Andrew Marr: Can I make a parallel. I’ve been around for a long time. This feels a little bit like John Major’s government after the Back to Basics speech when day after day after day there was yet another story, and another, and another and it was drip, drip, drip, and it shredded and exhausted that government. And the same thing is happening to you. Can I put it to you this is not tittle-tattle, this is politically serious.

Amber Rudd: I do think this is very serious. Where I think it’s different is this is about cross-party change. This isn’t just my party, it’s the Labour Party, it’s the whole of Westminster. What we’re seeing is a wholesale change taking place. What we’ve seen is the abuse of power, in particular, and the widespread cultural change that needs to take place as we recognise that. And we will be recognising that, we are going to be making changes, and it has to stop.

Andrew Marr: It certainly does. And there’s been a really big focus this morning in particular on the role of the Whips’ Office. You’ll have heard Anna Soubry saying they must have known much more and they must now come to the Prime Minister and tell them everything they know and she must demand that. And so I suppose must you as Home Secretary. Is that happening, is that going to happen?

Amber Rudd: Well, the Prime Minister has set out what she’s going to do, which is going to work tomorrow across party with the party leaders to make sure a system is put in place. Andrew, I have to tell you –
Andrew Marr: I’m focusing on your party. I’m focused on Labour earlier on, I’m focusing on your party and the role of Conservative whips in all of this.

Amber Rudd: Okay. Well, I’m just as concerned, as Home Secretary for all women in parliament. I’m happy to answer your question on the Conservative Party as well. I was a whip myself and I don’t recognise some of those more lurid stories that are told about the sort of things whips new and did.

Andrew Marr: The black book.

Amber Rudd: I just don’t recognise it. I just tell is as it is. I was a whip for a year and our aim was to make sure that we got government business through. So the sort of things we try and do is accommodate people’s lives so that they were there to vote, that sort of thing. I really don’t recognise the other stuff.

Andrew Marr: I understand. It’s a sort of black and white picture and it’s more extreme that it is in reality. But nonetheless there was always a black book, or at least a black spreadsheet of misdemeanours and so forth. It always happened in the past.

Amber Rudd: Well, so you say. I spent a year in there and there wasn’t one. And I think parliament has already changed a lot. You know, we no longer have those midnight sittings. You know, it has changed to become more family friendly. It’s got to do more.

Andrew Marr: Absolutely. Well, let me read to you what Tim Fortescue, who was a Tory whip said – it was a TV programme looking at the role of the Whips Office, and he said anyone who was in any trouble would come to the whips. They’d say, ‘I’m in a jam, can you help?’ This is an absolutely direct quote: ‘it might be debt, it might be a scandal involving small boys and we would do everything we can to help because we would score brownie
points. If we could get a chap out of trouble, then he’ll do as we ask for evermore.’ And that is precisely the problem.

Amber Rudd: And that is absolutely disgraceful. It is shocking. And I wonder when that was. Because that isn’t –

Andrew Marr: That was back in the 1970s.

Amber Rudd: Andrew, that isn’t the parliament I know, that isn’t the Whips Office where I worked, that is in the past. I’m not saying that there’s not a lot of change to take place, there is. I want us to work in a workplace where men and women respect each other, where there is no abuse of authority, those are the changes that we need to make.

Andrew Marr: Now, you say it’s in the past, but let me ready you what Katy Perrior, who’s very, very recently part of the government and working with the Prime Minister – she worked in Downing Street just a few months ago – she says, ‘this information is held by the whips, because they use it to make sure that MPs know that other people within the party know exactly what they’ve been up to and that behaviour is either not acceptable or it will be used against them. You vote in a certain way or we will tell your wife exactly what you’ve been up to.’ And the problem is the information is being held for partisan reasons to get urgent legislation through rather than being passed to the proper authorities, including the police.

Amber Rudd: Okay. I just don’t agree with you. As I say, I spent a year in the Whips Office under George Young, who was the Chief Whip then, and there was no black book, there was no sort of that sort of influence going on. It was much more about trying to get government business through. That’s the Whips Office. But having said that, I recognise there is a really important change that needs to take place in Westminster. It’s not just Westminster,
it’s other workplaces as well. We just heard Michelle Pfeiffer saying what was going on in that industry. This is an international cross-business change that needs to take place to support particularly young women in work.

**Andrew Marr:** But to be absolutely clear, and you saying that the whips didn’t know anything at all, for instance, about Sir Michael Fallon in the past? Because there are suggestions in the papers they did know things in the past.

**Amber Rudd:** Well, there’s a lot of suggestions in the paper. I can’t guess at who might have known what rumour or what truth. I’m just saying what I knew and how I operated as a whip within the Whips Office when I was there.

**Andrew Marr:** Can we at least say that whatever they do know they must now take to the Prime Minister. It must be absolutely on the table between you and the Prime Minister and the whips so that all the information is out there before it turns up in the newspapers?

**Amber Rudd:** Absolutely. I think that there should be total candour about these sort of, if they’re rumours or allegations we need to bring them out, find out what’s going on, and deal with them in a transparent way so they don’t happen again.

**Andrew Marr:** So I mean, the obvious question is this has been driven all the way through by newspaper story after newspaper story, splash after splash after dirty splash. Are there more splashes to come?

