

ANDREW MARR SHOW, BORIS JOHNSON, 6TH MARCH, 2016

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AM: Boris Johnson now joins me to talk about Brexit, or Britain leaving the EU. Good morning to you. Now when the prime minister was in your chair two weeks ago, he made an appeal to you, you may have noticed it fell rather on deaf ears, but at the beginning of that interview I said to him look, let's give you a chance to make your case straight forwardly. So I'm going to do the same to you. Before we get going on the detail, tell us why you have decided now we should be better off outside the EU.

BJ: Well, I think we've got a once in a lifetime opportunity which will not come again to strike a new series of relationships, free trade deals with the growth economies around the world whilst maintaining, as Wolfgang Schauble just said, our free trade advantages with the European Union. And the reason I've come to this conclusion is that I think staying in the European Union, as it evolves towards an ever more centralised federalist structure in the effort to preserve the Euro, is the risky option and the best thing for us now, 'cause we're a great country, a proud economy, a proud democracy, is to take back control over our borders, over the huge sums of money that we send to the European Union and to take back large amounts of control over our democracy. And that is really what clinched it for me. And I'll tell you, I'll describe if you want my – the journey that led me to this conclusion.

AM: We will come to that but part of the journey, cos I want to clear up exactly what you think and want to happen now, because relatively recently you were arguing that we could have a referendum. We could vote to leave, they would be so panicked and shocked we would then get a much better deal and we could then stay in.

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BJ: I have to say I think that that is you know, it is certainly true that if you vote to leave all your options are good, and you could certainly strike a great free trade deal as Wolfgang Schauble has just said, with the European Union. What I don't think you can do is hope – if you remain, if you stay in the EU for any real reform. And what we were told, if you remember Andrew, what we were told was that – in actual fact the stated government policy was that we should have a reformed EU, a fundamentally reformed, wholesale change in Britain's relationship with the EU was promised. That has obviously not been delivered. We were told at the time that Britain would be perfectly safe to walk away by the government, by the prime minister. That has now – that rhetoric has now very much been changed – and I think that was right. I think by the way the policy was right then. We should be absolutely confident about the future of this country and at the moment – go on.

AM: Sorry those people watching need to be clear, your view is that you could vote no, we could leave the EU and then there could be a second referendum, we could come back in again on better terms?

BJ: No. I don't think that's necessary. As I've said I think that what you could do

AM: What else would happen? If we voted no, that would be it, surely.

B: Yes, Yes I don't know why you

AM: the British people would have spoken, we'd be out of the EU. I just want to make that absolutely clear. So there could not be a second vote?

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BJ: Yes, folks. Since you asked me to explain what you do is you vote to leave and you then have the opportunity to strike a series of free trade deals around the world, which are currently forbidden.

AM: Okay, fine. I want – to come onto free trade

BJ: Can I just explain why that's so important.

AM: All right.

BJ: Europe is not the growth area of the world at the moment. If you look at the relative performance of the Eurozone economies and the rest of the world it is tragic. Now ask yourself, who is in a better position to negotiate free trade deals with the rest of the world? The UK, looking after the interests of business, British business and British industry, or the European Commission who currently have sole responsibility for negotiating those agreements

AM: And i'll come onto that shortly.

BJ: and of whom only 3.6% of the officials are British. Now we don't even

AM: Now I am currently asking myself how I'm going to persuade Boris Johnson to give me slightly shorter answers, we've got an awful lot to get through if you don't mind.

BJ: Come on.

AM: So let's move onto – let's assume, for the sake of argument we vote to leave the EU, we vote for Brexit. The thing that happens immediately after that, according to the prime minister, is that Article 50 is triggered and we begin negotiations immediately about leaving. You shook your head. Why?

BJ: Look. What you do is you – as soon as you vote leave the EU treaties remain in force for at least two years, they're grandfathered on and you have plenty of time in which to negotiate new free trade arrangements. Now I have to say I think one of the feeblest arguments from the remainers is that we're so emaciated in our diplomatic and commercial abilities today that we could not negotiate free trade arrangements ourselves and that we have to entrust it so these brilliant officials in the European Commission.

AM: Fair point, but

BJ: I think that is wholly absurd. And I can just give –

AM: there will be 66 different new trade deals we would have to negotiate and that's everything from shoes to marmalade, it's a very complicated business.

