ANDREW MARR:  
Now on Saturday we’ll find out who has won Labour’s leadership election. It has been, by all accounts, a fascinating contest, and for the Acting Leader, Harriet Harman, it will bring down the curtain on 28 years in the frontline of Labour politics as a cabinet and shadow cabinet minister. It’s a long time. She’s been overseeing the process, much criticised by some of the party, of choosing Ed Miliband’s successor and she joins me now. Welcome to you. Twenty-eight years. We’ll talk about that in a moment, but first of all how certain are you that all these people who have been joining the Labour Party, paying their £3 for the wrong reasons – Tories, llamas, people’s dogs, hard left Marxists who have very little in common with the Labour Party – how certain are you that all of these voters have been weeded out before the final vote?

HARRIET HARMAN:  
Well there’s been a proper process under these new rules that were introduced in 2014 and whoever is elected as leader on Saturday will be validly elected under those rules. And the aim of those rules was to involve many more thousands of people in the
choice of the leader of the Labour Party and that has certainly happened. We’re going to have over half a million people taking part.

ANDREW MARR:
It’s a huge number of people. How many people have you weeded out as being infiltrators and there for the wrong reasons?

HARRIET HARMAN:
Well something over 4,000 because what the rules required us to do was to involve those people who whilst not being members of the Labour Party support the party and therefore should have a choice in the leadership contest, but to not allow in those people who are members of the Tory Party or the Green Party. I mean they can choose the leader of the Tory Party, they can choose the leader of the Green Party, but they’re not supposed to be joining in our leadership election. So we’ve had a process of scrutiny and verification which has resulted in …

ANDREW MARR:
(over) And you think that’s been solid?

HARRIET HARMAN:
It has been absolutely due diligence. And there’s no question about it – whoever is elected on Saturday that is the leader and they are validly elected. And obviously, as it’s the first time we’ve used these rules, people will want to look at how they’ve worked …

ANDREW MARR:
Sure.

HARRIET HARMAN:
… but that will not make any difference to who is elected on Saturday.

ANDREW MARR:
It may not matter if it’s an easy victory for whoever it is, but if it’s very, very close and you get people popping up in the press saying “Well I’m a Conservative and I
voted for X or Y”, it’s going to be extremely embarrassing and highly controversial, isn’t it?

HARRIET HARMAN:
Well no, I don’t think it … I don’t think it will be embarrassing or controversial. The rules have been implemented and I’m absolutely confident that we’ve exercised due diligence to make sure all those people who are entitled to a vote get a vote and those people who obviously are not are not allowed their ballot paper.

ANDREW MARR:
A slightly different point perhaps, but is it really right that somebody who might have just logged onto a website and decided they’re going to pay their £3 gets the same voice, the same amount of clout in the Labour leadership election as one of your constituency workers who’s been a member of the party for 50 years, paying the full fee for 50 years out of a relatively low income, tramping the streets, licking the envelopes and so forth? To a lot of people that doesn’t quite seem fair on those who have stuck with the Labour Party through thick and thin.

HARRIET HARMAN:
Well that was the objective of the 2014 rule change – that basically many thousands, tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands more people should be involved in the leadership election on a one person/one vote basis – and after this …

ANDREW MARR:
(over) I’m just asking if it’s fair really.

HARRIET HARMAN:
Well after … It’s certainly achieved its objective of involving hundreds of thousands of people in the election and after the election there will be the longstanding members, there will be the new people who joined in the process, and they’ll need to work together in the common cause of holding the Tories to account and also rebuilding Labour to make us electable again.

ANDREW MARR:
And do you want to see all those new people who’ve paid their £3 and voted then
becoming full members of the Labour Party?

HARRIET HARMAN:
Oh absolutely, we’ve got to build the party and we’ve also got to make ourselves electable again. I mean one of the things that’s been so difficult about this turbulent period is not just losing the election, but losing an election that we’d expected and hoped to win, and we have to learn the lessons to rebuild.

ANDREW MARR:
If you had your time over again on this, would you have run this contest in exactly this way?

HARRIET HARMAN:
Well I’m having my time right now, which is running the contest in the way that the 2014 rules lay down, and you know I’m absolutely confident that’s what we’ve done. So it’s not been my task to second guess the rules; it’s been my task to implement the rules. And I can absolutely assert …

ANDREW MARR:
(over) They’ve been properly implemented, okay.

HARRIET HARMAN:
... that they have been properly implemented and we will go forward under the new leadership.

ANDREW MARR:
Now part of this I know means that you can’t come out and say that you support X or Y, whatever. We understand that. But you have four candidates there. Do you think those four people could all become a successful prime minister?

HARRIET HARMAN:
Well I’m absolutely not anticipating the result one way or another and I’ve put my head in complete …
ANDREW MARR:
*(over)* No and that’s why I’ve asked … I’ve asked the question very openly and …

HARRIET HARMAN:
Well you know obviously we want a Labour leader who’s going to be an effective leader of the opposition and is going to be …

ANDREW MARR:
*(over)* And they could all be that is what I’m asking.

HARRIET HARMAN:
*(over)* … and going to be a prime minister. And you know whoever is chosen, we’ll all need to be working with to get ourselves electable because the disappointment is that despite the fact that the Tories were not ragingly popular before the last election nonetheless they didn’t have trust and confidence in us, the public didn’t …

ANDREW MARR:
No.

HARRIET HARMAN:
... and didn’t elect us. So we have to address those concerns. We have to have our principles and our policies, but we also have to win the support of the public and understand why we didn’t get elected last time, and that’s a job for the longstanding members and the new supporters.

ANDREW MARR:
This sounds slightly coded to me, as if you’re not suggesting that Prime Minister Corbyn would be as good as Prime Minister Cooper or as likely as Prime Minister Cooper or Prime Minister Kendall.

HARRIET HARMAN:
Well I’m just in that period of time where people are still voting and I’m just trying to be very careful to not anticipate the result and be completely neutral. I’m probably the one person in the Labour Party that you can talk to now who is absolutely not in a position …
ANDREW MARR:
(over) Okay.

HARRIET HARMAN:
… to say anything about afterwards …

ANDREW MARR:
Alright.

HARRIET HARMAN:
… because I have had to be scrupulously neutral and I have been.

ANDREW MARR:
However, I said at the beginning 28 years. You joined the Labour front bench at the high point of Thatcherism and you have been all the way through the Thatcher years and the Major years and the Blair years and the Brown years and the Miliband years. With all of that perspective, do you think it is right at this point for the Labour Party to turn sharply to the left?

HARRIET HARMAN:
Well again you’re asking me to anticipate the result …

ANDREW MARR:
No I’m not.

HARRIET HARMAN:
… and I’m absolutely … No and I’ve not even cast a vote in this election because I’ve had to remain scrupulously neutral. You know the result will be what it is. But you know you’re right, I’ve been through a long period of time on the front bench with the Labour Party. I’ve seen the Labour Party written off, come together, come back into government …

ANDREW MARR:
(over) Okay.

HARRIET HARMAN:
... and that’s what we need to do again.

ANDREW MARR:
And you’re about to leave the frontline of politics very shortly. I hope you come back on the programme afterwards and tell us what you were thinking all along at that point, but for now, Harriet Harman, thank you very much indeed.

HARRIET HARMAN:
Thank you.

ENDS