million people out of paying income tax altogether, and a Labour Party that is about raising taxes, that is about higher taxes for the future. So a Conservative Party that believes in lower taxes and whose intention is to reduce the taxes on working families or a Labour Party that wants to increase tax.

AM: You mentioned social care a moment ago, and you have said that this is a huge issue for the country it can't carry on ducking. It's big, big news for the NHS. Have you come to proposals to help us on social care?

TM: Well, as I've said before, I think if we look at this issue on social care we need to think of it as a – there are short term measures to take and we've taken that, in the budget we put two billion pounds extra into social care. In the medium term we need to make sure that good practise is spread across the whole of the country. If you look at things like delayed discharges from hospital, which is where hospitals interact with local authorities on social care – there are three stages, I said there are three stages to this. There's the short term two billion pounds extra going in, there's the medium term which is about spreading best practise around the country, and long term we need to have a sustainable solution for social care. And yes, we have been working on that sustainable solution, and these issues, an issue like this about the impact of our aging population, is exactly the sort of long term –
AM: Tell us a little bit more about the sustainable solution then.

TM: Well, it's exactly the long, sort of long term issue that I want to address for the future and if you want to know what's in our Manifesto, Andrew, you'll have to wait until the Manifesto is published.

AM: All right. Is the triple lock on pensions still safe?

TM: Under a Conservative government the state pension will still go up every year of the next parliament. Exactly how we calculate that increase will be for the Manifesto, and as I'll just said you'll have to wait for the Manifesto to see what's in it. But what we see already is that because of the actions taken under Conservatives in government on the basic state pension, pensioners are £1,250 a year better off and under a Conservative government the state pension will continue to rise each year.

AM: What about pensioners whose pension funds collapse at the same time as their bosses are heading off to the Mediterranean and to yachts with vast amounts of money in their back pockets? That is going to change is it?

TM: Yes, it is, because I think this is one of the injustices. I think we have seen examples, a limited number but we have seen examples where workers have been really worried about the future of their pensions because of the actions that's been taken. So what we would do is we would bring in new rules and new powers for the pensions regulator so that if in certain circumstances where companies were being taken over there would be new powers for the regulator to make sure that the issue around people's future pensions was being addressed so they had reassurance of the future of their pensions.

AM: And if this was in practice in the future would a future Sir Philip Green be prosecuted and possibly jailed for what he did?

TM: Well we will also be introducing greater powers to take action against individuals if what they were doing was about trying to – effectively trying to destroy people's pensions for the future.

AN: Let's turn to l'éléphant dans la chambre, Brexit. You said in your Lancaster House speech that no deal was better than a bad deal. Do you stand by that?

TM: Yes I do. I think it's important but I also think it's important that we go in there with the strength of hand in negotiations to get the good deal for the British people. That's what I want to do. And that's why I say that every vote for me and my team on June 8th will strengthen my hand in those negotiations.

AM: Because you've now had a private conversation with Mr Juncker and the rest of the team and it doesn't seem to have gone terribly well because Jean-Claude Juncker said apparently to Angela Merkel, after meeting you: "It went very badly. She is in a different galaxy. Based on that meeting no deal is much more likely than finding agreement." Was it that bad a meeting?

TM: No, look, I'm not in a different galaxy but I think what this shows and what some of the other comments we've seen coming from European leaders shows is that there are going to be times when these negotiations are going to be tough. And that's why you need strong and stable leadership in order to conduct those negotiations and get the best deal for Britain. I'm confident we can get a deal. You see the Trade Commissioner, Cecilia Malmstrong has been very clear that she thinks we will get a trade deal.

AM: But we've also seen the 27 standing absolutely shoulder to shoulder on the question of wanting a deal on money before they will even talk to us about trade and other issues and they made that very, very clear this weekend. And the Luxembourg Prime Minister is talking about between 40 and 60 billion pounds worth of deal to be sorted out. Can I put it to you that if you win this election, if you get a big majority, the first thing that you will do is go over there and sign the cheque.

TM: No. What they're very clear about is yes, they do want to start some discussions about money. I'm very clear that at the end of the negotiations we need to be clear not just about the Brexit arrangement, the exit, how we withdraw, but also what our future relationship is going to be. These negotiations are going to be tough.

AM: Are you prepared to agree on the money before you agree on everything else?

TM: I want to ensure that we agree on a trade deal and our withdrawal arrangements so that we know what both of those are when we leave the European Union.

AM: But they're saying you must agree the money first.

TM: No, no. They have – if you look at what is being said in the guidelines they say that they want to start the discussions on a number of issues. There are things that we absolutely agree on should be early in those discussions. The position of EU citizens living here in the UK and the position of UK citizens living in those 27 European countries. Absolutely we agree should be early in the discussions. They also agree, if you look at the guidelines, that we should be discussing the development of a special partnership for the future, so there is much on which we agree on.

