ANDREW MARR:  
Now Ed Miliband re-launched himself last week as the candidate for Prime Minister who doesn’t care how he looks, or at least doesn’t think it’s the most important qualification for the job. In a speech in London, he confronted head-on the hapless way in which he’s been caricatured. It’s a high risk strategy which got mixed reviews. Has the cartoon image struck because he hasn’t been given enough substance about what he actually wants to do? That’s one of the criticisms I put to him when we talked in his garden yesterday. But we started with a very substantial issue indeed: the crisis in the Middle East. Has Israel’s response to the Hamas rocket attacks been disproportionate?

ED MILIBAND:  
Well I’m clear that we oppose the Israeli incursion into Gaza and the loss of life is tragic. And I think what needs to happen now is that we need a ceasefire, a proper ceasefire. Both sides need to draw back …

ANDREW MARR:  
That goes well beyond a 24 hour one?
ED MILIBAND:
That goes well beyond 24 hours. Because, look, I’m a friend of Israel and the Palestinian people, but this is doing no favours to Israel what is happening. The Hamas rocket attacks are totally unjustified and appalling, the murder of the three Israeli teenagers was terrible, but this is – I’m afraid – a tragic loss of life which I fear is just going to recruit more people to Hamas. The real lesson of this is …

ANDREW MARR:
(over) People have talked … Sorry.

ED MILIBAND:
… is the vacuum that there is in terms of a proper … in terms of proper negotiations for the two-state solution that is necessary.

ANDREW MARR:
People have talked about this for a very long time. It’s never ever happened. What more do you think can be done, needs to be done internationally to make it happen?

ED MILIBAND:
Well I think the international community needs to engage even more. Secretary Kerry has done a very good job in seeking to do that. The European Union needs to do that because now we see the price of the failure of that peace process and there not being a peace process.

ANDREW MARR:
Right let’s move on, if we may, to the leadership issue, which you raised very vividly this week and you talked about Wallace and you talked about the bacon sandwiches and all of that. What you didn’t say, but must be true, is that it must hurt when you’ve got small boys growing up and so forth, it must be pretty horrible?

ED MILIBAND:
(laughing) Look, I’ve got used to it I think is the best way of putting it. I suppose the reason I gave the speech was that I felt everybody else was having their say about
leadership, and indeed my leadership, and I felt I needed to have my say. And this goes beyond me actually. This is about a political culture that I think is driving people away because, let’s be honest, this is a political culture that fewer and fewer people are engaging with, care about, think will make a difference to their lives. And I personally believe it’s partly because the presentational, the superficial, the trivial, sometimes me eating a bacon sandwich, is what’s elevated above big ideas, principle, decency, the things that are going to really change the lives of people. So that’s why I gave the speech.

ANDREW MARR:
Now you say “it’s beyond me” - and of course it is - but nonetheless it is also about you.

ED MILIBAND:
Sure.

ANDREW MARR:
You’ve got very poor leadership ratings at the moment and your enemies are trying to dig into people’s heads an image of you, which is very, very hard then to remove. I mean I’ve got the …

ED MILIBAND:
You’re going to show it to me.

ANDREW MARR:
I’m going to show it to you.

ED MILIBAND:
Excellent!

ANDREW MARR:
There you go.

ED MILIBAND:
Thank you for that. Thank you very much. *(laughs)*

**ANDREW MARR:**
That’s you on fire. And you’ve clearly bitten someone there.

**ED MILIBAND:**
I didn’t realise you know you’d be bringing me a present. That’s incredibly kind. I’ll show it to my kids.

**ANDREW MARR:**
What do you … What do you think when you see these? Do you not wince? Do you not think this is actually very damaging? It’s a bit like what in a different way was done to Neil Kinnock when he was opposition leader.

**ED MILIBAND:**
You know the funny thing is I don’t really. And I’ve had lots of people saying to me over three or four years that I’ve been Leader why don’t you do more things like David Cameron did, which is you know the photo with the huskies that he did in the Arctic Circle, you know the wind turbine on the roof and all that …

**ANDREW MARR:**
And you said yesterday one of the reasons is you’re not very good at that.

**ED MILIBAND:**
And I suppose what I’ve worked out is that personally I don’t care about it that much. Of course communication is a part of modern politics and is important and I’m not pretending it isn’t, and image is as well, but I don’t care that … I don’t think it’s the most important thing.