BJ: Do you know what this is like? This is like – this is like a - the jailer has accidentally left the door of the jail open and people can see the sunlit land beyond –

AM: But they're frightened of it.

BJ: and everybody's suddenly wrangling about the terrors of the world outside. Actually it will be wonderful. And it would be a huge weight lifted from British business and I think it's very – by the way can I say it's very sad that someone like –

AM: There's a sunlit uplands out there.

BJ: someone like John Longworth, who shares my view, who has great experience of British business and industry, should have paid

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quite a heavy price it seems from what's happened today for sharing that optimistic view.

AM: You said the agents of project fear had got him out by bullying. Who did you mean?

BJ: Well look,

AM: Who did you mean?

BJ: It's certainly the case, as far as I can tell that he was

AM: Did you mean the prime minister?

BJ: No, he was - he's been asked to step down for expressing what I think is a passionate optimistic view of this country's chances. Let me - perhaps for the benefit -

AM: But from an organisation trying to stay neutral.

BJ: perhaps for the benefit - can you imagine the CBI doing the same to any of its leading figures. Sir Mike Rake for instance if he passionately argued for staying in? Can you - can you imagine that?

AM: You don't think necessarily that No 10 bullied this or manipulated it, you're not saying that?

BJ: No. No no, I think - well younger, fitter journalists than ourselves Andrew can discover what happened

AM: They can and there are many of those, but let's turn back to the sunlit uplands you were describing, because before you get to the sunlit uplands there would be a period of dislocation, uncertainty and job loss. You yourself have used the very clear

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metaphor of the Nike tick and we all understand these days the Nike tick goes up in a swoosh but it goes down first. There would be a period people would lose their jobs.

BJ: It might. Well, it might or it might not and actually there are plenty of people who now think that the cost of getting out would be virtually nil and the cost of staying in would be very high. Now let me – can I explain

AM: Your own adviser, Jerry Lyons, said there would be an economic shock, economic shocks produce downturn dislocations that there would be a big problem.

BJ: No, Gerard Lyon says very clearly that Britain would be better off outside an unreformed EU.

AM: 'Leaving the EU would be an economic shock. Most, if not all economic shocks depress economic activity.'

BJ: Tell me what he says about leaving an unreformed EU?

AM: 'Thus economic forecasters focus on saying a couple of years ahead would tend to show that leaving the EU is always worse than the alternative.' Now, after that

BJ: No, that's not true.

AM: Well that's what he said. That's exactly what he said.

BJ: No, it's not true. His report says very clearly

AN: These are his own words.

BJ: the best future, the best future is to get out of an unreformed EU and that's what we've got.

AM: But he says that there would be two years of uncertainty.

BJ: Can I just explain for the benefit of our viewers who remain faithful viewers remain listening to this conversation, why I think – what I think the problem with the EU is – and it boils down to democracy.

AM: You've done that. I gave you the chance to do that.

BJ: No, no no, let me explain

AM: one last time, then we move onto –

BJ: It really has become I think injurious to government in this country. For instance, even as Mayor of London I have encountered the delay caused by the EU.

AM: Give me an example.

BJ: Crossrail. The Crossrail tunnels. The EU decided, or the department – such is the Stockholm syndrome capture of officials in this country that they decided to interpret the directive of interoperability of trans European networks in such a way as in terms that Crossrail tunnels had to be 50% bigger in order to accommodate German trains. In the vanishing unlikely eventuality of German trains needing to go down a Crossrail tunnel. Now that would have cost billions. We had to spend literally a year trying to fend off that demand. Second, it was absolutely horrific to be told that there was nothing I could do as Mayor, there was nothing the Secretary of State for Transport could do to ensure that we had safer tipper trucks on the streets of London to stop cyclists, vulnerable road users being crushed, particularly –

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AM; The EU agreed with your argument in 2015 and has put forward legislation to allow safer tipper trucks.

BJ: It's blocked and it – it's blocked and there's no chance of getting it through until '21 or 2022 because currently it is opposed –

AM: I thought there'd been an EU commission decision about this.

BJ: It's opposed by both – the Commission may be favour but it's opposed by both the French and the Swedes because they have truck businesses that don't want to see it. Now that – what's happened there –

AM: I've looked into this. It was unanimously supported and it's coming in. This is project fear.

