

ANDREW MARR SHOW, THERESA MAY, 2ND OCT 2016

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THERESA MAY, PRIME MINISTER

AM: Welcome Prime Minister. You are announcing today this Great Repeal Bill. Can you start off by explaining to people exactly what it means?

PM: Yes. I mean when the United Kingdom joined the European Union of course legislation was part of the European Communities Act which enshrined that relationship that we have as a member of the European Union. What we're doing with the Great Repeal Bill, what we will be doing is repealing that European Communities Act. That means that the United Kingdom will be an independent sovereign nation. It'll be making its own laws.

AM: I can't quite work out, I'm scratching my head a little bit, is this a statement of the blindingly obvious? In other words, we know we're leaving the EU, we know at that point EU law ceases to apply to us and this has to be done, but is it such a big deal really?

PN: Well I think it's an important measure that we're taking. It's an important step we're taking because first of all it makes it very clear to the British people who voted for us to leave the EU that is exactly what we will be doing. Secondly, it gives that greater degree of clarity about the sort of timetables that we're following, and crucially, if I may just, Andrew, it's important for us to set this out now so that we have the timing, so that when we leave the European Union there's a smooth transition. I think that's important for us all but particularly important obviously for the economy and for business.

AM: But it seems to me that all of those European laws people have been complaining about for years about bananas and sausages and how we insulate our houses, all of those become British laws.

PM: What will happen is we will take European law into UK law, then we, because we will then be independent and sovereign in relation to this, we will be able to decide on those laws. Parliament will be able to decide whether we wish to change those or what – or keep those laws. And I think it's important to bring that body of law into UK law, because of course it's that for example that protects workers' rights and that's very important.

AM: But a lot of MPs, I can see them looking at this and saying well actually rather than incorporating this thing about bananas, whatever it is, into UK law, I'd like to change it. Are you sure you'll be able to get this Bill through the House of Commons?

PM: This is an important step in ensuring that we leave the European Union. Parliament gave the decision to the British people. Parliament voted 6 to 1 to give the British people the choice as to whether to stay in the EU or leave. The people voted, they want us to leave. This is an important step. And we – in terms of getting this through, we think it's important that we have this in place by the time we leave the European Union, so there's a smooth transition. So workers know that their rights are protected, so businesses know where they stand. Then, as a sovereign nation we'll be able to make our laws and determine whether we want to change them.

AM: It just seems to me in terms of the brutal politics, there are lots of opposition MPs who for their own reason might want to vote this down and there are a lot of Tories on the so called soft Brexit argument who might want to vote it down. You may well

not be able to get this through, and if you can't, isn't that the trigger for another General Election? I know you've been through this, we've been talking about this before.

PM: Well, Andrew, let's just look – as I've just said, when parliament voted for a referendum on staying in the European Union, parliament voted six to one to say to the British people this is your choice. We're going to ask you this question. You give us your voice. The British people have determined that we will leave the European Union and I think anybody who's looking at this Repeal Bill, which will repeal the European Communities Act, will make us that independent sovereign nation once again, able to determine our own laws, anybody looking at that should remember that this is about delivering for the British people. And it's – to me it's not just about leaving the EU, it's about that essential question of the trust that people can have in their politicians. The people have spoken, we will deliver on that.

AM: But again to kind of ventriloquise MPs, some of them may say, but hold on a second, Prime Minister, we have no idea at all what kind of Brexit you're taking us to. We don't know what this journey is going – why should we give you a blank cheque before you set out on it?

PM: Well of course we'll be starting the negotiations once we've triggered Article 50 and going through that process, but I think it's important as we go through that process of negotiation, I want to get the right deal for the British people. I'm optimistic about the opportunities that are available to the UK when we're outside the European Union. We want the right deal for our continuing relationship with countries and with – inside the EU and with the EU itself. But we're not going to give – it's not right to give a running commentary or to set out at every stage what our

negotiating hand is, because you don't get a good deal if that's how you approach it.

AM: I understand that, but you used the word 'negotiations' there. Do we actually need negotiations with the EU?

PM: Well, I think we want to negotiate with them what the relationship will be. Life is going to be different in the future. Once we leave the EU we'll be in a different position. We will be that independent country, but crucially we want still to have a good relationship with countries inside the European Union and with the European Union itself. That's important for our economy, it's important for jobs here in the UK, it's important for us to be able to continue to work with them on issues around dealing with crime and security.

