ANDREW MARR SHOW
8TH APRIL 2018
ANGELA RAYNER

AM: Is the Labour Party position really that all these deaths are the result of austerity?
AR: Well, I mean, it’s devastating to see the amount of deaths on our streets, and you rightly say, this is not just about London, but we’re seeing knife crime increase in 39 of the 43 police forces across the UK. And it’s not just about austerity, but I think when the Home Secretary sticks her head in the sand and suggests that losing 21,000 police officers off our streets doesn’t have an effect, then I think that’s a very naive position. And we’ve seen cuts to youth service, cuts to education, cuts to children’s services, and all these wraparound services that we know support our young people in growing older and making sure they make right choices, I think has a knock-on effect. So it’s not just about police, of course it’s not. But it’s about the wider public service and about us supporting families to make the right choices.

AM: I mean, since 2010 overall crime has gone down. You rightly mention youth services, but can I ask you, therefore, whether Labour would replace the money that’s been lost for local government for such services?
AR: Well, we’ve said we’d put an extra 1.5 billion a year into council services. And of course that would be up to councils to decide how they use that. But we’ve also committed to making sure we have a statutory youth service. I mean, I worked in local government for many years and my husband was a youth worker and I remember the tremendous work that they used to do in our community. In fact, I was one of those children that used to follow the van and get the chocolate biscuits from them and the advice and support. And it’s a lifeline for young people that are often on the streets for many hours needing that support.
AM: This is the problem now: you’re offering 1.5 million, which sound like a lot of money, but it’s only ten per cent of the cuts to local government budgets that this government has made. If you were really going to change the situation on the ground for local authorities up and down the country you’d have to offer a great deal more money than you are at the moment.

AR: Well, we’ve also committed to ensuring that we’d replace – we’ve lost a thousand Sure Start centres under this government, we’ve lost 21,000 police officers, we’ve lost a billion from our youth service.

AM: You’d replace those police officers?

AR: Well, we’ve said that we’d put 10,000 police officers on the streets, and of course we have to be fiscally responsible, Andrew, so we would start to reverse the cuts and an end to austerity. Because what we’ve seen in this country is those at the top have been doing well whilst we’ve seen crime on our streets increasing, recording crime is up, we’ve seen people fearful of going out on the streets, and when you see our children being stabbed to death on the streets that is a time where you’ve got to say stop where we’re going and move forward on investing in our young people’s future.

AM: So there is a big and genuine dilemma about stop and search. On the one hand we know that a lot of black kids feel very, very angry about the way it was used in the past and that even triggered riots back in the 1990s and 1980s, the sus laws and so forth. But on the other hand a lot of people are saying that now it’s gone to the stage where the police cannot stop and search people. Kids could go out carrying knives or guns and feel that they won’t be stopped, they won’t be caught, and therefore the thing needs to change. What is your position on stop and search?

AR: Well, there has to be a balance, Andrew, and evidence-based stop and search is the right way forward.
AM: What does that mean, evidence-based stop and search?
AR: Well, it means that, you know, the intelligence that we get, if you’ve got local police forces and neighbourhood policing, which was a triumph of the last Labour government, then they know their communities, they know where these gangs are, they know those children that are vulnerable and they target those areas. Not just with the police, but working with youth services, social services and community and health workers to ensure that, you know, we know who those children are and we target them rather than targeting on ethnicity.

AM: In terms of targeting, would you agree, therefore, with Trevor Philips, who’s saying this morning there are parts of Tottenham where there are serious gang problems, where the police have to be allowed to stop and search people on the streets even if they don’t think a crime is about to be committed, for the sheer deterrent effect of stopping kids going out with blades?
AR: Well, like I say, you have to have evidence-based. So it’s targetted stop and search rather than just going randomly around saying, ‘I think you look like you might be a gang member so therefore I’m going to stop and search you.’ There has to be a balance. And if you’ve got the rest of the community services, youth workers on the streets as well working with young people they tend to know which are the kids that are vulnerable or potentially at risk of that.

AM: Right, we’re coming up to the local elections. Your party’s faced a lot of problems over anti-Semitism and this was something that you yourself warned about back last autumn when you said, ‘no more jam tomorrow, I want some hard actions to be taken about this.’ Have you see hard actions, and are you satisfied with what’s going on?
AR: Well, Jeremy’s been quite clear, there’s no place for anti-Semitism in our party, but I’ve been a little frustrated that we haven’t moved forward on the Chakrabarti Report as fast as I
would have liked to have seen. But Jennie Formby, our new General Secretary, has made it her number one priority and we need to make sure that the full Chakrabarti Report is implemented and that we have an absolute zero tolerance, because, Andrew, it can’t be right when people see on social media – and it’s not just in the Labour Party but across the board – anti-Semitic rhetoric and they see no action taken or that action is far too slow. We’ve got to make sure procedures, not only protect those that are, you know, allegations are made, but enforce people’s right to live in a country where they’re free from racism or anti-Semitism.

AM: Absolutely right. And you say Jeremy Corbyn has said that there’s no place in the Labour Party for this kind of thing. So let me ask you about Thangam Debbonaire, your colleague from Bristol West, who attended the protest against anti-Semitism outside the House of Commons, went back to talk to her party in Bristol West about it. She was shouted down and she was hounded out of that meeting. Surely she was treated disgracefully.

AR: Well, I wasn’t at the meeting, Andrew, but what I can tell you is Thangam is an absolute credit to the Labour Party and has actually being working with me as the opposition whip to ensure that we hold the government to account for the bursaries cuts that we’ll have a vote on in parliament very soon, which is very important to people across the UK. So Thangam’s doing a fantastic job. She shouldn’t be hounded out of any meeting. We have debates in the Labour Party, that’s quite fine, but she’s absolutely right to be able to protest, and Jeremy’s made that clear as well.

AM: He’s made that clear, but – I wasn’t at the meeting either, but I was able to read the motion that was put to that meeting, and it talked about – it said, talking about anti-Semitism, ‘when people see inequality, ecological disaster and war alongside the accumulation of unprecedented wealth in the private hands of a
ANGELA RAYNER

few it’s reasonable that they seek out explanations. What does that mean if it’s not a grotesquely anti-Semitic trope?
AR: Well, again, I didn’t write that motion. I would potentially see some of the issues with that is the inequality that’s growing in the UK and people’s focus on feeling quite annoyed about that and wanting to do something about it in the broader sense. I mean, I wasn’t the person that wrote the motion, but let’s be absolutely clear, there is no place for anti-Semitism in the party, but there is a place for fantastic local MPs like Thangam Debbonaire who are getting on with the job of protecting the most vulnerable in society.

AM: And she was shouted down in her own party meeting when that kind of motion was put to her. Do you think Bristol West Labour Party should be suspended by Jeremy Corbyn? Because it’s doing exactly what he said shouldn’t happen.
AR: Well, Bristol West Labour Party, I was over in the southwest just this week talking about children’s centres closures that the local council have implemented and the cuts they’ve received from central government. I think actually what they need to concentrate on is highlighting the devastating effects on our communities of this Tory-led government on our local councils.
(ends)