

ANDREW MARR SHOW

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KEIR STARMER

AM: Do you accept that you have been very unclear up to now about where you want to end up?

KS: No, we've been very clear. We've said that we want a partnership that retains the benefits of the single market and the customs union. And the events of this week prove that we're right about that.

AM: Can I explain to you why I think that you have not been clear? You've had your deputy – deputy leader Tom Watson has said that we could stay inside the single market perhaps in perpetuity. John McDonnell has said that would not be respecting the views of the single market, and you yourself have said this week that you have not been sufficiently clear on the point of the single market.

KS: My problem is I always get very technical and – I'm not going to do that – so let me just be clear. I mean, what are the benefits of the single market and the customs union? They are no tariffs and they are alignment of regulations and standards. And that means that for goods and services we can trade successfully in the future. That's what we want, that's what we mean by the benefits. And to some extent the model doesn't matter, it's what are the outcomes.

AM: Can I try and ventriloquize for you? What you want is you accept that you can't stay inside the single market, as Ian Blackford has just answered, because of the referendum result. But you want a new treaty which gives you as many of the benefits of the single market and the customs union as can be negotiated. Is that true?

KS: The way we put it is that we would start with viable options, staying in a customs union and a single market variant, which means full participation in the single market. So it's a bit more than that. We want the full benefits and we're clear about what the starting options would be. But the developments this week show that we're right in our approach. Because one of the reasons we've advocated that course is because it's the only way to achieve no hard border in Northern Ireland. It's a point I put to David Davis in the House of Commons on Tuesday. You can't sweep the customs union and the single market off the table on the one hand and also say you don't want a hard border in Northern Ireland, and that is exactly the conclusion really of negotiations this week.

AM: Okay, well let's talk a little bit about – I want to come on to your position in a second. But this hard border question, we have this new word 'full convergence' of regulations between the EU on the one hand and the entire UK on the other. But we're told this morning that that's not legally meaningful and that actually it may not mean much in the end.

KS: Well, the document that was released on Friday commits to no hard border, meaning no infrastructure and no related checks or controls. That's an absolutely clear commitment. There's an equally – let me finish this.

AM: There's a fall-back position.

KS: I'll come to that. There's a commitment to the north-south cooperation which is across a whole range of areas, and what's written into the document is that these are commitments come what may, in all circumstances...

AM: The document also says no customs union and no single market.

KS: And you've pushed me on – that's the fall-back position. So let me deal with that. I am, having read and re-read the small print here, including the EU Commission's own assessment, I am clear that the fall-back in the first position in fact will collapse into one which is alignment. And I'll tell you why I say that. I've been saying over and over again –

AM: So you think this is the real deal?

KS: This is the real deal. You can't have no hard border if you don't have alignment.

AM: You're saying that because the European Commission is also saying it?

KS: The European Commission on Friday issued their own document, which is their own assessment of the agreement that was released on Friday. Now remember, they are on the other side of the negotiating table and they say they did a mapping exercise of the north-south cooperation agreement and they were clear that the biggest single risk is divergence to those north-south agreements because they're based on EU law and policy. And then they went on to say what the UK have said is that their aim is to solve this with a EU-UK agreement, the number one option that David Davis will talk about in just a minute, and then this is what the EU said about this: 'these intentions seem hard to reconcile with the United Kingdom's communicated decision to leave the internal market and the customs union. So nine months in –

AM: With respect they would say that wouldn't they?

KS: Well, they're on the other side of the table and they're saying, 'we do not see how option one isn't essentially the same as option three. These will collapse into one. And that is why you're seeing

the reaction from those on the right of the Tory Party, because they realise that this collapses into one way forward, which is alignment and convergence.

AM: Okay. So for a lot of people this is confusing, but let me be very clear, you really think that the agreement that Theresa May struck this week means that Britain will in perpetuity stay very, very close to the single market and the customs union?

KS: Yes. And I think that's the right thing and I think we should hold her to that because that goes to the heart of the question what sort of Britain do we want to be? Do we see Europe as our major trading partner in the future or do we want to rip ourselves apart from that.

AM: That's exactly where I want to get to, and your own position. So you want a new treaty giving us the full access and benefits to the single market and the customs union.

KS: It'll have that in the Union treaty.

AM: And you have said it's a bit like a Norway-style treaty for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

KS: Yes.

AM: Exactly. Now, the two things the EU has made absolutely clear that involves is, one you have to carry on paying some money in. Would you accept that?

KS: Norway pays money in. They do it actually on a voluntary basis, not to the budget. But there may be –

AM: Would you accept it?

KS: There may have to be payments to be negotiated.

AM: So you could negotiate payments in that thing. But the other thing, as you know, is the four freedoms. And you have said again and again that freedom of movement is off the table because after we leave we've left and all the rest of it. Can I ask you a different question? A subtly different question - would maximal cross-Channel migration in both directions be part of that negotiation or not?

KS: Well, whatever the rules are will have to be negotiated. You're absolutely right to push me on this, because I've said freedom of movement can't stay the same. The status quo is not an option. That means it's got to be negotiated, and you and others pushed back against me and say you can't have the benefits of the single market and the customs union if you don't also accept freedom. Well, now, as a result of Friday we've got the EU and the UK agreeing to an approach which says we must retain alignment if we're to solve the position in Northern Ireland. In other words –

AM: That means people moving across those borders in both directions.

