ANDREW MARR SHOW, 5TH MAY 2019 – ADAM PRICE

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ADAM PRICE, AM
LEADER PLAID CYMRU

AM: There were no local elections in Wales, but Plaid Cymru with four Westminster MPs and one MEP has big ambitions and the new Plaid Leader Adam Price is with me now.

AM: Let’s start with a paradox which you are determined to try to prevent Brexit happening as a party and yet Wales voted for Brexit and you call yourselves ‘the party of Wales.’ Explain.

AP: Well, I suppose what you’re asking is why –

AM: You’re going against all –

AP: Yeah, why after the referendum didn’t we change our policy. And there’s a simple answer to that you know. I think that what we need actually are political parties that actually stick to their principles. I mean that’s part of I think what we’re seeing at the moment, you know. People feeling that actually politics has lost the sense of conviction right and people are actually saying what they think they want voters to hear rather than saying what they believe in. People ask me an honest question, is the Brexit that’s on offer going to damage Wales, damage the people of Wales, then I have to say yes. And you know, in 1979 we had a referendum where the people of Wales voted 8 to 1 against devolution. Did we change our mind, you know? A party that was founded in order to support something. No, no what we did actually was we tried to change people’s minds. We waited 18 years for the second referendum that we won. If we’d had that referendum a little bit earlier maybe we could have avoided the damage that was done to our economy in the 1980s. I don’t want to see a generation in Wales actually having to face economic
devastation as a result of this Brexit, so my job is to persuade people. That’s why we go into politics.

AM: But this is a change of tone from the party. Your predecessor Leanne Wood said at the time: ‘The referendum result was not narrow enough to be overturned or called into question.’ You’re trying to do both.

AP: Well look, I think the context has changed, hasn’t it? The nature of political debate has changed, as I think people –

AM: People’s views haven’t necessarily changed. You look at the big rallies for the Brexit Party in Wales at the moment, you still seem to be on the different side of Welsh opinion to the majority.

AP: I don’t think that’s true. Ultimately the only way to test it is to have a people’s vote, isn’t it? I mean that’s the reality. I think actually a lot of people now when they’re looking at the reality, not of the fantasy Brexit that was promised three years ago but the reality of what’s on the table. I mean even Brexiteers of course admit that this wasn’t what they voted for. Yes, opinion is polarised but in that situation the only way to resolve that in a democracy is to take it back to the people.

AM: We very nearly got some kind of resolution in the House of Commons last month on this with a customs union vote, Ken Clarke’s motion, and the four Plaid MPs could have taken that over the line, but they sat on their hands and abstained, even though in the past Plaid’s policy has been for a customs union. Can you explain that?

AP: No, no. Our policy you know we tried actually to avoid the most damaging Brexit so we supported the idea of having a single market and a customs union but again –
AM: Last summer.

AP: - you have to have both because actually in terms of our economy having the single market is absolutely essential. But there’s a key issue here, isn’t it? Even that should be put back to the people and that’s the problem I think that particularly the Labour Party is facing because on their side a lot of their supporters are deeply angry at the vacillation and the ambiguity of their leadership, you know. This is the problem in politics at the moment because the two most unpopular leaders of the main parties ever in history and I just mean amongst their own members by the way.

AM: Let’s stay on another analogous European issue. You’ve just been to Madrid to meet the leaders of the Catalan Movement in prison. Why?

AP: Because I think it’s a stain on democracy in Europe at the moment. That here we have 9 political prisoners. I met Raoul who was a member of the Catalan government as well as Oriol Junqueras, both elected to the Upper and Lower House in the Spanish parliament. They may be released in order to take up their seats and then they’ll be taken back to prison. And as an internationalist – and particularly as a small nation, we want to express our solidarity with them. We did it in the 1930s when the Esguerra last won an election and we should do it now as well.

AM: I can remember in the time of Dafydd Thomas and Dafydd Wigley and so forth, some debate as to whether Plaid was even a nationalist party at all. You are slightly more of a nationalist red in tooth and claw than they were, aren’t you?

AP: Well you know I don’t see any distinction actually. I want to see –
AM: But you want independence, don’t you?

AP: Absolutely because you know I come from a Labour family Andrew, I saw in the 1980s the devastation in our communities and I came to the conclusion that the only way out of the rut that we found ourselves of generations of poverty is actually for us to take power into our own hands as a country. Otherwise we’ll still be at the bottom of the economic league table for ever.

AM: You’ve said, ‘the tide is turning, the marches are growing, the voices are growing louder, Welsh independence is closer than you think.’ You don’t really have any evidence for that. There’s been a big poll in Wales recently; can you recall what percentage of people actually voted in favour of independence in that poll?

AP: Well, the Sky poll just before Christmas actually had the support of 20%. In fact the opinion polls –

AM: The big BBC poll of a thousand people in Wales you were at 7%.

AP: Well that depends on the question, Andrew.

AM: Are you in favour of independence? 7% said yes.

AP: If you give people a range of options then you’ll get a range of different answers. If you ask a simple question on independence what you see is support is rising. I’ll give you one example. David Buttress, the Chair of the Dragons, one of our regional rugby teams, our most successful entrepreneur at the moment came out last week in favour of independence. He said look, I’m proudly Welsh, I’m also proudly British but I’ve come to the conclusion that the only way that we can build a successful future for the Welsh economy is through independence. A lot of people are on that journey at the moment.
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AM: It’s going to happen one day or another. Adam Price for the moment, thank you very much indeed.

AP: It’s inevitable.

Ends