SIAN BERRY

ANDREW MARR SHOW
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AM: Welcome, Sian Berry. Vince Cable, the Liberal Democrat, has been very clear, with 900 extra councillors and so forth that they are the big winners. They are now the main anti-Brexit party. What do you say to him?
SB: Well, proportionately our wins were bigger than theirs. We tripled the number of councillors we have on the cohort that was elected. We've doubled our number of councillors and overall. That's a bigger rise by an order of magnitude than we've ever, ever seen in our local council representation. We've broke through onto 56 new councils, and places all around the country. Right up in the northeast, right down in Kent, places that voted Leave were voting in Green councillors. And that's really significant. It's taken all of you by surprise, but it's not a mystery to us, it's to do with hard work locally right round the country.

AM: At the same time magnitude does matter. And they've got 700, not 900, extra councillors. You've got just around 200 extra councillors. For people looking ahead to the European elections they might think if I'm going to register an anti-Brexit vote the Lib Dems are the obvious way to do it now.
SB: Well, they need to look at who's already got MEPs represented in the European Parliament. We've got three across three different regions of the UK. The Lib Dems have one in one region. We're the strongest pro-EU vote you can cast in the European elections. And in the European, I just saying we won these council seats by working hard locally right around the country. It should have been a tough election for us. This is our 2015 cohort, where we were on the back of a very big surge, our best ever local – our best ever general election, and we won there by working hard locally, talking to people about the problems that led to Brexit. Those are the things that we've worked on. But for
the Europeans people do want to vote on the big issues. And we’ve been the strongest voice for a people’s vote since the very beginning. And also you can cast a very strong message about climate change and a different society by voting for us.

AM: I’ll come onto those as well, but one of the really big issues I suppose is one Nigel Farage on the front page of the Sunday Telegraph there. That side of the argument seems to be more organised. We have lots of different, as it were, pro-remain voices in these elections. Is there any chance at all of an alliance or an agreement between the various pro-remain parties to boost your voice?

SB: Now, you know, Andrew, it was too late to form any kind of new party, and you have to stand – if you’re going to stand it has to be a registered party. So it was too late to do that by the time people started to talk about it. So we are standing under our own banners. And then there are lots of parties, because these are established parties by and large. We’ve got people who have representation in the European Parliament. People should be looking to those to see where to cast their vote.

AM: Can I ask you whether you actually blocked an agreement with Plaid Cymru, who are going to be on later on, on Brexit? Because Patrick McGuinness, who’s one of their candidates in Wales said: ‘we’d hoped for a formal cross-party Remain alliance. We’ve been in conversations with the Green Party to that effect. Sadly, the Greens didn’t allow that idea to go ahead. We were disappointed that they felt unable to take that idea forward with us.’ Is that basically true?

SB: I don’t know actually. Wales Green Party have a separate decision making council, and I don’t know if there were informal talks or anything like that. Certainly we’ve had no formal approaches from, say, the Lib Dems or any other party to make an alliance. And I say it’s not necessary, we have in the European elections a form of proportional representation, different parties
can win seats. They don’t all have to gang to together like under first past the post at all. People can just cast a vote for who they support. And I say, you know, support the parties that already have MEPs, who have a track record in the European parliament. Like the Greens, where we’ve worked so hard, in a very strong group in Europe with people who share our values. Don’t vote for one of these new parties that have suddenly sprung up out of nowhere. You don’t know how they’re going to work in Europe. And you don’t even know how they’ve selected their candidates, quite honestly.

AM: We were talking about the climate extinction protests earlier on, and that must have been part of the reason for your success, I’m sure about that. But you’ve said you want to end all carbon emissions by 2030 net. Now, the main government body on this, with all the experts, has looked at this and said it’s simply not possible.

SB: I think it is. Many, many things are possible with the right ambition. And that is what is scientifically necessary. We cannot risk going over that 1.5 degree warming threshold which could kick off runaway global warming. That’s what’s terrifying all the young people who are going out on the streets, who are very, very concerned about their future. There’s a whole movement now of people for whom climate change is something that’s going to affect them in their lifetime. It’s going to have a huge impact on their lives and they are calling on the people in power now to take the action to preserve their future. We have to listen.

AM: Let’s come back to what actually needs to be done to achieve this. Because John Gummer, who is himself an environmentalist chairman of a committee of Conservatives, says, ‘very simply,’ – looking at your timetable – ‘the facts are you can’t do it.’ And he’s talking about things like getting rid of all the gas boilers in houses up and down the country in time. Everybody getting rid of petrol and diesel cars and getting electric cars. Planting huge numbers
of acres of forest, and getting rid of most of the carbon emissions from British industry. These are huge, huge things to do in you give us a very, very short amount of time to do that.

SB: Well, we're giving ourselves ten years to get down to that kind of level. And it is possible. Look at what we did when the Clean Air Act was passed in the 1950's, after thousands of people died of smog.

AM: That was one act of legislation.

SB: But we had to change the way people were burning coal to other things in people's homes. That was done extremely quickly because people were up for the challenge. There was political will behind it. There was investment and funding behind it. And the thing with even a lot of the climate change –

AM: That was on piece of legislation. And this is whole range, this is much more complicated and much more wide-ranging, and also of course involves all of us changing our behaviour. Not just government changing, but you know, you saw the Emma Thompson story in the Mail On Sunday. There's somebody who was at the protests and who feels that she has to fly for work. And there are lots of people watching who want to fly for their holidays and so on.

SB: Yeah, absolutely. I mean, frequent fliers need to fly an awful lot less. Most flights are taken by a very small number of people who fly an awful lot. But we don't mean no flying at all ever either. I mean, people need to be able to go on holiday now and again, but it's just not going every ten weeks and all of that kind of thing. But it is just – we can do this, if we all pull together we can change the world. This is the lesson that we have to learn from the young people. You know, one person can make a difference. One government making the right ambition can inspire other governments around the world. And we are after all the country most responsible for historic climate emissions. We have to make it up today.

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