ANDREW MARR SHOW, 3RD JULY 2016

ANDREA LEADSOM

AM: Can I just read to you something that you said to the Hansard Society, not that long ago, 2013. You said: ‘I’m going to nail my colours to the mast here. I don’t think the UK should leave the EU. I think it would be a disaster for our economy and it would lead to a decade of economic and political uncertainty at a time when the tectonic plates of global success are moving.’ Why was that Andrea Leadsom so wrong?

AL: Well, you know it has been a journey. Now when I came into parliament, like most people in the country I’d grown up as part of the EU and it’s absolutely part of our sort of DNA and I came into parliament, set up something called the Fresh Start Project which took hundreds and hundreds of hours of evidence about how the EU impacts on the UK on everything from immigration to fisheries, to budgets and so on. And during that process I travelled all across Europe with lots of parliamentary colleagues - up to a hundred of Conservative colleagues supporting this work - to try and get a really decent fundamental reform of the EU. Now in that very same lecture which you’re obviously not quoting today –

AM: We have listened to it all.

AL: I was very clear that the UK’s current situation was totally untenable and that the only way we could remain a part of the EU was if we had fundamental reform. The status quo was not an option. And I made very clear in the rest of that speech that what the sort of reforms that we needed should be –

AM: Absolutely you did.

AL: And of course when the Prime Minister came back with his reform, with his renegotiation, with the certainty of a referendum
behind it, sort of lent power to his elbow, it was very clear that the EU is just not reformable. So that speech was April 2013 and things have so moved on.

AM: The reason that we have listened very carefully to the whole speech and we do understand all the reform side, is that nonetheless your fundamental point was – despite all of that stuff as it were - coming out of the EU would be such a big shock we shouldn’t do it. That has not changed has it?

AL: Well no, I think it absolutely has. I think that the risk of remaining in the EU massively magnified since – around that time actually - as did the determination of the EU institutions to go further, faster. You know they have sacrificed a generation of southern European young people to up to 50% youth unemployment to poverty; you know Greece has lost 25% of her economy; we’ve got this massive migration crisis. So things fundamentally changed, but also, at the same time, the UK’s economy has been recovering. You know I think the Chancellor did a fantastic job –

AM: So it has changed entirely?

AL: Yes it has been, yes it has.

AM: And you completely disagree with George Osborne who says we’re going to be a poorer country as a result, clearly?

AL: Well I do, yes. I disagree, yes.

AM: He said it this week and you wouldn’t have him. If you became leader you wouldn’t have him in your government, is that correct?
AL: You know, I’m kind of not even slightly at that stage, but what I genuinely believe is that the next person to lead this country has to be somebody who believes in the opportunity of leaving the EU. Who genuinely believes our place in the world could be so much better if we leave the EU.

AM: So why should it be Andrea Leadsom? You’ve had a lot of experience in banking, and so forth, before you came to politics, but you’re relatively inexperienced at top flight politics. You haven’t been in the Cabinet. Rather than somebody like Michael Gove who’s been a senior Cabinet Minister, who’s been there for a long time, or indeed Liam Fox who was in the Cabinet for a long time. Why you and not them?

AL: Well you know, I absolutely believe that people who have real world experience – I mean I’ve been in financial services for 25 years before coming into parliament, running enormous teams, small teams, running start-up businesses, being part of a huge bank. I’ve also set up and run charities, I have a huge passion for the early years, for the real social justice agenda, and I genuinely believe leadership qualities need people who profoundly believe in things and that’s -

AM: In a sense what you’re saying is it’s time for some outsiders. The politicians have screwed things up so badly it’s time to bring in people from the outside.

AL: I’m not saying that at all, Andrew.

AM: I’m Bill Rookie?

AL: No, I’m absolutely not saying that. I think I genuinely want to do some things for our country to make it the greatest country on earth and I believe I have the experience of the real world, as well as a good amount of experience. In government I was City
Minister for a year, I’ve been Energy minister for a year. I have actually a good deal of understanding about politics and I don’t think that should hold me back.

AM: We don’t know much about your programme. I think you’re launching that tomorrow. But you have said that you would trigger Article 50 to begin the negotiation to leave as soon as is humanly possible. Is that because you fear like many people watching, that Brexit somehow won’t happen, there will be an establishment stitch up to stop it?

