

MICHAEL GOVE MP

THE ANDREW MARR SHOW

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Minister for the Cabinet Office

(Rough transcript, check against delivery)

AM: Mr Gove, welcome. Should face masks be mandatory in shops in England?

MG: I don't think mandatory, no. But I would encourage people to wear face masks when they're inside in an environment where they're likely to be mixing with others and where the ventilation may not be as good as it might. So I think that it is basic good manners, courtesy, consideration to wear a face mask if you are, for example, in a shop.

AM: But we don't need the law to do that?

MG: Well, I trust people's good sense. Of course the government at all times does look at the emerging evidence about what the best way to control the disease is. If necessary and if tough measures are required, as we've seen in Leicester – obviously a very different situation – then tough measures will be taken. But on the whole my view is that it's always better to trust to people's common sense to give them their sense of what is wise, and I think that individuals and businesses are responding well to that lead.

AM: You're talking about borders today. Are Britain's borders going to be ready and secure by the end of this year?

MG: Yes, I think they will be.

AM: Because your colleague, Liz Truss, as we know, as expressed some real worries about this. She said in her letter that she wanted assurances 'that we'll be able to deliver full control at ports by July 2021 and that plans are in place from January to

mitigate the risk of goods being circumvented from ports intercepting port controls.’ In other words, the whole thing is tight by then. And you can give that assurance?

MG: Yes, absolutely. Everyone in government wants to make sure that our departure from the European Union is a success. And whether or not we secure a Canada-style trade deal with the EU during the course of the negotiations that we’re carrying out, we will be, we know, outside both the single market and the customs union come what may. And that means that business needs to take some steps, and government certainly needs to take some steps in order to make sure we’re ready. That’s the basis of the announcement today. More than £700 million in order to provide infrastructure at ports, to invest in technology, and also to make sure that we have the personnel to keep ourselves safe.

AM: And are you sure that we will be complying with international law by the 1st January? Because again Liz Truss was worried about that.

MG: Yes, I’m absolutely certain that everything that we do is compliant with law. Indeed, is designed to ensure we can, not just comply with law, but keep people safe, but also facilitate trade as well. Because the critical thing about our new border infrastructure is that it’s there both to allow us to trade with Europe, but also to make it easier to trade with the rest of the world with new trade deals that Liz is leading on. And also it’s part of the process of making sure our points-based immigration system can come in too.

AM: So explain to us, why is Micheal so confident and Liz so worried, and are you going to sack her for leaking?

MG: No. Liz is one of my best friends in the Cabinet. We work together because we’ve got a shared interest in making sure that Brexit works, that we have trade deals that help UK customers get cheaper goods and help UK producers access new markets and make sure that we protect jobs in this country. And it’s part of the

natural process of government that a minister from one department will test the propositions of a minister from another department. And, you know, one of the things that we do – I worked with Liz, we were ministers together at the Department for Education – is that we will discuss what we think the best approach is and then get cracking on implementation.

AM: So, you say get cracking. Now, we don't know who leaked this letter, I should make clear. But when it comes to the border policy, you've set the timescale all the way through. Why have you left it so late? A lot of them are worried that you have left it a bit late.

MG: I don't think. And I heard Rachel Reeves earlier make that point, but with respect to Rachel, who's a great person, the Labour Party until recently was thinking that we should have a second referendum, and they were saying that I was in the Cabinet Office last autumn laying the ground for preparation Brexit come what may. So you know, I think some of the criticism has come – how can I put this? – there's an element of Captain Hindsight about some of this. But what we've been doing is laying the groundwork for months now, and we've been consulting with the people who are responsible for freight, for our borders and all the rest of it, and it's a timetable that we've developed in cooperation with them.

AM: Is it true that you're buying a large property in Kent as a lorry park? Can you explain what that's for and where it's going to be?

MG: No. We've been exploring a variety of potential sites. It's not the intention to do that. What we want to do is to make sure that freight travelling through Kent can get to Dover and then onto the ferries and then into France and into the rest of Europe as quickly as possible.

AML: Without..