AM: The reason I asked the question is that there are some of your own MPs, Bernard Jenkin and others, we say we actually don't need a negotiation, Article 50 will trap us in an endless, very difficult and presumably sometimes rather humiliating series of talks and actually all we need to do now is say listen, we're not going to put tariffs on your goods coming in, we don't expect you to put tariffs on our goods going to you. Take it or leave it, goodbye!

PM: Well, of course the process of leaving the European Union is quite complex. We've got to look at a whole range of issues in terms of getting –

AM: Must it be is my question really, must it be complex?

PM: Well, there is complexity in our relationship with the European Union at the moment. I think we owe it to people here in the UK in terms of their jobs, in terms of the protection of workers here in

the UK. I think we owe it to businesses, people who want to invest in the United Kingdom for the future to actually ensure that we get the right deal for trading goods and services. And I think that's about sitting down with the European Union. It's about – it's not just about what we want, I think we want a strong EU, it's in our interests to have that strong EU we can continue to trade with. They have an interest in being able to trade with us. That's the way we'll get the right deal for Britain.

AM: Now you say no running commentary and all commentators gasp at that and think how depressing, but actually much more importantly people who are making big investment decisions, most recently Nissan say they can't decide whether or not to invest more money in new factories and products and produce jobs in Britain until they know roughly speaking where you're going. Aren't you in danger by not giving any kind of commentary about which kind of exit you want to actually starving Britain of investment?

PM: Well there's actually a difference between not giving any commentary and giving a running commentary. I mean what I'm doing today –

AM: You can give us some commentary, yes.

PM: Well what I'm doing today is setting out some further detail on the timing and the way we're going to approach this whole question and of course the Great Repeal Bill. That will give people greater clarity. So when I think it's right to be talking about the approach we're taking we of course will do that. But everybody assumes – commentator want to have a sort of day by day what is it you're talking about now? How are you're going to get this and so forth.

AM: We will learn at moments.

PM: That's the wrong way to deal with a negotiation.

AM: Now you used an excellent word just now. You talked about 'timing' which allows me to ask again about the timing of triggering Article 50. Boris Johnson has suggested maybe early next year, kind of January, February. Donald Tusk has suggested he thinks the same thing. Are they right?

PM: Well, as you know, I've been saying that we wouldn't trigger it before the end of this year so that we get some preparation in place, but yes, I mean I will be saying in my speech today that we will trigger before the end of March next year.

AM: So a reasonably brisk trigger and at that point we have two years to conclude these negotiations?

PM: That's what the process within the Treaty says, yes.

AM: So once we trigger, once you say – you send your letter and say right, I am now triggering Article 50, what then happens?

PM: Well, it's for the European Union, the remaining members of the EU have to decide what the process of negotiation is. I hope, and I'll be saying to them, that now that they know what our timing is going to be, it's not an exact date but they know it'll be in the first quarter of next year, that we'll be able to have some preparatory work, so that once the trigger comes we have a smoother process of negotiation. I think this is important. It's not just important for the UK, it's important for Europe as a whole, that we're able to make – do this in the best possible way so we have the least disruption for businesses, you were talking about investors earlier -

AM: Absolutely.

PM: - in your questions and when we leave the EU we have a smooth transition away from the EU.

AM: Can I ask about parliament itself, because all of this is about making parliament sovereign and yet at the moment it suggests that we're going to go through this negotiation and the most important talks probably this country has had for generations, without parliament being told what's going on, surely if parliament is sovereign then parliament at least needs to know stage by stage what is happening.

PM: Well, first of all of course parliament will be involved in this process. The Great Repeal Bill that we've just been talking about parliament will be having its say on that. And on of course at various stages we will be keeping parliament informed. As I've just said, this is not about keeping silent for two years, but it's about making sure that we are able to negotiate, that we don't set out all the cards in our negotiation because as anybody will know who's been involved in these things, if you do that up front or if you give a running commentary you don't get the right deal. And what I'm determined to do is to get the right deal for Britain.