AM: I understand all that but it is absolutely critical to this issue and to the election campaign you are saying that you will not agree to pay a large bill to the EU until the entire negotiations are finished. Yes or no?

TM: And the EU itself has also said that nothing is agreed until everything is agreed.

AM: All right, well let's move on to some of the other issues. You mention EU citizens. Now if I was somebody watching this programme and perhaps I was married to a French or German citizen I would be very, very worried about their status and my children's status in the future. Jeremy Corbyn has said that if I become Prime Minister on day one I guarantee their status. Why can't you do the same?

TM: I believe that as the United Kingdom Prime Minister it's important that I have a care for UK citizens who are currently living in the 27 countries, remaining countries of the European Union. That's why I say I think this is about reciprocity; I think it is about us. I want to be able to guarantee EU citizens living here their rights and their status, but I think it's important that we ensure that UK citizens living in Europe have their rights and status guaranteed as well. There is good will there. If you look at my – sorry Andrew I think this is an important point. If you look at my Article 50 letter which triggered, the letter that triggered Article 50, I was very clear that I believe the rights of EU citizens here and UK citizens in Europe should be an early discussion, should be an early agreement for – point of agreement for us and if you look at the guidelines that's exactly what the EU has - the 27 who agreed as well. There's good will there. I believe we can give that reassurance to people at an early stage.

AM: Do you think the richest people in this country, people who perhaps in houses worth more than £5 million are paying their fair share of taxes? Should they be asked to pay more given that we've got a tough time still ahead of us?

TM: If you look at what has happened in terms of tax the top one percent of people paying tax are actually paying a higher burden, a higher share of tax under us, under a Conservative government than they did in any year under a Labour government.

AM: But going ahead?

TM: I think that it is right that we ensure that the tax system is balanced, as I've been clear it would be my intention to reduce taxes on working families. I think you can see –

AM: Including the richest ones?

TM: I think you can see from the fact - well let's look and see what we've done in relation to tax.

AM: Let's not go back into history, we haven't got time for history I'm afraid.

TM: No, well I think our record is important in this tax issue. We've taken the four –

AM: And people can read it.

TM: million people out of paying income tax and 30 million people have seen a tax cut which to a basic rate payer is worth about a thousand pounds a year.

AM: I've just been having a conversation with Tim Farron about his attitude to gay sex. You are also a Christian. Do you think that gay sex is a sin?

TM: No.

AM: And do you think that looking at what happened to Tim Farron, I know he's a rival leader and all of that, that there is an aggressively judgemental mood being imposed on Christians in this country that other groups don't have to face?

TM: I think that obviously if anybody who is a leader of a political party who is putting themselves up for election, who is asking the

public to trust them is bound to get a whole range of questions from a whole range of different groups.

AM: Some people think the reason that you called this election is that 30 Conservative candidates and or Asians are under investigation by the Crown Prosecution Service, could be facing charges quite soon, can I ask if that issue was discussed at all when you were discussing an election?

TM: That is not the reason why this election has been called and let's be clear, in relation to the Electoral Commission issue local spending was properly declared, we did – the Conservative Party did make an administrative error on its national spending. As did other parties. We have paid our fine and I would expect other parties to do so.

AM: If people are facing CPS action should they be able to stand?

TM: Well the CPS is an independent body which will make decisions about whether or not it takes actions on individuals. What I'm very clear about in this election is that this election is about the national interest. It is about the future of our country and that's why I say to people I want to see everybody voting.

AM: And you have raised again and again the question of Jeremy Corbyn. Can I put it to you that when it came to one of the most important votes that we've had in recent times on the Iraq War, whatever you think of Jeremy Corbyn, he was on the right side looking at history and you were on the wrong side. You went into the voting lobbies behind Tony Blair and voted for the Iraq War which had so many disastrous consequences. And he did the unpopular thing and stood out against it. On that at least he was right and you were wrong.

TM: If we look at the choice at this election the choice people will be making is who do they want to see as Prime Minister, who do they want to see leading those Brexit negotiations. Who do they want to see defending this country? What Jeremy Corbyn has shown is that he's not prepared to stand up for the defence of this country, his economic policies simply don't add up.

AM: If you knew then what you know now would you still have voted for the Iraq War?

TM: Well, that's hypothetical Andrew. You can only vote at any point in time on what you know.

AM: Do you regret voting for it?

TM: I voted in the way that I thought was right when that vote came into parliament.

AM: But he was right on that and you were wrong, isn't that the truth?

TM: I voted in the way that I believed was right when the vote came to parliament. If we look ahead there will be tough decisions to be taken. I think it's important that we have in Number 10 a Prime Minister willing to defend this country, to stand up for the defence of this country. Jeremy Corbyn has shown he's not willing to do that with economic policies that will take this country forward.

AM: Prime Minister, thank you very much indeed. We've covered a lot.

Ends