

ANDREW MARR SHOW

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DAVID DAVIS

AM: Mr Davis, if the Chequers plan, and the Prime Minister thinks she can get a deal on the basis of it, if that comes back to the House of Commons as the basis of a deal will you vote for it or against it?

DD: I'll vote against it. It'd be rather odd for me to resign over something and then vote for it when it came back. In my view the Chequers proposal – it's not a deal, we shouldn't call it the Chequers deal, it's the Chequers proposal – is actually almost worse than being in. I mean, we will be under the rule of the European Union with respect to all of our manufactured goods and agri-foods. That's a really serious concession. What about take back control? Doesn't work. That actually leaves us in the position where they dictate our future rules without us having a say at all. So it's a worse deal.

AM: You're going to vote against it. And that's even if there are no further compromises, even if it's as it stands now. If you all vote against it the chances are she won't get it through the House of Commons.

DD: Yeah.

AM: If that's the case can she possibly stay on as Prime Minister?

DD: Oh yes. I mean, I've listened to your press coverage, as it were, this morning, and the newspapers love to focus on the personality and so on. The centre of this – I mean, I don't know what Boris wants to do – the truth about this is.

AM: Yes you do. We all know what Boris wants.

DD: I know what he wants, but I don't know what he's planning to do. The simple truth is that the most important issue – you started out this morning, you said this is the most important issue.

AM: Sure is.

DD: - which will affect us for a generation and more and we should be focusing on the realities of it. Can I just come back on one thing you said. You said, 'if she gets it.' The other argument I made at that Chequers Cabinet was this won't be the last step. You know, they will not accept this.

AM: She said this morning there won't be more compromises.

DD: Well, except in the national interest. I mean, your commentators earlier were exactly right. That is an incredible sort of open sesame door. You know, you not going to turn around, come to the House of Commons and say, 'I agreed this but that wasn't in the national interest,' are you?

AM: I suppose what she would say is the trouble is, David, that your proposal, what you've called on this very chair Canada plus, plus, plus wouldn't work either, because it does not resolve the border problem in Northern Ireland. It would break the Belfast agreement, and there really isn't a way around that.

DD: Well, two things. I mean, firstly it's still possible – Tusk talked about a free trade deal, a long time ago now, I think it was a year ago, but certainly early on in this process. Secondly, I do think – I mean, I'm free to talk more freely now that perhaps when I was a Minister – I do think we've heavily over-emphasised the problem on the Northern Ireland border. The Northern Ireland border is a border already. It's got a VAT border, it's got an excise border. It's got a customs and it's got a security border. And it works perfectly well with careful cooperation between both sides. The

only thing that will be added, if we got a tariff-free agreement, which is what we're after, the only thing that will be added is rules of origin of goods coming into Northern Ireland that might go into the south. We could control that. There are only six ports in Northern Ireland. This is a much more straightforward issue to deal with if we choose to. If we put the political will behind it we and the Irish Republic, the two together.

AM: Coming back to the politics of all of this and the House of Commons, if she brings back a deal that is voted down, we've got yourself and many others, Nick Boles now on the other side, so it looks like the numbers are turning against her. If that happens, you have been a supporter of Brexit for a very long time, you might lose the whole thing, you might lose the prize, because at that point the House of Commons might very well ask for an extension to Article 50 and on we go, month after month, year after year.

DD: It may ask for it, but you've got to assume the other alternatives. You quite rightly pointed out, Nick Boles, a good man, a very, very firm Remainer, wants another alternative. He now accepts this is worse than the existing deal. Her own Chief of Staff, Nick Timothy this week said, 'we don't want Chequers.' It's the wrong thing, it's not good enough. So we've got to turn round with other alternatives. There are a couple of other alternatives. There's the World Trade Organisation deal. We have seen a sum up of disgraceful project fear mark three about that. So that's doable too. But also, as I said, the – we made up the phrase on this programme, Canada plus, plus, plus, but free trade plus is a better way of putting it. That's still available. My own department has been working on a fall back plan for some time.

AM: Do you think it's actually going to work?