AM: The argument kind of running through the Conservative Party here in Birmingham is about the nature obviously of the exit that we negotiate and I know this soft and hard thing is irritating jargon, but nonetheless there is a truth there. There are some people who say the most important thing is to keep markets open. Keep tariff free markets open. That will require a very detailed negotiation and we might have to concede stuff, even on the free movement of people to allow that to happen. And there are other people who say absolutely no. We turn our back on the EU in effect, we say take it or leave it, and we go out and make our way

in the world and we have an absolute blanket ban on the free movement of people from the rest of the EU. Can you give me any indication in which direction you personally are tending?

PM: Well, first of all when the vote took place on the 23rd of June I think apart from the message of leaving the European Union, I think there was also a clear message from the British people that they wanted us to control movement of people from the EU coming into the UK, so we will deliver on that. But I don't look at it in the sort of terms that you've set out. The way I look at this is that we want to negotiate what we believe will be the right deal for the British people, the right deal for Britain when we leave the EU, that's about a negotiating on things like trade in goods and services and making sure we get that good deal. So I don't look at it as is it a this model or a that model. I say let's actually sit down and say what is going to be right for the UK, let's go out and get it.

AM: But to be clear, let's talk about migration in particular. I can remember having a discussion with you when you were Home Secretary

PM: I think we've had quite a few discussions on migration, Andrew.

AM: I could feel you seething with frustration because I kept saying you can't control the number of people going in and at that point you couldn't. But are you clear that after the vote people want a complete control, so you are able to say as Prime Minister, nobody comes in or actually it benefits us to get 70,000 engineers or whatever it might be in, but the control will be definitely in parliament and there will be an absolute end to the free movement of people in all circumstances across the EU?

PM: What people want is to know that the government is able to decide who can come into - and set the rules for who can come into the country. That's what's important and people's frustration was that we were able to do that for people coming into the UK from outside the European Union, but not for people coming from inside the European Union. Now there's a number of ways in which you can do that and we need to look at what is going to be best for the UK, but the important point is to have rules that are set by the government so it's the UK government who determines and the UK government who is ensuring that we have that control.

AM: And so for people watching who might be involved in universities or parts of the NHS or scientific research establishments or car manufacturing or whatever it is, and they're thinking, I need some more people in, I need to know that I'm going to get the skilled workers I need. Some kind of work permit system might be a way forward.

PM: Well, we will look at the various ways in which we can bring in the control that the British people want and ensuring that, as we have been in our immigration policy generally, that the brightest and best can come to the UK. But you mention the word skills there Andrew, and that of course lights up another issue which is why it is over the years in the UK that we haven't been skilling up people here in the UK to take on these jobs -

AM: Very good question.

PM: - and to ensure you I want to ensure that we have a society where everyone can go as far as their talents can take them.

AM: Just before we get to society, one last question, how important is it to you that British industry and commerce has tariff free access to the single market?

PM: I want the right deal for trades in goods and services and what we're doing at the moment, what David Davis and his department have been doing is listening to businesses here in the UK, listening to different sector, finding out what it is that they find that is most important to them. I've been doing that, I've been sitting down with British businesses, big and small. I've also listened to investors in the UK. When I was in the United States a couple of weeks ago I sat down with some US investors, I sat down with companies, people representing companies from America that are here in the UK, providing jobs in the UK. We're listening to people as to what it is that they think is most important for them.

AM: But to be absolutely clear, this process starts, Article 50 is triggered by the end of March?

PM: By the end of March next year.

AM: Right, let's move on to other areas. You wanted this conference to be a moment where you appeal to the middle. You talk about struggling people who are making ends meet but only just. And I wondered to put flesh on the bones of that, what kind of policies there are behind, if I may say so, the warm words, because all politicians want to win elections in the centre ground. So what more is than warm words?

PM: Well, I think – I mean you talk about the centre ground. I think we're actually as a party building a new centre ground in British politics. What I said in the speech that I gave when I first became Prime Minister on the steps of Number 10 Downing Street is that I want a country that works for everyone. That's an economy that works for everyone, that means an economy where everyone's playing by the same rules, a society that works for

everybody so people can have the opportunity to go where their talents take them. We've already started setting that out in different areas. I've made a key speech on education which is about ensuring that young people are given the opportunity to develop their talents. I want a society – I called it a great meritocracy in that speech, where what matters about your future is how hard you work and your talents. Not about where you come from, not about who your parents were, what your accent is.

