ANDREW MARR:
With just one week to go until a new Labour leader in Scotland is elected, the party
admitted yesterday that it must show voters it’s learned from recent defeats. The latest
polls suggest a slump in support for Labour in Scotland, as well as a dramatic rise in
SNP membership - as we were just hearing – post-referendum. I’m joined now from
Glasgow by the Labour MSP Sarah Boyack who hopes to become Scotland’s First
Minister. Sarah Boyack, welcome. You spoke in your speech explaining why you
wanted to be First Minister in Scotland of your pride at working with Donald Dewar
and all the things that Labour had achieved in Scotland, so what went wrong?

SARAH BOYACK:
Well I think there was a disconnect. When parties are in power, they don’t spend as
much time telling people what they’re doing and bringing them with them, and that
re-engagement is the top priority for us. So I believe my experience in government is
absolutely crucial. It’s about how we deliver for people, but keep delivering and get
beyond the bureaucracy. I implemented free bus travel, kick-started massive
investment in our railways and started the renewables revolution which has created
thousands of green jobs in Scotland. So I’ve got a track record in government, but I’ve also got that analysis about that disconnect. It’s not just in Scotland; you can see it across the UK, across Europe of people not seeing traditional parties as representing them. So for me, that is the ambition …

ANDREW MARR:
Yeah.

SARAH BOYACK:
… that whoever is Scottish Labour needs the ideas, the analysis, and crucially the ambition to reconnect traditional politics with our voters.

ANDREW MARR:
Okay. Do you think that … I mean there’s no disconnect at all with the SNP in Scotland at the moment. Do you think Labour simply became complacent and lazy?

SARAH BOYACK:
Well I think our votes started dropping off quite a while ago. Even from the first Scottish Parliament elections, we got less Labour votes than we did two years previously in Tony Blair’s government, so it’s a long-term challenge for us.

ANDREW MARR:
(over) It doesn’t look complacent perhaps?

SARAH BOYACK:
It is a long-term challenge. And I think the 2007 result, people though oh we’re only one vote behind and 2011 put that idea to rest. So it’s a big challenge, but next year we have the opportunity with the choice between a Labour and a Tory government and I believe that is our big chance to come back and tackle in-work poverty, get the country back on its feet and make sure that we have a Labour government in the UK with a new investment that will come from that that we can use in Scotland. So tackling in-work poverty, getting people back to work, building housing – there’s a huge agenda that we need to be addressing in Scotland now.
ANDREW MARR:
Meanwhile, are you shocked to read in this morning’s papers that the Conservatives are now ahead of Labour in Scotland for the first time certainly in my lifetime?

SARAH BOYACK:
Yeah, well I think let’s look at the votes next year. I don’t think if you track every single poll, that would take you to that conclusion.

ANDREW MARR:
Okay.

SARAH BOYACK:
I’m absolutely confident that Labour can come back, and with the right leadership we will come back.

ANDREW MARR:
Right. Are you worried about the kind of aggressive tone of the campaign in Scotland? Reports this morning that UNISON might actually disaffiliate if Jim Murphy, the so-called Blairite candidate, wins. There’s a bit of dirty tricks going on, isn’t there?

SARAH BOYACK:
Well I would just look at the tone of the debate we’ve had, whether it’s in social media or in public through the traditional media or in the meetings we’ve had. It has been a really upbeat, earnest conversation between the three leadership candidates. I think none of us underestimate the challenge we’ve got.

ANDREW MARR:
Okay.

SARAH BOYACK:
But I think we’ve got to focus on the prize here, which is having the chance to serve the people of Scotland. That’s the job of the next Labour leader whether as Labour leader or the aspirant first minister. And the SNP do have a honeymoon period - we know that, they’ve just had a coronation. And our chance is to get politics back to the real issues -
housing, jobs, the whole social justice agenda – and I believe that’s what Labour need.

ANDREW MARR:
(over) Okay, alright.

SARAH BOYACK:
And our trade union supporters particularly need us to be back on form and back as the next party in government.

ANDREW MARR:
Sarah Boyack, thank you for joining us this morning.

SARAH BOYACK:
Thank you.

INTERVIEW ENDS