ANDREW MARR SHOW
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REBECCA LONG-BAILEY, MP
SHADOW BUSINESS SECRETARY

AM: Rebecca Long-Bailey is the Shadow Business Secretary and she joins me now.

Now what we know is the Labour Party wants a General Election out of all of this. Can I ask you, if Theresa May loses her big vote on Tuesday, when does the Labour Party put down a Motion of No Confidence in Her Majesty’s government?

RLB: Well look, we’ll have to see what happens on Tuesday but quite clearly we’ve got a deal that does not have the consensus of parliament. It’s a deal that doesn’t protect jobs, doesn’t protect workers’ rights and provides very, very little certainty for business, and I would be very surprised if the deal passes on Tuesday. Now once the deal falls, the Prime Minister is under a duty then to set out what she’s going to do next. Now what we’d urge her to do is either call a General Election, because she wouldn’t have had the confidence of parliament to carry on as Prime Minister and a government can’t pass a key policy proposal such as this. I question their legitimacy to carry on. But alternatively she could offer to renegotiate around a deal that would provide consensus within parliament and we’ve been trying to set out such a deal for some time. That one that would provide a permanent customs union with the right for Britain to have a say in future trade deals. A strong single market relationship and a floor under existing rights and protections, but also a guarantee that we’ll keep up with improvements in rights and protections going forward.

AM: I’ll come onto that in a moment. I’m just very interested, because the normal parliamentary thing to happen, not that there’s anything normal about this, would be the Opposition puts down a Motion of No Confidence in the government and if the
government loses that then we’re in for a General Election and all of that. But you sound as if you’re not going to put down a Motion of No Confidence quickly and that you are regarding the so called significant or the important vote on that Brexit deal as in effect a vote of confidence.

RLB: Well, no, I wouldn’t say that but it would be remiss of me to state quite clearly what we’re going to do on Tuesday without knowing what’s going to happen on Tuesday and we’ll have to make an assessment at the time and we’ll be in discussions with other political parties across the House to assess what the best thing to do. But ultimately, what we want to do is to provide certainty to businesses and communities across the country and to do that very, very quickly. And if the government cannot do that then that’s why we’re urging them to call a General Election so that a new team can come and be put into place and renegotiate a deal that puts our economy and jobs first.

AM: Now for fairly obvious reasons, John McDonnell has said that getting a General Election through the House of Commons which still has all those Tory MPs is going to be very difficult to do. If you don’t do that is it now inevitable that you have a second referendum?

RLB: Well I mean a lot’s going to happen after Tuesday if the deal does not get passed through parliament and you know, it would be very easy to run into different hypothetical scenarios, but in terms of the Labour Party policy we’ve been very clear on this. We respect the result of the referendum and we want a deal that secures a very solid future for our economy and for jobs within our communities. Now in the event that that cannot be secured and that Theresa May cannot secure that, that the Labour Party hasn’t been put into power and fails to renegotiate a deal that secures that then we’ll keep all options on the table and that includes a public vote, but we would have to go through a number
of different scenarios to reach that stage. But ultimately our priority is to secure that deal.

AM: Okay, well let’s reverse ferrets slightly and assume that the vote falls and assume that you get your General Election. From what you just said, I assume that the Labour Party goes into that election promising to deliver Brexit as a pro-Brexit party, is that right?

RLB: Well we’ve said our policy position’s very clear. We respect the result of the referendum and want to secure a deal that satisfies the criteria that we’ve set out, a customs union with a British say in future trade deals. A strong single market relationship and a guarantee that we won’t fall behind in rights and protections, both environmental protections, consumer rights and workers’ rights. That’s what we’d be going into to a General Election. But obviously in terms of what will be in the Manifesto that will be a discussion that the Labour Party will have at the time the manifesto is drafted, so again it will be remiss of me to say exactly what the working would be.

AM: It’s just the way that you put that Rebecca Long-Bailey. You sound as if you want to mitigate or soften the effects of Brexit. Are you yourself keen on us leaving the EU?

RLB: Well I voted to Remain and when we the deal came, the referendum result came through I was quite shocked, but unsurprised in particular in relation to my own constituency that has been de-industrialised and left behind quite frankly for a number of years. It had suffered significant underinvestment. Many of our industries were suffering and I can understand why many of my constituents were angry. So what I knew needed to happen was that firstly we needed to have a deal that put communities such as mine and indeed other communities like mine across the country first to get a deal that secured their economic future. But not only that, we have to have a domestic
policy agenda that looked at investing in our regions and nations and providing a strong industrial strategy to create high paid, high skilled jobs in the future and to secure that hope that we’ve got a bright future. Not just by having a strong deal but also by having a government that invests in our future.

AM: You’ve heard Jeremy Corbyn and John McDonnell say this week that in its renegotiations Labour would get rid of the backstop. And yet everybody you talk to in the EU, everybody on this side of the Channel who’s been involved in these talks say that if you don’t have a backstop you can’t have a Withdrawal Agreement. The Withdrawal Agreement and the backstop are completely linked together and therefore you can’t have the kind of deal that you want. You want a different kind of deal you have to a Withdrawal Agreement, you want a Withdrawal Agreement you have to have a backstop.

RLB: Well it’s not a backstop; it’s a full stop quite frankly. We’ve got a deal on the table now that essentially puts Northern Ireland in a completely different situation to the rest of the UK. The rest of the UK will be in a customs union without any say in future trade deals. Northern Ireland will be in a different arrangement where they have access to the single market and are subject to VAT rules and regulations and that’s not acceptable. We can’t unilaterally withdraw. We’re told that that the backstop’s only going to be temporary, but even the government’s own legal advice states that it’s quite likely that this will continue in perpetuity.

AM: So is it Labour policy to get rid of the backstop?

RLB: What we want is a permanent customs union and a strong single market relationship.

AM: I’m asking a slightly different question.
RLB: The backstop was installed to avoid a hard border in Northern Ireland. A permanent customs union would do exactly the same thing and it would offer that long term certainty and that’s what we go into a negotiation advocating for.

AM: To get to your deal you’d still need a backstop.

RLB: What we’re saying is we want a permanent customs union with a right for Britain to have a say in future trade deals. The current backstop has a customs union without the right to have any say in future trade deals.

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