AM: I understand all of that. You raised grammar schools just now as one of your big policy areas. What do you say to people watching who say what we don't want to do is to go back to 1955 and a stark sheep and goats separation of children at the age of 11. Wonderful for those people who are chosen, it could be very damaging and indeed devastating for those people who failed those exams and we must not go back to that. That's a way of dividing society. What do you say to them about your new proposals?

PM: What I say is this. We're not going back to that system of binary education. We're not going back to the 1950s.

AM: So what's going to be different?

PM: Well what is going to be different is this. First of all over the last six years we had great success in improving the quality of schools. The process of the policies of Academies and free schools have had an impact out there. 1.4 million more children are now in schools that are good or outstanding. But there are still one a quarter million children who are in schools that are underperforming. So we need to increase the number of good school places, we need to increase the capacity of the system and that's what my speech was about. So we'll be building on the

academies and free schools that policies – and bringing those forward and continuing those, but crucially what I'm doing is saying we want universities to take more of an interest in schools, we want the independent sector to give more support to state schools, we're changing the rules on faith schools that we'll see more faith schools, secondary schools being set up. But I also want to remove the ban. At the moment we have in our system a piece of legislation that says you cannot set up a selective school. Now we all know in practice what happens out there is the selection by house prices.

AM: Absolutely.

PM: Or by wealth. I want to ensure that that good quality education is available across the board.

AM: But once you have academic selection and children being chosen whether they're bright enough to go into this school, again I come back to this really brutal thing that happened at 11. You are on one side or the other. You were a failure or you were a success and a lot of people say we can't go back to that and I want to push you on what your new system will do that's different from the 1950s grammar school system.

PM: First of all there won't be a completely binary system across the board. There will be different types of schools providing education. What I've always said throughout my political career and I've been involved on and off in education throughout my political career, what I've always said is we want the education that is right for every child. So I think for those – the point about what we'll be doing is yes, removing the ban on selection, we'll be saying to grammar schools, you know, and people who want to set up a new selective school, actually if you're doing that we will want you to show that you are genuinely reaching out across

society in giving those opportunities to young people, and also that you're ensuring –

AM: Sorry, does that mean targets for people who are on free school meals for instance, poorer kids coming into that schools, quotas, does it mean helping to set up new feeder schools?

PM: Well it could mean a variety of things, Andrew. That's the point. We're consulting at the moment as the best approach in this, but it will be about ensuring that when selective schools are expanding or being set up, that they are reaching out, that they are ensuring the quality of education throughout the system and it's also one of the other things in the consultation is about how we identify those children who – you know free school meals has been something that's been always been used as a measure in education. Way back when I was chairing an education committee more than a quarter of a century ago, we were talking about other measures and trying to find other measures, so we're looking at how we identify those people, perhaps not captured by that but who are struggling.

AM: And is this a huge new policy for the whole of England, cos it's an English policy? Are we going to see a grammar school in every small town in England, or is this just in a few places?

PM: This is about letting actually the system develop in a way so it's government taking off the ban on a particular type of school, not saying we want one of this here and a one of that there. It's actually letting the system, and people will come forward. And as I said earlier, the speech I made, the announcement we've made, everybody's focused on selective education. Actually it's about more than that. It's about ensuring –

AM: So it could be really big this?

PM: it's about ensuring we have good school places for every child.

AM: Everywhere?

PM: It's about the capacity of the system across the board.

AM: Let's move on to one other which may seem quite small. We used to have an Honour system in this country which meant that people who had given back something extra to society, they'd given a lot of money to charity or more importantly a lot of time, got an Honour eventually. It was for people who had really put in something above and beyond and we seem to have drifted into an honour system which rewards people who are already rich and successful and very often famous and on telly and all the rest of it. Or they've got friends in government. And a lot of people wonder whether it's really a fair system. Would you like to see the honour system returned to a much more basic system which rewarded people who had done something extra for society and not those who are simply famous and rich?

PM: Well of course if you look at any of the Honours when they're announced the vast majority of people are people who have given something perhaps to their local community, who've been involved in charities, who've been working in a particular area and contributed a lot over the years. Of course the focus is always on the big names and the - and the headlines in that sense. But I agree, that we want an honours system that actually ensures we can recognise when people out there are really contributing to our society and to their communities.