DD: Yes, why not? It's based entirely on proposals that – not proposals, actions the European Union has taken before, whether it's Canada or South Korea or Japan or New Zealand or Australia, all of these deals exist already. So it's all precedent-based.

AM: A lot of your critics would say David Davis is always breezy and optimistic, he's always telling us it's going to be fantastic, it's going to be wonderful. I mean, you can't really say now that we'd get the exact same benefits.

DD: Yeah, what I've also said, over and over again, particularly in the House of Commons, is there'll be points of tension in this. I would have preferred to have the points of tension rather earlier, over different issues, that's well known.

AM: You said there were no downsides to Brexit, only considerable upsides.

DD: Well, there will be considerable upsides. You talked about it as a generational thing, it certainly is. You've got Liam Fox coming on later. He's dealing with the upsides, the huge opportunities – I'm not going to tell you where he's been this summer. You should ask him, because it's important. Because actually even if we stayed inside the European Union, even if we stayed inside, by the middle of the next decade two thirds of our business will be the rest of the world, one third with the European Union. That's the way it's going. And what this is about is facilitating that, and I said all along there'll be technical and tactical problems and there'll be pressure points and we'll have to live through the pressures. We have to see the other side off in some respects here.

AM: Were you ever really the Brexit Secretary?

DD: (laugh) Yes, I was always the Brexit Secretary, the question is whether I controlled events, that's another matter.

AM: Another way of putting it is was Ollie Robbins at Number 10 really always interfering or always in charge?

DD: I want to be careful. I mean, Ollie Robbins was also my permanent secretary for a while, and he's a patriotic man, he wants to get the best for Britain. We have different views on what that is. But the issue at the end of the day is what the Prime Minister wants. When I was appointed the Prime Minister, quite properly, said to me, 'I, the Prime Minister will be doing the leading negotiation, you'll be supporting me.' That's the way she put it. And what happened, the reason I left after Chequers, was we got to a point where her view, advised by Ollie but not just by Ollie, advised by many others, was different from mine.

AM: Do you think that Theresa May really believes that Brexit will be a good thing for Britain?

DD: I think so. I mean I –

AM: She can't answer the question apparently.

DD: Well, I think so. I mean, through all of our discussions – I mean, up until the last month or two, through all of our discussions, I mean, there've been points of difference we had, which it's my job to resolve, that's partly what I was there for, find the match, find the compromise. But I was quite clear in my mind that she saw this as an opportunity to be grasped. My disappointment about Chequers is it actually denies us a large part of that opportunity.

AM: Number 10 Central seems to think that Dominic Raab is a better Brexit Secretary. He spent six hours face to face with Mr

Barnier on Friday. In the first half of the year you spent only four hours face to face with him.

DD: Yeah, that's because we've now got a policy to work with. Bear in the mind, the first half of the year we've been battling very hard to decide what the outcome would be.

AM: So what were you doing in all that time?

DD: Having the battles to get the together. But you're right, Dominic Raab is a good Brexit Secretary. He was my choice, as it were – not my choice, it's her choice, but my preferred option for following on for me. He'll be very good as Brexit Secretary, he'll do the best he can on the Chequers deal. But unfortunately, the Chequers deal is not one which is going to be good enough for the UK.

AM: For most of us the summer's a time to do some reading. So I'm going to read you something that I read in the summer. 'If a democracy cannot change its mind it ceases to be democracy. We should not ask people to vote on a blank sheet of paper and tell them to trust us to fill in the details afterwards. Referendums should be held when people know exactly what they're getting.' David Davis some years ago. Are you going to announce your support for the People's Vote?

DD: No, certainly not. Let me tell you why not. I mean, the point about referendums is that they are once in a generation. The other thing you didn't read out of that is that they are a once in a generation thing. You don't do them all the time. Now, we had an argument lasting a year or more over whether we should leave or stay, and the British public came to the judgement – and it's a very smart public, the British public, they can see through people's stories that don't stand up and so on – and they made their decision. Now, if we try to have another referendum, what

would the European Union do? They've already tried to make this a tough negotiation. They would give us the worst outcome possible in order to encourage a referendum vote to stay in. That's why we don't need a referendum now.

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