ANDREW MARR:
Well George Clooney is a hard act to follow, if ever there was one, but I’m glad to say the Culture Secretary Jeremy Hunt is going to follow him.

JEREMY HUNT:
Pleasure to be here.

ANDREW MARR:
Very good. Can we start by talking about the Leveson Inquiry? You’ve got so many things on your plate, but the Leveson Inquiry is clearly one of them. It has been the most extraordinary, sort of almost theatrical performance that has run and run and run - some terrible stories being told, a lot of anger. In the end, Leveson comes to you with recommendations. Do you then simply accept them whatever they are?

JEREMY HUNT:
Well it’s an independent inquiry, so I don’t know what he’s going to recommend.
Sure.

JEREMY HUNT:
We will obviously look at them very, very carefully. We wouldn’t set up a process like this if we weren’t going to take seriously what he says. But I think the process that we’ve had really vindicates the decision by the Prime Minister against a lot of cynicism. I mean, remember, this has been something that has been swept under the carpet by governments for a very long time and David Cameron said no, we are going to tackle this; we are going to really go into it properly and we’ll have a properly independent inquiry. And I think the process has worked very well and I think people do have confidence that it’s being done fairly.

ANDREW MARR:
Could it be that the inquiry is the punishment?

JEREMY HUNT:
Well I think there’s an element of that because often you know the best disinfectant is sunlight when you have big problems, but I think we are also discovering and I think interestingly there is a sort of consensus emerging that there does need to be some structural changes in the way the press is regulated. But I think on the other side people are also recognising what we value the press for. So of course we don’t want phone hacking, we don’t want any of those practices; but I think people also have recognised, for example, you know the News of the World exposed the cricket fixing scandal …

ANDREW MARR:
Yes.

JEREMY HUNT:
… the Daily Mail had a very important role in bringing Stephen Lawrence’s murderers to justice, and so you know I think people are recognising what we value as well.

ANDREW MARR:
Without pre-judging the inquiry, there is clearly a conundrum. On the one hand,
nobody seems to want state regulation of the press - and I suspect you don’t either. On the other hand, self-regulation is self-regulation and it hasn’t worked in the past and there are some proprietors and others who say they don’t want to be part of any self-regulation system. And so won’t parliament have to have a role in some form? Is it going to be sort of self … state regulation without state regulation or legislation for self-regulation? I don’t understand how it’s going to work.

**JEREMY HUNT:**

Well I think it’s very interesting and, as I say, I think we’ve come much closer to a consensus on the way forward than I would perhaps have predicted. I think everyone agrees that we don’t want the state regulating content. I mean what we value the press for - and we have one of the most lively presses in the world, they make life for me and my fellow politicians extremely uncomfortable but that is part of keeping us on the straight and narrow - so we don’t want politicians to be regulating content and I think that’s completely agreed.

**ANDREW MARR:**

Hear, hear.

**JEREMY HUNT:**

But, on the other hand, we need to have a tougher system that makes sure … I would like it to be an industry led system, but it needs to be properly independent of newspaper proprietors and newspaper editors. And if a newspaper is going to be punished for stepping out of line, then it needs to be a credible punishment. We need to avoid a system where people can just say, “Well I’m going to leave the PCC. I don’t want anything to do with this.” And I think it is going to be possible to find a way through this, but we obviously wait to see what Lord Leveson says.

**ANDREW MARR:**

So what you are hoping is that the industry comes to you with a tougher, more formal framework, possibly involving things like a register of journalists - the Editor of the Daily Mail has raised that as a possibility - and that that means that you don’t have to legislate?
JEREMY HUNT:
Well I don’t know whether legislation will form part of the solution or not. I would love the industry to come to me with their proposed solution. But what I would say to them is that whatever you propose must have the confidence of the public because the public are not happy with what’s been going on. They are passionate about having a free press and having newspapers that hold people like me to account, but they want people to behave properly. So it must have credibility with the public. But if they can come forward with that kind of solution, then of course that would be a much better end game.

ANDREW MARR:
So it has to be tougher than what we’ve had in the past?