**ANDREW MARR:**
You may hate it, you may think it’s trivial, you may think it’s awful, but it is how things are done now. Just as in the Victorian period, you had to stand up and make a three hour speech in front of three hundred people, now you have to do photo opportunities and deal with the internet and memes and so forth.
ED MILIBAND:
Of course.

ANDREW MARR:
… and therefore it is the job, it is the duty of a political leader to be better at it than you have been and it’s not enough to say it doesn’t matter. It does matter. It’s the way things are done.

ED MILIBAND:
Well I’ll keep trying. But I think what I was saying was not photos don’t matter or that I’m never going to take photos because you know it’s not …

ANDREW MARR:
(over) There you were with Obama recently.

ED MILIBAND:
... that’s not the case. I think it’s more what do we really value most? What is really going to change things for people?

ANDREW MARR:
But the underlying narrative of your speech was a recognition that there is an Ed Miliband problem. There is an Ed Miliband problem, is there not?

ED MILIBAND:
(laughing) No, I’d put it a slightly different way.

ANDREW MARR:
Of course.

ED MILIBAND:
Look what I would say is that I think that this is a job interview. Not just being interviewed by you, but you know running for Prime Minister is a job interview for one of the most important jobs in the country and that’s a challenge. And I suppose
what I wanted to say to the public, I’m not just going to compete on the terms you are used to and it’s important you understand that about me. I’m competing on the terms that are different and I actually think are more important to you and to your life. And so that’s the really important thing I was trying to get across. And, look, let me just give you an example of that. You know if you’re thinking about people who are saying you know we’re on a zero hours contract, we can’t afford to bring up our family, we’re worried our kids are going to have a worse life than us, well I’ve got ideas to tackle that on the minimum wage, on housing, on action to deal with zero hours contracts. Now I happen to think that’s more important than whether you know I look good eating a bacon sandwich, which I clearly I think we should agree I don’t. *(laughs)*

**ANDREW MARR:**

Talking to Conservatives, it seems absolutely clear to me that between now and the election they have two themes: one is the economy getting better and the other one is Ed Miliband. You don’t want Ed Miliband as your Prime Minister, you don’t want Ed Miliband. Ed Miliband? Certainly not. And if you don’t kill that, then you are dead in the water, but you have most of the press against you. Do you feel they’re trying to do to you what was done to Neil Kinnock by as it were the right wing press in the past?

**ED MILIBAND:**

Look, it is true that are elements of the press that really don’t like me and don’t like some of the stands that I’ve taken. I think though the bigger sort of issue here is the Conservatives, they want to fight an election you said on two things. The economy, they want to say that’s fixed. I don’t believe that is. I believe there are deep problems and let’s talk about those problems. And, look, I’m proud of some of the stands I’ve taken, which in a way illustrate that, about Rupert Murdoch, about the energy companies, about the banks, on Syria – on the issues that count. And they’re tough because it’s tough to stand up on principle on those things.

**ANDREW MARR:**

But again and again and again, you are turned into a figure of fun, and you can’t ig… You laughed about it, but I come back to you - it must hurt, it must make you angry surely?
ED MILIBAND:
No. I think … Well I think it makes me angry in the following sense: that I think the British people deserve a better debate than this. This isn’t sort of c-list celebrity. This isn’t a sort of you know kind of ugly persons showbiz contest. *(Laughing)* This is … You know this is about more than that.

ANDREW MARR:
That’s what they used to say about politics, wasn’t it – showbiz for ugly people?

ED MILIBAND:
*(over)* Exactly, exactly.

ANDREW MARR:
I’ve been quite struck by the fact that Nick Clegg, who’s having a hard time as well, has nonetheless gone on week after week doing phone-ins with members of the public, inviting the public to confront him. Isn’t that the kind of thing you ought to be …

ED MILIBAND:
*(over)* He was right to do it. He was right to do it. And you know I knew at the time he got … He got a whole load of old bile about it when he did it and I remember saying to people actually it’s a good thing to do. Well I want to do that and I will do that in terms of radio phone-ins, but I want to do something more. I think what we need is a public Question Time where regularly the Prime Minister submits himself or her herself to questioning from members of the public in the Palace of Westminster on Wednesdays, so that … And why’s that important? Because I want to let the public in to our politics. You know at the moment …

ANDREW MARR:
*(over)* Well that’s quite a striking idea. Can I just stop you on it …

ED MILIBAND:
Yeah.

