HENRY BOLTON

ANDREW MARR SHOW
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AM: His party are holding a special meeting this week where Mr Bolton is going to have to plead for his job and convince them that his relationship with Miss Marney is over. And he’s with me now. Are you still in love with her?

HB: There are strong affections there, yes.

AM: Because what your party want to hear is that this relationship is over, and you can’t tell them that can you?

HB: Well, that’s not what the party have said at all. The NEC held a vote of no confidence. There were a range of reasons given for that. The general consensus was that there was a problem with my judgement around that whole episode. But the point is that actually we are off, and we have been for a very long time, off the field in terms of the debate on leaving the European Union. What we should be doing is shaping the future of this country’s independence. And that’s what we should be focusing on, not whether or not somebody, way before I met them, actually sent private messages that actually had nothing to do with me and I had no means of knowing about them.

AM: But very extreme messages. And you’re still in touch, aren’t you? You were seen with her on Tuesday, so this is a relationship which is live.

HB: Yeah, but that’s not the point, Andrew. The point is that I am the leader of a political party that brought about the referendum, that was partly instrumental in bringing about the result. We have a responsibility to the British people to project politics into the debate to shape the future of this country. And that’s what I’m 110 per cent focused upon.

AM: I’m pushing this and I’m asking you, not because I’m prurient but because your party are really concerned about it. You said the relationship was on hold. It’s no longer on hold, is it?
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HB: Well, if you’ll excuse me, Andrew, I think actually what the party’s concerned about is unifying and projecting its politics. For a very long time now, for way before I became leader, all of the members have known that internal communications, the finances, the organisation of the party needed an overhaul. And that’s what I’m engaged upon.

AM: You’re losing a thousand members a month I think you said recently.
HB: Well, hundreds yes. And indeed that’s been going on for the best part of a year. From way before I was elected leader. And it’s those things that need to be turned around. So the priority for me has been to organise the party, and that doesn’t happen overnight.

AM: Well, you say that the party aren’t interested in this stuff. Let me read to you what Ben Walker, who’s one of your leadership contenders said. You probably know about this. ‘If it’s true they are still an item, and I have no reason to doubt that they are,’ and he’ll certainly have no reason now – ‘it’s another kick in the teeth to hardworking grassroots members of UKIP. The fact that he continues to associate with this woman and her abhorrent views demonstrates a disastrous lack of judgement and complete disregard for the party’s reputation, which he’s managed to single-handedly destroy – his only achievement to date,’ says Mr Walker.
HB: Well, Mr Walker is on the back foot because Mr Walker himself has been –
AM: It sounds like he’s on the front foot.
HB: He’s absolutely not. As I think the coming days will prove. He has been subversive and disruptive in his activities towards the party. Along with other people. And indeed, one of the purposes – and I was fully transparent with this before I was elected leader, whilst I was going around during the leadership campaign. One of the primary tasks has got to be to unite the party, to do away
with the factionalisation that has actually arisen over a long period of time. If we’re going to be successful.

AM: It’s going to be very hard for you to do that isn’t it?

HB: It’s going to be incredibly hard. But the choice now facing the membership is either continue with the agenda of reform or retain the status quo, which includes the factionalisation. And so that decision will be made on the 17th.

AM: I am not going to read out your girlfriend’s tweets because they are so offensive, but they include things like, ‘Meghan Markle’s seed will taint our royal family,’ she said. And described Muslims as the ‘cancer of this earth’. Now you’ve said at the time that they were indefensible, but quotes, ‘there was some context to them which will be revealed in time.’ What context could there possibly be?

HB: Well, first of all the source of those tweets has already said publicly that they were doctored. He’s also said that –

AM: He?

HB: Yes, there was –

AM: The source of the tweets is Jo Marney?

HB: They’ve made them public. And you’ll probably be aware, Andrew, that when we talk about defamation, when we talk about the legal aspects of this, it’s the person who makes these things public. And these were not public comments, absolutely not.

AM: Let’s be absolutely clear, Jo Marney’s texts were doctored, you are saying, they are false?

HB: The source of those – one of those texts has said – or a couple of them, has said – and they weren’t texts, by the way, they were private Facebook messages – and he has said that they were doctored. So you know – by him. And indeed, as I say, in the days to come there will be more evidence being presented as to how they were obtained. And again that source has said he’s been misled by people within the party. So there are issues within the party, and the first thing is to sort this party out so that it can
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actually present its politics. And this is part of it. This is actually a problem that has been going on for many months. Way before I was leader.

AM: But they are livid with you, not only about this but also the fact that you left your wife and children in those circumstances. At that special meeting, let’s be honest, they’re going to hang you by the heels.

HB: I doubt it very much, Andrew. The 17th will tell. I’m getting a huge amount of support from around the country because the membership know what’s been going on within the party for a very long time, and they know that I’m not responsible for that. They know that the factionalisation needs to be dealt with if the party is going to professionalise and be effective, and they actually know that I’m embarked upon an agenda, because I’ve been touring round the country ever since October, and they are very well aware of the agenda that I’ve embarked upon.

AM: Mr Bolton, it’s over isn’t it?

HB: No, I don’t believe it is. No. I think that decision will be made on the 17th. I sincerely believe that if the party decides to go down the route of another leadership contest that will take sort of four to five months to complete, and then the new leader has to get themselves –

AM: Then it’s over.

HB: Then I think by then the party will have lost the opportunity to shape the future independence of this country post-Brexit, and I think –

AM: So it’s ‘me, or you’re finished’, basically?

HB: It’s reform or it’s remain as you are now. And we know that as we are now for UKIP is not good enough.

(ends)