BJ: No, in 2011 and 2012 we decided to give up type approval for vehicles to the European Union. So we can no longer control what type of trucks we have on the streets of London. And that for me is a really important issue of political control and accountability and people feel it very strongly. The third area

AM: Let's move from tipper trucks just for a second – no I'm – we do move on to move, got a lot to cover.

BJ: Well I'm going to tell you what I'm doing to cover.

AM: No, I get to ask – it's not the Boris Johnson Show, it's the Andrew Marr Show. I get to ask the questions.

BJ: All right, you have sovereignty.

AM: Thank you. I have complete sovereignty over this programme

BJ: Unlike the UK.

AM; the single market – I won't go down that. The single market you were always a great supporter of the single market, you talked a lot about its advantages. Do you accept that if we leave the EU we must leave the single market?

BJ: I think what - look, the single market people will think what do you mean by the single market? The single market is a huge territory now that comprises the member states of the European Union. Would we be able to trade freely with that territory? I think yes we would.

AM: But would we actually leave it as an institution? In other words, if I'm making marmalade and I'm trying to sell my marmalade to Italy and the Italians say do you know what, Andrew Marr, your marmalade has too many pips in it per jar, we're not going to accept it and that is a pure attempt to stop my marmalade coming in, then there are rules so - you'd lose all of that?

BJ: No, no you wouldn't, no you wouldn't because the sing – you'd still be able to sell your marmalade to Italy. If you had – if you had marmalade that was in some way poisonous and obviously then it wouldn't.

AM: It wouldn't be poison, it would be good marmalade but they're trying to keep it out and if I'm outside the single market, I'm outside the rules that stop other people discriminating against me.

BJ: There are plenty of countries that export more per capita to the European Union than we do. Switzerland for instance is not in the European Union, they manage to get round this problem. One of the interesting features -

AM: Let's make this simple,

BJ: One of the interesting features, no let me make a simple

AM: Are you in favour of leaving the European Market or not?

BJ: Let me make it simple for you. One of the interesting features of the last 30, 40 years is actually American exports to the European Union, US, have increased faster than ours have. Now they're not members of the single market. Let me explain what the single market is. The single market is basically a single judicial system whereby more and more power is taken away from individual member states.

AM: But you've always said you wanted to campaign for it.

BJ: - individual member states and given to EU institutions. And

AM: and Boris Johnson has said I want to campaign for the single market.

BJ: I want to campaign for free

AM: ...for the single market. You've always said it was a good thing.

BJ: No, no. For free trade with the European Union and that is – that is what we need and what we will get. And let me explain why the single market is evolving in a direction I think is completely...

AM: 'I would like to be able to campaign for the single market.'
Boris Johnson on this programme.

BJ: the single market means that – depends how you define your terms. I'm talking about the great zone – the great free trade

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zone that is the European Union. I want us to be able to trade freely with that zone. But I don't want us to be subject to more and more top down legislation and regulation.

AM: So your proposal is that we would make a new deal with the rest of the EU?

BJ: Can I just explain what the problem is with the single market, because it's a legal problem. When you vote in this referendum the status quo isn't on the ballot paper. You can't vote just to remain in the single market, because the single market is changing and the project now is to rescue the Euro by creating an ever denser series of political arrangements based around

AM: the Eurozone, but we're not in the Eurozone.

BJ: It is clear from the five Presidents report which came out last year that they want to harmonise company law, they want to harmonise property rights, they want to harmonise social law. In all sorts of ways that will impact the entire European Union, including the UK. And it's obvious that – I'm afraid that the – the reforms...

AM: You have changed your view, you used to be in favour of the single market – I've got all the quotes there – you used to be in favour of it and now you're saying we should get out of it.

BJ: No, I think you're – well, you're equivocating on the term single market.

AM: I'm not.

BJ: You are. The single market, what I mean by the single market –

AM: It's not a complicated term.

BJ: Yes it is. Because what people don't understand is the single market involves a – a top-down system of a single judicial –

AM: An area in which there is real complete free trade. Wolfgang Schauble said a few moments ago –

BJ: No, no, it's not free trade – I'm sorry –

AM: You can't – can't be inside it.

BJ: This is BBC claptrap.

AM: No, it's not BBC claptrap.

BJ: It is not complete free trade, it is – it is trade that is governed by a series of rules that are created by a single – by a single legal authority. And –

AM: To prevent protectionism.

