Ian Blackford, MP
SNP Westminster Leader

AM: Ian Blackford, welcome. You have issued an appeal this morning to the Labour Party in particular. Just explain what you’ve asked them to do.

IB: Well, we’re going into critical phase because now of course we’ve reached the end of phase one. It really is about the kind of deal that can be put together, which will protect the economic interests of the people of the United Kingdom. It’s about jobs, it’s about prosperity, it’s about living standards.

AM: It’s basic stuff. So what do you want them to do?

IB: Well, what we want Labour to do is to get behind us and others that are arguing that we should stay in the single market and the customs union. If you look at the agreement that has come forward over the last few days about full alignment in order to deal with the Irish question, the simple answer to that is to stay within the single market and the customs union.

AM: The Liberal Democrats want the same thing but the problem with that is that during the referendum campaign people were told time and time again that if they voted to leave the EU they were leaving the single market. Again and again and again.

IB: Many people did say that in that campaign, even on the Leave side that there would be no necessity of leaving that single market and the customs union. And I think the fundamental point is that nobody voted in that referendum to become poorer, and it’s about that threat which is becoming clearer to jobs and prosperity.
AM: But they did vote to leave the single market. I’m going to demonstrate to you why. Just hang on one second. Let’s look at what people were saying during the referendum campaign itself.

(film clips)

Cameron: The British public would be voting if we leave. Would be to leave the EU and leave the single market.

AM: Should we come out the single market?

Leadsom: I think that that is almost certainly would be the case, yes.

Q: Do you want us to stay inside the single market? Yes or no?

Gove: No. We should be outside the single market.

AM: I have Michael Gove in that chair and I said after Brexit will we be in the European single market, yes or no and he said, no.

Johnson: And he was right.

AM: So we won’t be in the European single market.

Johnson: Michael, yeah absolutely.

Osborne: We’d be out of the single market. That’s the reality. Britain would be quitting. Quitting the single market.

AM: So you can’t really say that voters didn’t know what they were voting for. They were voting to leave the single market, they did vote to leave the single market. Time and time again I was asking people in that very chair and they said the same thing on either side of the campaign we’re out of the single market. That’s what people voted for and therefore it is breaking trust with the voters saying we should stay.
IB: No, I don’t accept that. I think there were an awful lot of untruths that were told in that campaign.

AM: That wasn’t one of them.

IB: Let’s go back to the famous bus. The 350 million that was going to be invested on a weekly basis.

AM: That’s a totally different thing.

IB: Oh no it’s not, because it’s connected because now we know the reality. There’s a divorce bill of – they’re talking about 40 billion. Many people actually talk about it being a higher figure than that, and the simple fact is there was not the conversation with the people of the United Kingdom that you were looking at job losses. Quite substantial job losses which we’re already seeing.

AM: I would argue we’ve just heard that conversation on the screen there.

IB: But the point is, Fraser of Allander in Scotland for example has said 80 thousand job threats to Scotland. We know in the City of London people are talking about 75,000 jobs. We’ve lost the Medicines Authority already; we’ve lost the Banking Authority already. There’s a clear threat to living standards, to jobs. 2,000 have a reduction in wages in Scotland for example according to Fraser of Allander. Nobody, when we talk about parliamentarians, when we talk about the House of Commons, and I would even say some Conservative MPs have got to be very careful of the road that they’re going down, because if we go into this, if we go into hard Brexit without the protection of the single market and a customs union there is an economic threat to this country which is unparalleled in recent times.
IAN BLACKFORD, MP

AM: Your real position for Scotland is that you want to stay inside the EU. Is that still the case now that the actual agenda of the EU is becoming more and more clear? Martin Schultz who’s in negotiations with Angela Merkel, the Chancellor of Germany, very, very powerful figure there, said he wants a new constitutional treaty for a single state. A United States of Europe, explicitly, with an army and a treasury and a chancellor and all the rest of it and anyone that doesn’t like it will have to leave the EU. Is that really the kind of thing? There’s no independence for Scotland there.

IB: What we’re doing is actually concentrating on what’s in front of us at the moment, which is the negotiations that the UK are engaged in and it’s about protecting the interests of our people. And of course I would remind the Prime Minister that we’re talking about four nation states within the United Kingdom. We can see the difficulties she’s got in Northern Ireland. What the Prime Minister should do is pull the First Minister of Scotland and Wales into these negotiations. That’s the first point. And she also has to understand that the people of Scotland and in Northern Ireland voted to remain within the EU. And we’re asking for her to respect the wishes of the Scottish people and the Scottish government that made it clear that we should be staying in the single market and customs union. The question for Labour and the question for Jeremy is he going to make sure that he comes with us to protect the jobs and living standards of people in this country.

AM: Candidly I slightly doubt it, but let me ask you about one other thing which is the big story this week, was the Irish border issue and the sense of convergence as being the answer. How important is that for Scotland and why?

IB: Oh, it’s a massive issue because it is about that threat that we talk about because at the end of the day it’s about people. It’s about the living standards people have post Brexit. And what we have is a situation that the UK has now signed up to have full
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convergence with the Southern Ireland and the rest of Europe it’s the whole bit of that which is important. What I’m saying to the Prime Minister and everyone else is the single market and the customs union is the pathway to doing that.

AM: And very, very briefly if you don’t mind, do you think the Irish Agreement, the convergence means that in effect we stay in both those organisations?

IB: I believe that it will be ultimately. Now you can debate how we do that. Of course the first thing we’re going to do is have the transition deal. The EU is making it clear through that transition deal we will remain in the single market and the customs union. That will create the pathway for us doing that over the longer term and I believe it’s consistent with the vote that took place in the United Kingdom last year.

Ends