MG: Precisely. And so it may be the case that, not so much in Kent, but elsewhere, that there will be specific pieces of infrastructure that we put in place in order to smooth the flow of traffic. There's been some speculation about one particular site. We are looking at how we can develop infrastructure which makes sure that we avoid what I think all of us want to see avoided, which is any sense of the routes being clogged, and we're working with the haulage industry and freight forwarders in order to do that. But it's not the intention to create a massive concrete lorry park. It is the intention to provide the smart infrastructure which in Kent and elsewhere will allow trade to flow.

AM: This is a complicated matter. The Taoiseach I was talking to earlier, said that he did not yet have the information. He was rather worried about the slow information coming out on the matter of the Irish border. Is he going to have everything he needs by the end of the year?

MG: Yes, the announcement today is about the GB border with the EU, making sure that, as I say, we can have a good trading relationship with the EU and the rest of the world. We'll be seeing about the specific situation in Northern Ireland later this month. But we'll be building on the command paper that we published earlier this year which lays out the way in which we can ensure that there's no need for customs infrastructure on the island of Ireland, and what we are doing is making sure that people in Northern Ireland can continue to have unfettered access to the whole of the UK.

AM: Some of your colleagues, as you know, are rather worried about aspects of this. This is the Liz Truss letter again. 'The digital delivery of the dual tariff system,' that is the EU tariffs, 'in Northern Ireland is at high risk. And HMRC are planning to apply the EU tariff as a default to all imports in Northern Ireland on the 1st January 2021.' She's worried about this. Lots of your

colleagues, as you know, are also worried about this. Is that true? Is that the default position?

MG: Well, be saying more about how we're going to implement the Northern Ireland protocol later this month, and I don't want to pre-empt that announcement. But we'll also be explaining the additional investment that will be going into HMRC, Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs processes in order to facilitate trade. Now, of course we want to make sure that we get a trade deal with the European Union which doesn't impose tariffs or quotas. But as we've outlined in our command paper, it won't be the case that we'll be levying tariffs on goods that stay in Northern Ireland.

AM: I understand there'll be no tariffs, but there are going to be some kind of checks and some kind of regulations.

MG: There are some specific checks that will occur for products of animal origin. Sorry to be so technical, but in essence we know that island of Ireland since Victorian times has been a single epidemiological zone, so that vets know that you treat the island of Ireland differently for some rules than GB.

AM: (talking together)

MG: You know, I remember when BSE was a problem, the fact that Ireland was treated differently was something that the Reverend Ian Paisley was very pleased by. He said, 'my voters are British but my cows are Irish.' Now, in respect of the Northern Ireland protocol there will be some checks for products of animal origin that go from GB to Northern Ireland, but we want them to be as light touch and minimal as possible.

AM: So let's just clear up one thing for sure, which is what Boris Johnson said in December. He said, 'there's no question of there being checks on goods going from Northern Ireland to Great Britain or from Great Britain to Northern Ireland.' Let's be honest and straightforward. That is not quite true is it?

MG: Well, as we've explained, there is unfettered access for goods from Northern Ireland, no problem there at all. For commercial goods and so on, as they're going into Northern Ireland, one or two rather simple processes.

AM: But the prime minister said no checks. Was he correct or was he not correct?

MG: Well, I think the thing is that it's certainly not going to be the case that you will have customs officers saying, you know, 'halt.' and so on. What you will have are vets who will be suitably equipped in order to carry out surveillance, and as I say, in most cases because we will have the same standards on both sides of the Irish Sea there won't be any impediment to trade.

AM: Well, however they're dressed up and whatever the details are, you've just told me there will be checks. The prime minister said clearly there will be no checks. Which is true?

MG: Well, I don't want to be overly semantic –

AM: Be as semantic as you like. Checks or no checks?

MG: The prime minister was talking in the context of the sorts of customs checks that we might see, for example, in Calais, and he was saying that you won't have them here. And there's a difference, and it was the prime minister himself who, in concluding the withdrawal agreement, made the point that I've made about Ireland being a single epidemiological zone and saying that Ireland could have different SPS criteria from the rest of the UK. So at the time the prime minister was making that point he had already drawn that distinction. So it's always possible to, when politicians are speaking –

AM: It's always possible to read you a bit of a very clear sentence. 'There's no question of there being checks on goods going from Northern Ireland to Great Britain or from Great Britain to Northern Ireland.' I just put it to you, that is no so.