ANDREW MARR:
… and ask you exactly how this would work. Presumably you would do your prime minister’s questions as Prime Minister?

ED MILIBAND:
Yes.

ANDREW MARR:
Are you now saying that you would guarantee that you would go and answer questions from the public afterwards or beforehand?

ED MILIBAND:
That’s what we want to do, yes.

ANDREW MARR:
And you’d do it every week?

ED MILIBAND:
Well we’ll see how often we do it, but we definitely want to do it regularly. It’s something that I … And I want to make a formal proposal to the Speaker of the House of Commons. He and I have talked before many times about Prime Minister’s Questions. And, look, we shouldn’t rule out reform of Prime Minister’s Questions, but let me put it this way. At the moment there’s the glass that separates, a few inches of glass that separates the public in the gallery from the House of Commons, but there is a gulf a mile wide between the kind of politics people want and what Prime Minister’s Questions offers. I think as a test for Prime Minister’s Questions to raise the standard having people in. And, look, I’m part … you know I’m part of Prime Minister’s Questions, so I take some responsibility for that, but having people in asking their own questions – if possible …

ANDREW MARR:
(over) Anyone?

ED MILIBAND:
Well we’d have to be careful. I promise you, it woudn’t be just like cheerleading Labour supporters. I mean we’ve got to …

ANDREW MARR:
No, but if somebody was really angry about how you operated as Prime Minister …

ED MILIBAND:
(over) Yeah, yeah.

ANDREW MARR:
… would they be able to get into Westminster Hall and have a go at you?

ED MILIBAND:
(over) Yes, yes, yes. By the way, there’s one interesting thing about this. Go to Scotland and talk to people about what’s happening there and the referendum, people are interested. If you show people there’s a real choice and things can really be different and you let people into politics, it can happen. We didn’t seek that referendum, but it has engaged people in politics.

ANDREW MARR:
Your critics are going to say this is an interesting idea but it sounds like another gimmick.

ED MILIBAND:
No, it’s serious. It’s serious about how we … Look, I want to find ways to change our political culture. It’s not just about putting the photo op first. That is a problem, but it goes deep… It’s deep, this, and it goes well beyond that.

ANDREW MARR:
What about the Obama incident because there’s lots of briefing about the brush by,
whatever it’s called these days, and there you were with Obama talking about the Boston Red Sox, whatever you were talking about.

ED MILIBAND:
We didn’t actually talk about the Boston Red Sox. I would have loved to have talked to him about that, but …

ANDREW MARR
(over) I’m sure you would. But, nonetheless, again wasn’t that just a piece of PR? That's the kind of trivial politics you deprecate and there you were doing it.

ED MILIBAND:
I want to be the Prime Minister of the country.

ANDREW MARR:
Yeah.

ED MILIBAND:
Our relationship with the United States is important. If you think about what we talked about earlier in the interview - the Middle East; if you think about climate change, which we discussed, or the situation in terms of Russia and the downing of the Malaysian airliner or inequality … We talked a lot about inequality and the challenges our two countries face. If we talk about those questions, you know the solutions go through the United States and working with the United States. And, therefore, as somebody who wants to be the Prime Minister of the country, I think that I engage with the President of the United States is a totally sensible thing.

ANDREW MARR:
After your speech, there was a question I think from one of your constituents in Doncaster who said, “What I want to know is what is the big idea?” and you gave a very, very eloquent analysis of the problem, but you didn’t then come onto “And my big idea is this …”

ED MILIBAND:
The big idea is to make this country work once again for ordinary people and not just a few people at the top. And that is fundamentally what it’s about because, look, every country round the world faces this challenge of inequality – not just rich versus poor but whether a few people at the top are going to soar away from everyone else and people’s lives, the lives of ordinary, lower and middle income people are going to get harder and harder and their kids are going to have worse prospects than them. That is the generational challenge we face and that is what our offer, our programme is all about.