BJ: And protectionism has massively decreased in the last 30 years, tariffs are well down and we should be able to trade freely with that area. That's what I want. And so – so what I object to – what I object is the loss – I object to the loss of control. This is an opportunity, a once in a lifetime opportunity for the British people to take back control. And there is no...(talking over each other)...let me explain the single market to the...

AM: You've already explained it three or four times Boris Johnson.

BJ: Well, let me explain the difference between – between what we've got in Europe and other arrangements –

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AM: Just tell me, are we going to be in it or not in it, and if we're not going to be in it are we going to negotiate a similar kind of deal.

BJ: Okay. We're going to have our own British arrangements which will be – give us access to the rest of the European unit, the European Union.

AM: Without paying anything in, without free movement?

BJ: Well, again, get back to – if you look at free movement, it's very interesting how that has changed over the years. When I went to live on the continent you had to go to the local Hotel de Ville, the local town hall and present your papers and show what employment you proposed to do. And you had to register and all that kind of thing. Since Maastricht there has been a – since the last – since that treaty there's been the treaty of Lisbon, there's been a change in concept. What we now have is European citizenship. And the idea is that we've created a kind of – we've created a single country. That's what we're being told. Now, I think-

AM: And we want to be out of that.

BJ: I think a lot of people at the moment, I think most people in this country, don't believe that they share nationhood, that they are part of a single country called Europe. And it seems entirely reasonable to me, entirely reasonable to me that you could have visa-free travel, for instance, as we have with the United States, but still require people to show that they have gainful employment or – and to prevent people simply from claiming benefits. And there is – there is – there is an ideology –

AM: You're Mayor of London, you're Mayor of London, and you are responsible among other things for the City. Have you ever had

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conversations with leading bankers who say if we leave the EU we will move our headquarters to the continent?

BJ: No. No.

AM: No.

BJ: Absolutely not. And on the contrary –

AM: Well, that's what Goldman Sachs are saying. They have 6,000 employees here and they say, because of the passport system, if we leave they have no choice but to move to continental headquarters.

BJ: First –

AM: And bank after bank after bank are saying the same thing.

BJ: First of all I don't believe that to be true at all. I think that – we've heard – I've heard – we've had the same sorts of threats time and time again. Actually London has such a massive concentration of skills and talent here in this city that I don't believe – if you talk to serious bankers they don't think that –

AM: Well, two serious bankers for you.

BJ: They don't think – they don't think that –

AM: Michael Sherwood and Richard Gnodde, Co-CEO's in Europe said for Goldman Sachs, 'banks won't disappear from London overnight –

BJ: They're completely right.

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AM: - but they will over time if Britain votes No. It would begin with a decline in investment and hiring as London suffers relative to cities such as Frankfurt and Paris. This is their business, making that...

BJ: These, by the way, are the people who engineered the biggest financial disaster of the last century. So. But you know, what I would say is that they are also the same people who said that if we didn't join the euro then there would all sorts of economic disasters. They never happened. And you'll remember Peter Mandelson –

AM: So it's all – it's all –

BJ: - the CBI, the banks –

AM: It's all baloney.

BJ: - they were all saying – they were all saying that we had to join the euro or the British economy would be overwhelmed. We would be isolated.

AM: To be fair to people on the other side too –

BJ: They were wrong then, and they are wrong now. And there are people on the other side now. There are people on the other side now –

AM: On both sides.

BJ: There are people on both sides. There are people who think, as John Longworth thinks, as I think, that actually there's a great and glorious future for this country.

AM: Let's talk about immigration.

BJ: And what we're – what we're being asked, what we're being asked is to basically to take a very pessimistic view of Britain and of our chances. We're a huge economy, we could do well –

AM: You could say it's pessimistic to think we couldn't stay inside the EU and make it better.

BJ: Well, I think the evidence, proof of that is the recent reform process. We were promised fundamental reform. We were told we were going to get wholesale changes. Anybody looking at the agreement that we have before us now will be in no doubt that this is not fundamental reform. They are going – (talking together)

AM: ...his Bloomberg speech...

BJ: The next item on the agenda, the next item on the agenda. The next item on the agenda is the creation, the turning, the further evolution of the single market, what was a common market, into this superstate.

AM: You think we can't change it.

BJ: Into which we would inevitably – inevitably be dragged.

AM: Can I ask you about negotiations?

BJ: And that is not the right way forward.

