ANDREW MARR SHOW, DAWN BUTLER, MP

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DAWN BUTLER, MP
SHADOW SECRETARY FOR WOMAN AND EQUALITIES

AM: I’m joined now by Dawn Butler, Labour’s Shadow Secretary for Women and Equalities. Dawn Butler, do you accept the Labour Party faces just as serious allegations and problems as the Conservatives do?

DB: I accept that it’s an issue that needs to be tackled seriously and that we need to address it in parliament. But also everywhere else. It’s not just unique to Westminster, but we have to address it and the Labour Party has to take it seriously and I think the Labour Party has proved to be taking it seriously.

AM: Well that’s the question really for the Labour Party because Kelvin Hopkins was the subject of some very, very serious allegations by a young Labour Party worker. Can I ask you first of all at what point the leadership knew about these allegations?

DB: Okay. So I don’t want to discuss individual cases because I think that’s inappropriate, especially if there’s an investigation taking place. But as with anything, and if I can just talk generally as a general case, if somebody’s being promoted say into the Shadow Cabinet it’s in order for the Whip to say whether there’s an outstanding issue against somebody or an issue that’s been resolved. If there was an issue and the issue’s been resolved, then that’s the end of the matter. If there’s an issue and it’s ongoing that’s something very different. And it’s important that the processes are right. That’s what’s important. It’s important that they’re clear. It’s important that they’re transparent and it’s important that if somebody has an issue that they feel that that issue will be taken seriously and that they’re treated sensitively throughout the process.
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AM: With respect, this is only words unless some kind of action is taken. Dame Rosie Winterton, your then Chief Whip was absolutely clear that she was horrified by the appointment of Kelvin Hopkins into the Shadow Cabinet. She rang the Leader’s office and told them what the allegations were and she said it’s not too late to change this appointment but the appointment was maintained. And that has caused a lot of hurt and upset to ordinary Labour Party members.

DB: So, Andrew I don’t know what Rosie Winterton has said –

AM: Well she said it in public. She’s been public about that.

DB: - in that regard. But my understanding is that when the Chief Whip was informed of an issue against a member it was dealt with and it was dealt with by both sides were happy with the outcome. Now that’s the case. The process is that if there is an issue and that issue’s dealt with and both sides are happy then that’s the end of the matter.

AM: Do you know whether or not Jeremy Corbyn was told?

DB: As I said, I don’t want to talk about individual cases, but what I want to talk about –

AM: Well let’s talk an individual Leader of the Labour Party. Did he know?

DB: - what I want to talk about is the process. So if the Leader of the Labour Party was told that there was an issue against a member and that issue has now been resolved to the agreement of both sides, then it’s not something – what we don’t have in parliament, if you were to say - Andrew one second. If you would say to me is there is an issue of sanctions that’s a different issue.
So if somebody’s been given a verbal abolishishment and then there’s a sanction to say you cannot be promoted for six months or 12 months, that’s a different issue. We haven’t got that in parliament and maybe the meeting tomorrow with the Prime Minister we can talk about sanctions and whether if there’s a case against an MP that they’re suspended in the first instance or there’s an investigation and then they’re suspended, and that needs to be due process and it needs to be transparent and clear.

AM: We want due process and transparency, but in the end this is the same old business. It was swept under the carpet at the time. You said the woman concerned was perfectly happy in which case why has she been over all the media talking about this experience? She was deeply, deeply upset and angered and humiliated by what happened. The Labour Party kept it private –

DB: So Andrew, that’s not what I said. I said if the Chief Whip says to the Leader of the Labour Party there was an issue and a case and that case was resolved and both sides were happy then that’s perfectly reasonable for then the Leader to do whatever the Leader wants to do. If it’s an outstanding case and both sides are not happy then that’s something different. So we have to ensure that – I want to make sure –

AM: But she wasn’t happy. That’s the problem.

DB: - well maybe somebody was misinformed, but this is why I want to say to you that we have to get the processes right and correct and transparent and that’s why, Andrew there’s an investigation. So what we need to do, rather than try and guess what’s been said, we need to have the investigation and at the end of the investigation you can call me back on the show as the end of the investigation and I can talk –

AM: With respect on this we barely need an investigation
DB: - factually about what’s happened or not happened.

AM: The woman concerned has said exactly what she says happened all over the media for days and days and days. Now we know what the Chief Whip said because she has said that publicly for days and days and days. You can’t simply say that this is something we’ll have to investigate in due course.

DB: It has to be investigated because if the Chief Whip has been told something and now being told additional information, or if the Chief Whip has said something that she didn’t say at the time that has to be investigated too, exactly what was said at what time and therefore an investigation needs to take place.

AM: Let’s turn to another issue if I may.

DB: But because of the new information that’s why Kelvin has now been suspended, but as I said it’s important to talk about policy and process rather than getting into individual cases.

AM: Like Kelvin. Let me ask you about one other individual however. Bex Bailey who is the subject of an appalling attack. Can you, on behalf of the Labour Party apologise to her for what happened?

DB: Absolutely. I think that Bex Bailey has gone through a traumatic experience and what has happened to her and the fact that she felt that she was unable to get anyone to listen to her is a grave –

AM: And again at the time she was told not to pursue this by the Labour Party.
DB: So this is why, Andrew, there needs to be a thorough investigation and that is why Jeremy Corbyn has called for a very renowned established QC to investigate this matter urgently and to have a response urgently. Of course I’m really sorry what happened to Bex but – and Bex has been extraordinarily brave, but we need a process where you don’t have to be brave for justice to be done. You don’t have to be brave to come forward. We should have a policy in place in Westminster where women don’t have to be brave. It just has to be dealt with.

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