

ANDREW MARR SHOW, JEREMY CORBYN, 11TH JUNE, 2017

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JEREMY CORBYN

LEADER, LABOUR PARTY

AM: Now it was by any standards a remarkable campaign. But it leaves Labour many seats short of actually being able to put their policies into practice. What more can Jeremy Corbyn do to turn the effervescent politics of protest into the hard realities of power? He joins me now. Welcome.

JC: Good morning.

AM: Good morning, Mr Corbyn, you're looking very chipper, if I may say so.

JC: Well it's a nice Sunday morning. And what better place to spend it than with you.

AM: That's very kind of you to say so. Now you say in your interview in the Sunday Mirror today that you can be Prime Minister very shortly and that you still expect to put down a Labour programme in the House of Commons. I just don't understand how that can happen, given the numbers.

JC: Well look, we have a chaotic situation with a government that sought re-election on the basis of wanting a bigger mandate and a bigger majority to bring stability to British politics and what have we got? A minority government relying on the DUP to try and get business through the House of Commons when they have no agreed position, as far as I can work out, on most issues. It seems to me chaotic. And I think we are quite ready and able to put forward a serious programme which obviously has massive support in this country. Remember this election campaign turned around a great deal on the basis of an awful lot of people rejecting the politics of fear and instead embracing the politics of hope, that we can challenge austerity and we can actually start sharing the wealth out in this country a bit better.

AM: But in terms of raw brute numbers and the way the system works they got more votes and they got more seats than you did and if they can form a coalition or some kind of government then they have the right to do that. And it's very hard to see how with your numbers you can stop them.

JC: They are trying to form a government at the moment. I've no idea what they're going to put into the Queen's Speech. No idea what their stance is going to be on a legislative programme. I'm very clear what our stance is. We fought this election campaign on a jobs first Brexit. We fought this election campaign to oppose austerity. We fought this election campaign to start bringing fairness and justice, security for old people and real hope for young people. Surely the result has shown something remarkable in British politics. Young people became engaged, older people joined in that engagement. We have an incredible process here. There's something actually quite historic happened you know.

AM: It was an extraordinary campaign but nonetheless at the end do of it you lost the election. You accept that?

JC: We didn't win the election.

AM: Okay, you didn't win it.

JC: As you know I'm a totally effervescent, totally optimistic person. We didn't win the election but we had an incredibly good result, particularly, if I may say so, given that way that so many of our incredibly experienced commentators wrote us off a month ago.

AN: So I'm going to return one more time –

JC: Oh you're welcome to. Please do.

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AM: - to the numbers, the parliamentary numbers and so forth. You are going to put down, we read, an alternative Queen's speech, is that true?

JC: Well, we're going to put down a substantial amendment to the Queen's Speech which will contain within it the main points of our manifesto, and so we'll invite the House to consider all the issues we've put forward which I've mentioned, jobs first Brexit, I mentioned the issues of young people and of austerity. And there's many other things...

AM: What are you going to be saying about Brexit?

JC: Jobs first Brexit and negotiate that as quickly as possible. But also to guarantee the rights of European Union nationals to remain in Britain. I think that will be –

AM: And do that immediately?

JC: Immediately. Well we already did that straight after the referendum last year on an albeit nonbinding House of Commons majority vote where the Conservatives for the most part abstained but bizarrely Boris Johnson supported the Labour vote on that occasion.

AM: Keir Stammer, your European Spokesman, said that it was an open question as to whether you would actually stay inside the single market and the Customs Union or leave it. Do you have any clear position on that?

JC: Well, the position we have is that fundamentally it's protecting jobs and industry in Britain and maintaining that trading relationship. I've said this many times...

AM: My question is, could you stay inside the single market and Customs Union?

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JC: Well the single market is a requirement of EU membership and since we won't be EU members there will have to be an arrangement made, so where I would –

AM: So you are clear, we are leaving the EU?

JC: Absolutely. Where I frame it is that we want a tariff free access to the European market. We also want to maintain very important university and research collaboration in Europe and there's a whole host of European agencies, EAEC, security, environment in which we obviously wish to be part of. And I'll tell you this: we will absolutely remain part of the European Convention on Human Rights and the European Court of Human Rights. We are not walking away from those vital post-war agreements that we made.

AM: Do you intend to support the government on the so called Great Repeal Bill?

JC: The Great Real Bill I suspect is probably now become history. I suspect we'll have something different coming in a couple of weeks time. We will put forward a position which we negotiate tariff free access to the European market and legislate after that.

AM: You could quite close to dominating the House of Commons in numbers terms as well if you could persuade Sinn Fein to take their seats. Has it crossed your mind that they perhaps owe you a little bit? You could have a conversation with them and persuade them to come to Westminster.

JC: Listen, I fully understand the many, many aspects of Irish history and I find Irish history absolutely fascinating. And I have followed it, as you know, for a very long time and I represent a constituency that has a huge Irish community within it. I don't see any possibility of Sinn Fein taking their seats.

AM: None at all? Okay.