AM: You knew what the prime minister was going for from the time of the Bloomberg speech. He has been remarkably candid and frank about what he was trying to do. So you knew at that point that it wasn't the fundamental reform you wanted, and you kept quiet, he briefed you again and again, you had conversations,

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you were agonised, you were going through this whole process. He brought you – he rolled out the red carpet –

BJ: Let me, let me tell –

AM: And then when you finally decided you didn't even speak to him face to face. You gave him a text message. Can you understand why he's livid with you?

BJ: I wasn't – I don't know if he is. I wasn't actually at the Cabinet meeting where the deal was revealed and discussed, because I'm not in the Cabinet. But what is certainly the case is that in the days leading up to that summit, and indeed during while the summit was going on, there was a huge effort going on, which I was actually involved in, to try to make sense of the so-called sovereignty clauses. And a huge intellectual effort went into creating this language by which we could somehow ensure that the – our courts, our supreme court, our House of Commons, could overturn judgements of the European Court of Justice if we felt, if Britain felt that they were in some way capricious of it they were going beyond the ...

AM: Exceeding their powers.

BJ: Exceeding their powers. Exactly. And so finally we had some language that seemed to have some bite and seemed to work. And I was very pleased with it, went back to the –

AM: So at that moment might you have stayed in?

BJ: We went back to the government lawyers and the government lawyers said – just blew up. And they, you know, they said this basically voids our obligations under the 1972 European Communities Act, it doesn't work, we can't – and that is, I'm afraid, the reality. That cannot – cannot express -

AM: That was the moment when you decided you had to go this way?

BJ: It cannot express the sovereignty of parliament and accept the 1972 European Communities Act. There's no way of doing both at the same time.

AM: So this – this was the moment – this was the moment when you decided which way you were going to go, was it? Basically when you saw that that sort of matter couldn't be resolved.

BJ: We were told that there was going to be –

AM: It's a specific question.

BJ: - fundamental – yes, I mean, the answer is specifically yes. We were told that there was going to be fundamental reform. We didn't achieve that. And I think that the lesson of the whole business has been that reform is not achievable. So we now have a glorious opportunity, and, you know, to get back to this whole thing about what is the single market, what is not the single market, the key thing about the single market is that it does have this single judicial system, and very interesting, if you look at all the other free trade groupings around the world, NAFTA, ASEAN, MERCOSUR, whatever, none of them are trying to create this single country, this single political unit. None of them have a single currency.

AM: The prime minister clearly thinks you are doing this out of personal ambition because you want to take him out.

BJ: I think the longer we spend talking about this sort of –

AM: We've spent hardly any time about it. (talking together)

BJ: - political stuff, the less time – the less time people have to focus on the real issues. I think –

AM: You said that you have no political ambitions left the other day. I find that hard to believe. The greasy board is coming out, back to the...it's bouncing towards you. Are you really saying no, no, no...

BJ: I have to say, with the possible exception of Dan Hannan, I don't think there is anybody in Briti- and you, you know, you've .. I don't think anybody in British media or British politics who has written more or said more over the last 30 years about the democratic deficiencies of the European Union. And for the last few years I have said very clearly that if we didn't get reform then we should be prepared to walk away. I think we now have a golden opportunity to shrug off a regulatory legislative burden that is profoundly anti-democratic.

AM: As a result of –

BJ: As Michael Gove – right, as Michael Gove rightly says in his interview this morning –

AM: Do you expect to be our next prime minister.

BJ: Look at the – look at the – certainly not.

AM: Why not?

BJ: We have a wonderful prime minister...

AM: You know he can't carry on if he loses this, don't you? He can't really. Realistically, practically, you can't look me in the eye and say David Cameron will carry on as prime minister and renegotiate.

BJ: To the best of my knowledge there is not a single European Union leader in the last 20 years who has had to step down as a result of a referendum, whether on Europe or not. So I think the whole thing is a load of cobblers. You're all – you're just trying to personalise –

AM: I am.

BJ: You're just trying to personalise it to make it more interesting to people.

AM: He started it.

BJ: I want to talk about the real choice. It's a fundamental choice.

AM: And you've had plenty of time so to do.

BJ: It's between Project Fear and Project Hope.

AM: Boris Johnson, thank you very much. Thank you very much indeed.

BJ: I hope people go for Project Hope.

AM: Well, there we are. That's all we've got time for.

(ends)