**ANDREW MARR:**
And is this happening because what used to be called international capitalism but the big corporate powers in the world, the big banks, the big international companies have just become too powerful vis-à-vis democratic elected parliamentary power?

**ED MILIBAND:**
It’s partly because of the power of corporations, definitely, and we need to make sure that markets, corporations …

**ANDREW MARR:**
*(over)* Pay their taxes.

**ED MILIBAND:**
Pay their taxes, work in the public interest. It’s partly about the philosophy of the country because I think we’ve had a philosophy for too long that says as long as a few rich people are doing okay, the wealth will trickle down to everybody else. So I think there’s a number of factors, but I know what we need to … I know we need to change things and we’ve got specific ideas to change things whether that’s raising the minimum wage, taking on the issue of energy prices, taking on the issue of rents and housing. All of that … Those are the bread and butter issues if you like of what is going to change things for people.

**ANDREW MARR:**
You mentioned the NHS as well in your speech. And I know that for a lot of people the NHS is going to be a central issue in the General Election and you said that you
were going to repeal the recent bill and you were going to integrate care and social services and so forth inside the NHS. What wasn’t clear is how under a Miliband Government the NHS would actually be run.

**ED MILIBAND:**

We are going to repeal the NHS bill. We are going to repeal the competition aspect of it because it’s a massive problem which I think is leading to that plethora of lawyers and privatisation and fragmentation of the service. But we also think we can change things without doing a massive top-down reorganisation. So, for example, bringing together budgets for health and social care. That is a key aspect of making the health service work better. And what does it mean practically for people, Andrew, because in a way that’s the most important thing?

**ANDREW MARR:**

Yeah.

**ED MILIBAND:**

A single point of contact like your GP if you’re an elderly person who needs care. Not twenty different people that you have to speak to. So I think there are practical ways in which we can change things, repealing that bill, without just throwing all the deckchairs up in the air and seeing where they land.

**ANDREW MARR:**

Let’s move onto one final international issue which has been much in the news at the moment, which is frankly the influence of big Russian money on this country. We’re having a stand-off with President Putin at the moment over ghastly events in Ukraine and yet at the same time a range of oligarchs, a range of very powerful Russians – some of them with very close connections to President Putin – are spending their way into British power.

**ED MILIBAND:**

Not into the Labour Party. You know look I think let’s go to the bigger picture and then come to your specific. On the issue of the Malaysian airliner, it is a terrible, appalling thing that happened. All of my sympathy goes to the victims in this country and of course across the world. We do need action though, we need action. We need a
European Council. The heads of government of Europe should be meeting. They shouldn’t be leaving it to the foreign ministers. We need to raise the sanctions on Russia, on individual corporations that have been part of what happened around the big decisions that have been made. So look we need action on this and, look, David Cameron does have questions to answer on the money that he’s taking from Russian oligarchs, on the bidding for a tennis match. You know all of that stuff. You know frankly you can’t stand up one minute and say that this is the biggest issue and that we’re going to take the right action. He’s got to really look very, very carefully at who he’s getting money from.

ANDREW MARR:
We’ve got nine months to go - final point – before the election. Are you sure that by the time the election happens, people will not be laughing about Wallace and so forth but will see a different Ed Miliband entirely?

ED MILIBAND:
Well, look, I relish the chance to go out and say between now and the election what I offer this country. It is about big ideas to change this country, so it works for most people once again. It is about principle and sticking to your principles even when it’s tough, even when you’ve got big opponents – whether it’s Rupert Murdoch or the energy companies - and I will talk about a different type of leadership which has listening as part of leading.

ANDREW MARR:
Some critics say that the trouble is that all the way through period of opposition, the Labour Party has not owned up to the economic mistakes it made beforehand and that has been your big problem, not the Wallace and Gromit stuff.

ED MILIBAND:
Well, look, if … if people start to stop debating the triviality and start debating the reality, well that’s good. But on that point, we’ve said we got it wrong on the banking crisis. We’ve said we didn’t regulate the banks properly – albeit that the Conservatives were saying they should be more loosely regulated. But look, I think that people want a forward looking election about the future. They want to know what
is going to happen in their life in the future and that’s what I think the focus should be on and that’s what I’m determined it is on.

ANDREW MARR:
Ed Miliband, thank you very much.

ED MILIBAND:
Thank you.

INTERVIEW ENDS