KS: Just let me make this point, because you know, what's said against me every time I put this argument up is you can't have that, it's fantasy and therefore, you know, you've got to give up on the benefits of the single market and customs union. What's clear from Friday is that the benefits of the single market and customs union are integral to Northern Ireland. And what's really important is –

AM: I'm sorry, I just want to say one more time on this question of migration, people moving back and forth between the EU and the UK, it's not a kind of abstruse matter, it's about real people watching this programme. Would Labour, in that treaty, negotiate

a system whereby people living in the EU could come and work here freely and vice versa? Yes or no?

KS: Well, that would have to be negotiated but the end of free movement doesn't mean no movement. Of course we would want people to come from the EU to work here. We want people who are here to go and work in the EU. The basis of that would have to be negotiated.

AM: Alright, easy movement if not free?

KS: Yes, of course.

AM: Right, okay, that's really interesting. And when it comes to the regulations can I be absolutely clear that after we have left the EU, under your negotiation we would still be mapping, copying and pasting, whatever, sticking very close to EU regulations when it comes to, you know, carrots, car engines, vacuum cleaners, whatever it might be?

KS: Yes. I mean, what underpins access and the benefits of the single market and customs union is a level playing field, that everybody applies the same regulations and standards. So if you want those benefits you've got to stay on the same level playing field. Now, the Labour Party doesn't have a problem with it. We do not want to deregulate, we don't want to cut away –

AM: So the answer to my question is basically yes.

KS: - workplace rights, environmental rights. Yes, we are comfortable with staying on that level playing field.

AM: And in the future we don't have a vote on these things, but they change, the vacuum cleaner regulations in a few years' time

and we change with them? Even though we don't have a vote, yes?

KS: Yes.

AM: Okay, so –

KS: Just let me explain. If you're making vacuum cleaners in this country and you're selling to Europe you are going to have to change with those otherwise you can't sell into that market. We've got a choice when we leave about whether we stay aligned or not. It doesn't mean we've got to exercise that choice in a way that makes it more difficult for us to trade. You've got a choice and we can choose to stay aligned.

AM: Okay. Let's rehearse where we've got to.] After your negotiation with the EU, we carry on paying money in, we have very easy movement of people back and forward. So those people who voted to take our money back, those people who voted to cut immigration will not be happy. And we're going to copy and paste and follow the EU regulations even though we don't have a vote. That is by any standards the worst of all worlds. You have backed yourself into a very unpleasant corner.

KS: Well, I really don't see who it's the worst of all worlds to be able to continue to trade successfully in Europe. I really don't see how it's the worst of all worlds to have a solution that works in Ireland. Three thousand six hundred people or so were killed, murdered, over 30 years in Northern Ireland. There's a very good book published earlier this year which –

AM: We're going wildly off subject here.

KS: - Remember These Dead. I mean, these are serious choices about the future of Britain –

AM: Of course they are.

KS: - and having no hard border and being able to trade successfully with Europe in the future is a choice that we're entitled to make. We've got a choice, we can choose that future.

AM: We're going to take their regulations without a vote, we're going to carry on with a big migration back and forward and we're going to pay money for the privilege. That has been described as being a vassal state of the EU.

KS: How we negotiate that agreement with the EU is a matter still for negotiation. It doesn't mean it's cut and paste. But we do have a choice. Do we want to stay aligned so we can trade successfully, or do we want to tear apart? And I say we should stay aligned. We're talking about what sort of Britain we're going to be and what the next 40 or 50 years might look like. And I don't think anybody voted to make it harder to trade with Europe.

AM: Nonetheless, you're in a position which your own colleague Barry Gardiner has described as being a vassal state. And that is going to be Labour's offer to the voters in the next election?

KS: I think the position –

AM: Vote Labour for a vassal state.

KS: I think the position that Barry Gardiner laid out was one at the beginning of last summer. We did a huge amount of work over the summer, as you know, developing our policy. We came out very clearly saying transitional arrangements are going to be needed and on the same terms as now, and that we should have as viable options on the table staying in a customs union and a variant of the single market. And every Labour spokesperson since then has said the same thing. So I appreciate that, you know, if

you go back you can find minor differences, but really since the summer there's been a unified voice from Labour.

AM: Okay. I am not, unfortunately, a mind reader. I can't do that. But I suspect that you would actually like to stay in the single market and the customs union and you know that would be the best available option to us right now because we would then have votes and so forth. Now, can I just ask you would it not be more honest, would it not be more straightforward and would it not kind of vivify and enthuse many of your own supporters if you were just able to say, 'do you know what? Yes, let's get rid of all the obfuscation, let's get rid of all the kind of weasel words, I'd like to stay inside the single market and the customs union.'

KS: Well, Andrew, I've said we want the benefits of both, and I've said that the viable options there are staying in a customs union or variant of the single market. And I say variant, I don't want to get technical because it doesn't help Northern Ireland. But everybody knows that you would have to sign a new agreement, you can't stay in exactly the same agreement you're in. You need a new agreement. There's got to be a variant of what we've got. But do we want full participation in the single market? Yes, we do. Do we want the benefits of the customs union? Yes, we do. Do we need to negotiate that? Yes, we do. Because that's the Britain that we want to live in.

AM: Very big choices ahead. Jeremy Corbyn has said that the idea of a second referendum is still on the table. Is it?

KS: Well, at the moment I think it's absolutely clear that we've got to get through this phase of negotiation, we've got to get through the Article 50 agreement. Now, we've never called for a second referendum, we are focused on what the new agreement could look like.

AM: You have frequently said that you haven't taken a decision on it, which means that you might call for a second referendum, yes or no?

KS: Well, we haven't called for a second referendum.

AM: I'm asking about the future though.

KS: Well, we haven't called for a second referendum. Things are moving so fast that it's hard to know what's going to come next. But we are not calling for it.

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