AM: A people's honour system, rather than a posh people's honour system it could be said, which takes me onto the question of you

yourself, because as I said at the beginning, lots of people don't really know who you are. Can I ask you about your early upbringing? Were you relatively stringent kind of family, an austerity kind of family or were you comfortably off. How would you describe your early years?

PN: Well, first of all very happy and very stable and I think what was important was that my parents always gave me the message, whatever you do in life try to do your best and that's what I've sort of followed throughout my life.

AM; Were they Conservatives, I mean did you talk about politics around the kitchen table?

PM: Well we didn't – we talked a bit about – I was brought up as an only child with a great interest in current affairs. I think that's how I would portray it. My father was a clergyman as you know. He took a very simple view. He was the clergyman for the whole of his parish. He was the local vicar and it wasn't right for him to set out what his politics were because he should be appealing and working with everybody in his parish. So there was a limit to what – when I got an interest in politics I was limited as to what I was able to do publicly, precisely because he wanted to ensure that nobody felt that he was somebody they couldn't approach, because of his politics.

AM: He was obviously very important to you. You lost him and your mother very early on. How did that affect you do you think as a politician and person?

PM: Well, it was – I did lose both my parents very early on and quickly one after the other. I hope that what I've continued to do throughout my political career is to do what they wanted me to do, which is as I said is always to try to do the best in whatever

job I do and to give back. I think there was – what I learnt from them was a very strong belief in public service and in always trying to understand what you need to do for other people. It's not just about what you yourself think. Actually it's getting out there, it's hearing from people, it's listening to their voice. And then delivering for them.

AM: Like Margaret Thatcher you had a father who was a religious leader. Like Margaret Thatcher I think you'd describe yourself as a believing Christian and you came from a family that wasn't very rich as it were. Is the Conservative Party better off when it's led by somebody from that kind of background? I'm thinking of Ted Heath, John Major, yourself and Margaret Thatcher. You call come from similar sorts of background.

PM: The Conservative Party has had great leaders from all sorts of backgrounds. I think what David Cameron did for the Conservative Party over the last six years is really important. He took us into government and took us into our first majority government for nearly a quarter, of a century. And changed the party while he was doing that. I think that was a very important contribution. Others – each leader will approach their leadership of the party in their own way. But the party as a whole is strongest when it is a party that works for everyone. The party as a whole is strongest when it is reaching into every part of the country and when it's reaching into every part of society.

AM; This sounds to me quite like what George Osborne said about representing the liberal mainstream. Why did you sack George Osborne?

PM: Well, George has contributed hugely to British politics over the last few years, both in government and of course in opposition

alongside David Cameron, but also alongside previous leaders as well.

AM: And you sacked him.

PM: And I was putting together my team. I have a great team of Cabinet ministers. We have great discussions around the Cabinet table as we're putting our policies together as we're taking forward that vision we share of a country that works for everyone not just the privileged few.

AM: Can I ask about your style of government cos a lot of people say actually what you're doing is you're returning the country to a much more traditional style of government, old fashioned, Cabinet government where the conversations take place around the Cabinet table or in Cabinet committee, away from the sort of sofa style of government in the past. This is going back to traditional parliamentary style of government we haven't seen for a long time in this country. Is that an accurate characterisation of what you're doing?

PM: Well, we're certainly looking to more Cabinet discussion. I've set up three new Cabinet sub committees, so Secretaries of State are coming together in different groupings, perhaps more frequently than they have done in the past to at different issues. I've also said that we'll be a government that will operate more with Green Papers and White Papers. So there's an opportunity for people to have that involvement as policy is developing. So we're hearing people's voices as we develop policy.

AM: Do you think there was too much - sitting on the sofa now, but too much sofa government, too much groups of chums sitting around and not enough formal process?

PM: I think that I've decided to have the processes that we have in terms of Green Papers, White Papers, these Cabinet committees. I think that's the way I think it's important to take government forward. But over the last few years we have achieved an awful lot as a Conservative government.

AM: One very final quick question, everybody wants to know the answer to this. Is your husband Philip going to be on the platform once you've made your speech? I don't know why they want to know, but everyone wants to know this.

PM: You'll have to wait and see Andrew.

ENDS