JC: Well, unless you know something I don't know.

AM: No I don't, I'm asking you. But Ruth Davidson who did very well for the Conservatives in Scotland has opened up the idea of the main parties sitting down together and agreeing a joint position on Brexit. Is that something you would be open to?

JC: I don't think there is a joint position because Theresa May and the Conservatives have said all along that they will go and have a talk to Europe, if they don't agree then they're going to set up some kind of Singapore style low tax haven on the shores of Europe. Well that's not on our agenda at all. We're putting forward a very clear view on the kind of relationship we want with Europe in the future. That may disagree with Ruth Davidson if I may say.

AM: That may be changing...

JC: What I do agree with if I may say so is that we have to challenge the social conservatism of the DUP and what price they are going to extract from Theresa May and the Conservatives in order to continue support. They say there's no agreement. Well, the DUP have a very specific view on gay marriage, on women's rights, on a whole lot of things. They're not social liberals you know.

AM: They also have a very specific view about things like Winter Fuel Payments and some of the welfare issues where they're on your side rather than the Conservative side, so we'll wait to see what happens. Presumably you would welcome the Conservatives not implementing those parts of the Manifesto?

JC: Well listen. I've been all through this election campaign and I've been asked a hundred times the question, 'have we done deals with anybody?' No. 'Are we forming a coalition?' No. 'Will we put our programme to parliament?' Yes. And that is what we will

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do. That's why we fought the election, that's why we had the biggest increase in Labour support at any election since 1945. There's something quite remarkable happened there.

AM: Do you think we may be facing another election this year?

JC: I think it's quite possible. Quite possible there will be an election later this year or early next year and that might be a good thing because we cannot go on with a period of great instability. We have a programme, we have the support and we're ready to fight another election campaign as soon as maybe because we want to be able to serve the people of this country on the agenda we put forward which is transformative and has gained amazing levels of support. Because people who say, hang on, why are my children worse off than we are? Why are my grandchildren worst off than me? It's about – this election wasn't just about Brexit, there was something very different about it. It was challenging an economic consensus which has impoverished so many people.

AM: It certainly was, and there is now a big choice in a sense ahead of you, a strategic choice, about how you lead the Labour Party going forward. Because you now need to make one further big jump to actually achieve a parliamentary majority and govern as the Labour Party. On the one hand you could say I'm going to double down what I've achieved so far, the Momentum movement getting all those younger voters out, giving them a more left of centre manifesto, that all worked brilliantly for me and that's how I'm going to carry on with the same sort of people around me as before. Or you could say, on this occasion I want to open generously out to those people who gave me such a horrible time over the last two years, all those Blairites and Brownites who have been carping in the wings and are now eating humble pie all over the airwaves and saying how brilliant you are. Would you bring those kind of people back in? Yvette Cooper and all the rest? Are they welcome back in the Labour Party?

JC: Andrew, I'm the most generous person in the world.

AM: So the answer is yes? Chukka Umunna, Yvette, they can come back in?

JC: I'm not going to appoint a Shadow Cabinet on your programme if it's all right with you, you know.

AM: I'm slightly disappointed, but.

JC: I know you're disappointed but you know I'm sure we can come to an accommodation about this. Yes, of course we're going to reach out. Listen, I always have. Ever since I became Leader I've reached out and there's been one or two difficulties at times in the Parliamentary Labour Party, but let's put that behind us. The issue is the party came together around a brilliant manifesto. Came together and fought this election and came together for a result that you and nobody else ever expected. Out there a lot of people said, 'hang on a minute, you are for the first time offering a real choice in British politics' and d'you know what? It's infectious.

AM: So what is the next stage of all of this because if you bring more people back in you're going to as it were heal the Labour Party wounds and bring the Labour Party back together again after this election result. You're expecting an election quite soon. Is the Labour party ready for an election again this year? It's a very expensive process.

JC: Listen, we don't have any big donors. We don't have any billionaires. We raised millions of pounds from an average donation of £22. Ordinary people without much money saw in us something that was transformative, different and a real offer in society. We're ready any time.

AM: Now you've probably heard already Conservatives on this programme saying one thing we really fear is an early election

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'cause Jeremy Corbyn will become prime minister if we're not very, very careful. What's your message to Theresa May now?

JC: Well, she fought the election on the basis she wanted a personal mandate. She said in terms in parliament, vote for me. I've never said that, I've said vote Labour, and she said she needed that mandate in order to negotiate Brexit. Well, what happened? She lost seats, she's now in a minority government and she's relying on the DUP which barely gives her a majority vote in the House of Commons in order to survive. Listen, is it credible that with all the issues facing our country, all the issues of inequality, injustice and the Brexit talks and everything else that you have a government that cannot actually gain a majority in the House of Commons except by doing a deal with a very socially conservative DUP? Come on. We need something more responsible than that.

AM: Is Jeremy Corbyn in this for the long term?

JC: Look at me. I've got youth on my side!

AM: Jeremy Corbyn, thanks very much indeed for talking to us.