JEREMY HUNT:
It has to be tougher, and there has to be a system of punishment so that if a newspaper steps out of line they really do get punished and it’s not something that they conduct. But I think the newspapers understand this and I think they understand things have to change, and, as I say, I think we’ve made much more progress. I think the elephant in the room in this is the fact that the newspaper industry itself, as you would know as a former editor, is actually not making money …

ANDREW MARR:
No.

JEREMY HUNT:
… and with the changes in technology that are happening, the fact that people are reading their news on their iPhones and on their iPads actually there’s a big technological upheaval.

ANDREW MARR:
Absolutely. And in the context of that, how important is it that Rupert Murdoch remains a big owner in this country? He’s said that he’s not going to close The Sun, but, as we’ve heard, The Sun funds The Times and The Sunday Times, which are
losing lots and lots of money.

JEREMY HUNT:
Well …

ANDREW MARR:
You know not everybody would come in and fund those, you know back those newspapers.

JEREMY HUNT:
It’s not my job as a secretary of state to say who should be owning what papers or what they should be doing …

ANDREW MARR:
Sure.

JEREMY HUNT:
… but you know I will say that I think Rupert Murdoch through the investment he made in Sky, for example, has massively increased choice in the UK and given us one of the most competitive broadcasting markets in Europe, and obviously I want the UK to continue to be an attractive place for international investors. And what I’m hoping is that what will come out of the whole Leveson process is not just that we can clean up the stuff that shouldn’t be happening, but also we can put in place a new modern regulatory structure that helps the newspaper industry evolve - deal with the challenge of the internet, deal with the fact that people want to read their news on the go. And if we can do that and if Britain is an exciting place for that model, then hopefully investors from all over the world will say well actually we want to be part of this story.

ANDREW MARR:
We saw this shocking story yesterday of a slew of arrests of really very senior people at The Sun newspaper, but this business of … And I should say it’s separate to the Leveson thing entirely, but this is people corruptly paying police and other civil servants, allegedly. But this is not limited to one newspaper, is it? This is something
that you presumably fear, everybody fears is more widespread in the industry?

**JEREMY HUNT:**
Well you know so it would appear, but you know this process is going on and I think this is the process that David Cameron started when he set up the Leveson process and said he was going to deal with phone hacking with a series of inquiries. But I think the other thing that happens when this happens is people realise how important our newspapers are. And I think about the MP expenses scandal when you know parliament was in absolute disgrace, but actually parliament has recovered since then and it’s found its voice back and it sort of needed to go through that.

**ANDREW MARR:**
Yes.

**JEREMY HUNT:**
And I think the tragedy of the closure of The News of the World is that a lot of the people who used to buy it haven’t switched to another Sunday paper.

**ANDREW MARR:**
*(over)* They just disappeared, yuh.

**JEREMY HUNT:**
*(over)* They’ve stopped buying a Sunday paper altogether, and I think people are now realising how important a free press is in our democracy.

**ANDREW MARR:**
Let’s turn to another current crisis, which is what’s going on in football with some very serious allegations of racist behaviour on the pitch and boorish, thuggish behaviour as well. Now you’re talking to the Prime Minister. You’re meeting the Prime Minister to talk to him about this. Give us a sense of the kind of thing that politicians can do.

**JEREMY HUNT:**
Well I think when you think about the issue of racism in football, I mean the first
thing to say is that we have made huge strides and in fact I would say that as a society one of the reasons that we’ve made huge strides in changing attitudes to racial discrimination is because of the changes in football. But …

**ANDREW MARR:**

*(over)* The last few weeks wouldn’t necessarily support that.

**JEREMY HUNT:**

Well this is exactly the point. I mean the lesson I think of the last couple of months is that you can never be complacent, and the Prime Minister is very, very concerned to make sure certainly that we don’t go back to the bad old days, but also that we are absolutely on our metal and making sure that the football authorities and the government continue to do everything we can to stamp out this problem.

**ANDREW MARR:**

So you would be pleased to see Terry being stripped of his captaincy in the sense of you know no suspicion of racism can be tolerated?

**JEREMY HUNT:**

Well it’s a decision for the FA, but I did support them when they made that decision because I think sometimes a principle is more important than any one person and it’s incredibly important for the future of the game that the FA deal decisively and clearly with these issues, as they did with Suarez, and so I absolutely supported them. But you know John Terry’s innocent until proven guilty and you know we must wait and see what the courts decide.