AL: No, I don’t think there would be an establishment stitch up but what I believe is that we need to get on with it. We need to seize the opportunity. It’s not just about leaving the EU, but it’s about giving certainty to businesses, it’s about saying to the world we’re open for business, let’s get some free trade agreements started as soon as we can. It’s about saying to young people we’re sorting out the issues around competition from EU migrants for your jobs, you know businesses need to up skill British workers, so we just need to get on with it. We need to get a grip and make progress.

AM: Because the other side of the argument is that once the clock starts ticking you have limited time to get the deal and therefore you’re in a weaker position and that is why Michael Gove for instance has said, there’s no hurry behind this, let’s give it some time. But you want the clock to start ticking in September this year? Doesn’t that weaken your negotiating position?

AL: No, I genuinely don’t think it. I mean I probably know more about the EU than most people in government right now, apart from some people who’ve spent their whole careers looking at it for whom I have immense regard, but very seriously, I genuinely believe on trade with the EU – we currently trade tariff free, we’ve had 43 years aligning our goods and services to theirs. There are
very strong reasons, both financial and for reasons of links, that we will continue to trade tariff free.

AM: All right. Now you have had a huge amount of support for your campaign already piling in. My twitter feed is crammed with it. But they’re almost all UKIP people, Aaron Banks wants to fund your campaign. Are you content, are you satisfied to be as it were the candidate where the Conservative Party and UKIP touch fingers?

AL: I mean I don’t recognise what you’re saying.

AM: Well the support is come pouring in from UKIP people too.

AL: Well I don’t know how you can say that they’re UKIP people. I think I’ve been overwhelmed by –

AM: Aaron Banks certainly is if we wants to back you.

AL: Aaron Banks is one person, that’s true and I’ve been absolutely overwhelmed by support from people who are saying you know I’m traditionally a Labour voter but if you got elected I’d vote for you, so how do you know that’s a Labour supporter. So I don’t think it’s fair to say that I’m just being supported by UKIP. I think the undertone of your accusation is that somehow –

AM: It’s not an accusation, it’s a friendly question. No, it’s a friendly question. I just want to know where you are politically.

AL: Okay. In answer to your friendly question then, Andrew, I’m delighted by the wide range of support and actually very particularly from young people who say it’s not true to say only older people wanted to leave, we want to leave, we see our future in the world.
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AM: One question, very clearly. Would you have Nigel Farage on your negotiating team? As a lot of people would like to see. He is the great victor of this in many respects. He should be there. He shouldn’t be pushed out by the Westminster establishment.

AL: I don’t want to get into who would do what.

AM: That sounds like a no.

AL: What we need is somebody to lead the campaign who really believes in the opportunities.

AM: Now a lot of people would say actually in this period of uncertainty it’s a very, very difficult world, you could end this now, you could all stand aside and let Theresa May be the next Prime Minister. We would have a new government in very short order, we could get on with everything. Business would be much reassured by that. Why not? What’s so important by getting Andrea Leadsom onto the ticket that it’s worth putting the country through weeks and week and weeks of uncertainty and turmoil?

AL: So, I wouldn’t frame it in the way that you have. I think Theresa is a superb candidate, no question about that, but genuinely I believe the country needs to be lead by somebody who believes fervently and understands the opportunities of leaving the EU. We just had a referendum, people voted to leave. We need to understand that and deal with it.

AM: But she understands. She said: ‘Brexit is Brexit, I get it.’

AL: But yes, but somebody who says okay, I’ve been to leave so I’ll leave with no enthusiasm, is very different to somebody who absolutely sees the ‘sunlit uplands’ of leaving the EU. The prospects for our children, our grandchildren, our business of being open to the world. And secondly, really importantly in this debate
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I just don’t think it would be right to have a coronation, I think people need to have a choice of candidates.

AM: Final question. David Cameron changed the political landscape when he published his own tax returns, will you do the same?

AL: I’m. I’m – oh would I – Yes, I mean I’m perfectly happy to publish my tax.

AM: Soon?

AL: I would not want to make MPs have to do that. I don’t believe that people should have to disclose everything in life.

AM: But now you’re a candidate for the top office, would you publish it before the vote?

AL: I’ll have to think about that – but in principle I have no problem with it, but as I say, I don’t want to set a precedent, I think MPs are under far too much –

AM: Couldn’t you just say yes? I mean after all.

AL: Yes, okay, Yes. All right.

Ends