MG: Well, you have to look at the context in which the prime minister was speaking, and he was speaking after he himself had

said that we should have Ireland treated differently for SPS reasons. So he was talking about the customs context, not the SPS context.

AM: We've heard from people around Michel Barnier that there are moves on the EU side of these negotiations. Are you confident, as the prime minister said that we were going to be, that we will get a trade deal this month?

MG: Well, I don't know about this month. But it's certainly the case that progress is being made. Yes, there are divisions between ourselves and the EU. But take a case in point: until recently the European Union was saying that there has to be a permanent presence in Northern Ireland, they needed to have an agency there to supervise it. They've now retreated on that. We've persuaded them that wasn't necessary.

AM: There is movement on both sides.

MG: There is movement. And to be fair to Michel Barnier and his team they recognise the strength of the case that our negotiators are putting. But there are still differences. So there are hopeful signs but I wouldn't want to be over – what's the word?

AM: Enthusiastic, positive.

MG: Over enthusiastic. I want to be optimistic but not over enthusiastic.

AM: Okay, let me ask you about something else. You've been a long term enthusiast for civil service reform.

MG: Yes.

AM: We've talked about it forever. Are we finally going to see chunks of the civil service moved out of the centre of London to other parts of England?

MG: Yes.

AM: Are we going to see the House of Lords moved to York?

MG: I don't know.

AM: But possibly.

MG: Well that's a matter for parliament. So it's not –

AM: Okay, well tell us the case for doing that. Tell us the case for moving the chunk of the legislature out of London after all these centuries and putting it back in York.

MG: Well I think what I – my own views on two areas. Firstly on civil service reform. I think it's vitally important that decision makers are close to people. I think it's vitally important that the strength of the UK government is displayed across the whole of the United Kingdom and that we distribute opportunity, jobs and investment fairly. We've already got civil servants in Scotland who are working for the Dept for International Development, in Wales working for the Dept of Transport, we can do more. It's good for the Union, it's good for equal opportunity it is good for what's been called levelling up. As far as the legislature goes that is obviously a question for the House of Commons and the House of Lords. Government has to tread carefully there. But my own view, I think it will be a good thing if people were to see parliament closer to different parts of the United Kingdom and I don't see there's any reason why we can't have more operations of the UK parliament in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. It's a – you know our UK parliament is a parliament for everyone in the United Kingdom so making it more accessible and we can discuss how, is a good thing.

AM: But without tying you down to what the Commons and the Lords might decide in the future, in your instinct this is going to happen.

MG: No. I don't know about that. I don't know about York specifically, I don't know about the House of Lords specifically but my own view is we should be bring parliament closer to the people. I think the distinction's drawn up in some people's minds where they think that the UK parliament is for England, Holyrood is for Scotland. There are two parliaments for the people of Scotland and we work together and Nicola Sturgeon pointed out earlier that we've had good conversations about how to

collaborate on working to deal with the Coronavirus. I want people to be as aware of the good work that the UK government does in Scotland as they are aware of the work that Holyrood does.

AM: In your own personal view should Huawei inside the 5G network in this country?

MG: Well it doesn't matter what my personal view is, this is going to be decided by the National Security Council and when the National Security Council decides then that decision will be communicated to parliament and to others. In some respects rather old fashioned. I think that if you've got something like a National Security Council then the decisions that are taken there shouldn't be pre-empted by individual ministers riding hobbyhorses.

AM: We both know that relations between the UK and China are deteriorating at the moment, they're not good and there have been reports today that the government is worried about a cyber attack on this country as has happened in Australia as a result of that. Are you one of those people worried about that?

MG: Well again, I don't want to see even more crusty but I don't think it's a good idea for ministers to talk about cyber security issues in that way. You know the UK has a relationship with China which is based on appropriate candour at times, So if we disagree as we do over the new security law in Hong Kong we'll say so, but it's also the case that China is a significant player in the global economy, China is a partner with whom we have to engage if we're going to make progress on dealing with climate change, so I think the right thing to do is to leave the leadership in diplomacy to the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary do a great job and for those decisions on other matters to be taken appropriately.

AM: it's a delicate dance...

ENDS