**Amber Rudd:** I don’t know. Some of these have surprised me. You must also, I think, make the distinction between some very serious allegations and some which is tittle-tattle. So I think we have to be careful about the distinctions here.
Andrew Marr: So let’s look at the Damian Green tittle-tattle, if you like this morning in the papers today. Here we have a former very senior policeman alleging something about effectively the Deputy Prime Minister. Is this a proper way for the police to behave?

Amber Rudd: I think that is a very reasonable question. I think that – I know that the Cabinet Office is going to be looking at this tomorrow along with the wider inquiry about Damian. And I do think that we shouldn’t rush to allege anything until that inquiry has taken place.

Andrew Marr: What about the way that he has treated the woman, Kate Maltby, who makes allegations against him? The lawyers have been called in. It seems a very, very heavy and slightly scary response. If you’re another young woman who feels that they have been mistreated, that kind of thing will put you off telling anybody.

Amber Rudd: Well, I do think that men and women who have been subject to any sort of abuse of power should have the confidence to come forward. But I also think that people who are – think that they have been wrongly accused should absolutely be able to come out and say this is not true. And Damian has made some very strong statements on that side.

Andrew Marr: He certainly has. Just let’s talk about the politics of all of this because he’s an absolutely crucial figure in Theresa May’s Cabinet now. She’s lost Michael Fallon already. Are you quite close now to a complete collapse? I mean, if he goes, then that seems to a lot of us as if the whole centre of the government has just imploded.
Amber Rudd: Absolutely not. I think it is something that will take place in terms of clearing out Westminster of that sort of behaviour, and I think that Westminster afterwards, including the government, will be better for it. When we are confident that men and women can work in a respectful environment and people who have been on the receiving end of abuse of power can come forward, that will be a positive thing. I would also like to say that the government is committed to delivering on its agenda. Now, I know that there’s a lot of interest in this and it’s right that there is and it’s right we change it. But we are doing other things too, Andrew.

Andrew Marr: You mentioned the word ‘other things’ and ‘agenda’ which leads me to say you’ve got an announcement today about child pornography in particular. This is about the treatment of much younger women than the ones we’re talking about earlier on.

Amber Rudd: Yes, this is exactly the sort of thing that other departments are getting on with. I’m going to Washington this week to make sure that we step up our fight against child sexual exploitation. We’ve seen a real growth of child sexual exploitation internationally and we’re going to make sure that we work with the Americans to take action against it. There’s much more that the internet companies can do. They already go quite a lot, but the growth has been exponential and we need to make sure that they put their technological know-how into addressing it. And particularly with working with smaller platforms where children go to game online, the meet each other. There are paedophiles working there, we need to make sure the internet companies work with us in partnership to change this.

Andrew Marr: Alright, let me return, if you don’t mind, to Westminster politics. Can you understand why there is so much
anger directed against Mr Williamson who’s taken over as Defence Secretary, was Chief Whip?

**Amber Rudd:** Mr Williamson is going to be Defence Secretary. He’s the Prime Minister’s choice and I’m sure he’ll do a very good job.

**Andrew Marr:** Alright. ‘Gavin Williamson is a real slime ball with his own leadership team in place. Theresa May has gone mad. It’s a real end of day stuff,’ says the Huffington Post quoting somebody else. Somebody else says, ‘she’s so weak she’s let Williamson appoint himself. This is appalling.’ And somebody else says, ‘it’s straight from the Caligula school of party management.’ This is a bit like House of Cards, the original version.

**Amber Rudd:** Well, he’s certainly aroused a lot of comment, that’s for sure. I’m sure he will go forward and be a great Defence Secretary and we will all give him the opportunity to do that.

**Andrew Marr:** But the idea of the Chief Whip suddenly appearing in a very key position in the Cabinet is straight out of House of Cards isn’t it?

**Amber Rudd:** Well, listen Andrew, the Prime Minister can appoint her own Cabinet, she’s made her choice.

**Andrew Marr:** You’re supposed to say, ‘you can say that, Andrew, I couldn’t possibly comment.’ That’s what you’re supposed to say.

**Amber Rudd:** I’m sorry, I didn’t fall into that one particularly. But Gavin’s already been in Cabinet, I know he’ll be a great Defence Secretary, part of the team.
**Andrew Marr:** Can I ask you about one other case, because there was another Minister, Mr Garnier, who has been investigated under the Ministerial Code of Conduct, but the allegations against him go seven years before he was a Minister. As regards people watching, is the Ministerial Code of Conduct endlessly retrospective, the way Amber Rudd, or anybody else behaved then they were 18, is that now covered by the Ministerial Code of Conduct? That seems bonkers.

**Amber Rudd:** I think the point is that all these allegations will be properly investigated. That’s the important thing. So that there is no place for these allegations to hide, so that everybody can feel confident that when they come forward, and they should if they have something to say, it is properly and fairly dealt with. That’s the Westminster I want to work in.

**Andrew Marr:** Do you think we’re going to see another Sunday like this?

**Amber Rudd:** I certainly hope not. I certainly hope that what we’ll see is more evidence of what the government is doing to deliver on its agenda. In my case, making the online world safer, in Jeremy Hunt’s place making the NHS better, all these things that really matter to this government. I hope we can see more of that.

(ends)