

MARR SHOW, LEN McCLUSKEY

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AM: Now you are still in the position where, despite everything, you think Jeremy Corbyn should stay until the next election and fight as Labour leader?

LM: Yes, I do, and to be honest Andrew, it's unhelpful for ex leaders to be wheeled out. Neil is you know a nice man but the reality is he was leader of the Labour Party for 8 years and lost two elections. Ed Miliband, leader of the Labour Party for five years and lost an election. Gordon Brown, 13 years at the top of our party, including Prime Minister lost an election. It's not right that they are part –

AM: On that basis you'd be wheeling out Tony Blair.

LM: It's not – no I won't wheel Tony Blair out but the reality is that grandees being dragged out to be part of this unedifying queue is quite outrageous. I mean the reality is that this has been a political lynching of a decent man. Undermined, humiliated, attacked in order to push him out. And here's the truth. It's failed, the coup has failed. Jeremy Corbyn is made of stronger stuff. He's a man of steel and he's made it clear that he will not step down.

AM: The people doing this are not, as it were the usual suspects. The Blairite MPs, they're people like Lisa Nandy and Angela Eagle who are MPs on the left of the party. He has lost the left of the party as well.

LM: I'll be honest, I'm amazed that some of the MPs have fallen into a trap. I think they've been seduced by sinister forces in play here.

MARR SHOW, LEN McCLUSKEY

AM: What sinister forces?

LM: Well, if the BBC want to do an investigatory programme of a company called Portland, then feel free to do so. This is a PR company with strong links to Tony Blair, right wing Labour MPs who've been –

AM: Well we can't be associated with words like sinister.

LM: - critically involved in this orchestrated coup. And the coup has failed. And I'm astonished that people have left their posts, they've abandoned their positions at the very time that we need to be scrutinising this Conservative government after Brexit. We need to know about our members jobs, we need to know about our employment rights and Labour MPs should be there fighting for us.

AM: But your own union, as Neil Kinnock was saying, your own union seems to be turning against Jeremy Corbyn.

LM: No, that's not true.

AM: There's been a poll which suggests 79% - I know a poll is a poll.

LM: A poll of half a dozen people. The reality is –

AM: Why don't you poll them and then find out? Because Neil Kinnock's – I'm sorry to interrupt, but Neil Kinnock's quite serious point is that a lot of your members are desperate for a Labour government. They have to have a Labour government they feel for their living standards and their employment and so forth and that is best served by a different leader. Shouldn't you be leading.

MARR SHOW, LEN McCLUSKEY

LM: That's why nine months ago my union overwhelmingly supported Jeremy Corbyn. We're talking about 9 months in.

AM: Not a long time.

LM: And the reality is – it isn't a long time and of course the truth of the matter, if you examine the real polls, we've had four by elections that Labour have won and increased their majorities, in three of them quite considerably. We won the London Mayoral election. The Bristol, even the local elections in May where people were expecting Jeremy to do badly, Labour did better than the Conservatives, and that was the high watermark of Ed Miliband.

AM: So that is, as it were, the extra parliamentary case for keeping Jeremy Corbyn as leader, but inside parliament you now have complete chaos. The same person is having to be Northern Ireland secretary, Scottish secretary and he's an English MP! It's total chaos and it can't carry on, can it?

LM: It cannot carry on and let just make this point. I hope it's an important point. The trade unions have always been the rock, the anchor, that has kept the Labour ship steady in stormy seas and what I'm saying is that because this coup has now failed the trade unions can broke a peace with Jeremy as our leader and the genuine concerns of the PLP, we can bring people together. And I'm calling upon Angela Eagle and Owen Smith and anybody else to desist from challenging –

AM: What kind of deal could you offer them?

LM: Oh, there's all kinds. We're professional negotiators, trust me. The General Secretaries that could step in –

MARR SHOW, LEN McCLUSKEY

AM: So you'd bring in a different shadow Cabinet?

LM: We would bring both parties together and resolve this issue.

AM: ... I guess.

LM: The alternative, if Angela goes ahead with this and I hope she doesn't or Owen is that we're plunged into a civil war that will be bitter and ugly and may never allow the Labour Party to reunite again. Why would people want to do that? Give us a chance, give the trade unions who've always been the solid block within our party, bring people together and we will resolve the issues.

AM: You've said that if Jeremy Corbyn isn't on the ballot and there is a ballot the Labour Party could split. Do you really believe that?

LM: He will be on the ballot. The legal opinions are pretty clear.

AM: Well you've just heard Neil Kinnock reading out the party law, the party rule book.

LM: Absolutely, and the party – and he talked about candidates not sitting candidates. Look the legal opinion is crystal clear.

AM: So Jeremy Corbyn will be

LM: without a shadow of a doubt.

AM: So you think there should now be an honest, open leadership contest?

LM: I don't. I don't. I'm suggesting that Angela and Owen should desist from this. That they should allow the trade union general secretaries to broker a peace. That is the way forward so that we

MARR SHOW, LEN McCLUSKEY

can reunite. They need to come back on the frontline and we need to challenge this government.

AM: And so when you say that these people are dupes of a PR company but with sinister forces behind them, do you think that they're stupid? Do you think they haven't actually watched Jeremy Corbyn and made their own minds up about him?

LM: I think, as you know Andrew, there's been rumours of coups going on since Jeremy was elected quite disgracefully for a core group of MPs. But I do believe that people have been seduced into this belief that now is the time. For what purpose? Because of the European referendum? Let me just give you some figures. 81% of Labour members voted to remain. 65% of Labour voters voted to remain. 68% of Liberal voters voted to remain. I don't hear anybody attacking Tim Farron.

AM: Some people will be watching this and saying really what Len McCluskey think is that Jeremy Corbyn can take the ship onto the rocks and let it sink, rather than changing course while there's still time.

LM: That's not true. Look at the results that we've had since Jeremy has been leader. None of them have indicated that a falling away of Labour support.

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