**ANDREW MARR:**

More headlines today as you’ve seen - some again unpleasant behaviour on the pitch. That presumably depresses you?

**JEREMY HUNT:**

It’s incredibly depressing. It was very unsporting behaviour. I’m sure the FA will look into whether any rules were broken. I thought the referee handled it brilliantly
actually. It was an incredibly tense and difficult situation and Phil Dowd did a fantastic job. But you know this is the kind of thing which can so easily escalate, which is why the Prime Minister has decided that he’s going to take a real interest and have this meeting at Downing Street.

**ANDREW MARR:**
Part of the sort of … the knock-on from that of course is that old Fabio walks out and there’s now going to be a vacancy for the England Captain. Important to get a Brit in that job or even an Englishman in that job?

**JEREMY HUNT:**
Well no-one would be happier than I would be if we could have an English coach for the English team, but I wouldn’t want it to be an English coach because he was English. I would want it to be an English coach because it was the best person for the job, and I’m sure that Harry Redknapp or whoever is chosen would have exactly the same views. So I think we have to have the best person for the job.

**ANDREW MARR:**
Okay. Let’s move onto, if we may, the other great government issue of the week, which has been the health reforms. It’s been a miserable, miserable time for the government. The Prime Minister is banging the table, we read, in cabinet, and saying no retreat, we’re going to hang onto the Health Secretary come what may. But a lot of people are now saying so many changes have been made to this bill, what’s the point? Aren’t you simply … Hasn’t this simply become a sort of macho struggle for the sake of it?

**JEREMY HUNT:**
Well the first thing I want to say is Andrew Lansley is absolutely the right person for this job.

**ANDREW MARR:**
Because you’ve been tipped to take his job.

**JEREMY HUNT:**
Well you know I am very proud to be Culture Secretary in the year of the Olympics … …

ANDREW MARR:
(over) You’re not applying, you’re not applying.

JEREMY HUNT:
… but Andrew Lansley is a decent man, passionate about the NHS, and he knows what he’s doing. And you know it is completely wrong to make a judgement about someone when they are right in the eye of the storm. I think putting through reforms is never popular - when Ken Clarke was doing GP fund holding in the 1980s, when Tony Blair was doing foundation trusts. These are very, very contentious issues and I think that he will be seen as the architect of the modern NHS in years to come because of his tremendous bravery in seeing this through.

ANDREW MARR:
Andy Burnham for Labour was saying actually this bill will not now go through.

JEREMY HUNT:
Well you know I think Andy Burnham’s got some real questions to answer. I mean he was Health Secretary in a government that had seven reorganisations in eight years. He now says he’s against reorganisations. He was someone who supported all sorts of moves to give autonomy to the frontline, which he now calls privatisation, which it most certainly isn’t. And I think we have to talk about money. I mean he went into the last election campaigning to cut the NHS budget. There’s one part of the UK where Labour does control the NHS and that’s Wales, and they have cut the NHS budget in Wales, so I think they should answer some questions about their own policies too.

ANDREW MARR:
You mentioned the Olympics. You’re wearing your very smart little Olympics badge there. Rather controversially you doubled the budget for the opening ceremony. Time of austerity, people would say that was not necessarily a good use of public money.

JEREMY HUNT:
Well it was a controversial decision, but let me say this. We don’t know how many people will watch that opening ceremony. It could be one billion; the Chinese say four billion of the world. Seven billion watched their opening ceremony. This will be the biggest, longest ad for our country in our history and when those billions of people see it, I want the world to know that this is the country that invented or codified eight of the world’s top ten sports; it’s the country that was the birthplace of many of the freedoms and democratic rights from the Suffragettes to Magna Carta to standing alone against Fascism in the Second World War. And I want the world to know that. This is our chance and if there’s one British quality we don’t want to see this year it’s British modesty. This is the time to bang the drum for all that’s brilliant about our country.

ANDREW MARR:
Alright. Jeremy Hunt, thank you very much indeed for joining us this morning.]

JEREMY HUNT:
Thank you.

INTERVIEW ENDS