

ANDREW MARR SHOW, 13<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY, 2019, STEPHEN BARCLAY, BREXIT SEC.

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STEPHEN BARCLAY, MP

BREXIT SECRETARY

AM: Stephen Barclay the new Brexit Secretary told us the last time he was on the show was that it was a hundred percent certain that that meaningful vote was going ahead in December. Now a couple of days later you may remember, exactly the opposite happened. Well, he's with me again now.

Stephen Barclay, as I said, I asked you hundred percent certain that this vote's going to ahead in December and you said, 'yes,' and it didn't. Were you misleading me and the people watching or was it the case you simply didn't know what was going to happen?

SB: No. That was the government position at the time.

AM: So you didn't know it was going to be reversed?

SB: No, as I said when we met, we were listening to colleagues, those calls were going on during the course of the weekend. When we met for Cabinet or we had a call for Cabinet on the Monday that's when the decision was taken. So Sunday morning that was the policy, but as I said then we were listening to colleagues and what's clear is that was the right decision to take to postpone the debate.

AM: It may have been the right decision but you did say it was a hundred percent certain the vote would go ahead and it didn't.

SB: And I also said we were listening to colleagues, taking soundings from them and that was reflected in the discussion that we had as a Cabinet on the Monday.

AM: Now I'm staring at your jacket as I'm rather hoping there's a neatly folded piece of paper in your breast pocket or another pocket with Plan B written on it and you can bring it out now and tell us what Plan B is.

SB: Well we're committed to the vote on Tuesday. There's still three days speaking with colleagues. We've seen from speeches in the House this week, whether it's senior Conservatives such as George Freeman or whether senior Labour figures such as Jim Fitzpatrick that there is some movement in the House and our commitment is to –

AM; Not enough though. There's not enough.

SB: We recognise that it is challenging. A lot of people rush to judgement with the vote, what was a complex document, 585 pages of the Withdrawal Agreement. Some people rushed out within minutes to give their verdict on it. So we're working hard with colleagues, we're working hard with EU leaders, the Prime Minister has been speaking to them in terms of the specific concerns we've heard, particularly on the issue of the backstop.

AM: But if you lose that vote and most people think you will, there will have to be another plan, Plan B. Do you know what it is and you're not telling me or do you not know what it is?

SB: Well there is a process in place following that vote if we were to lose it in terms of the Prime Minister coming back to the House.

AM: But you must know, surely?

SB: But the issue is for parliament and for Members of Parliament is they face a choice in Tuesday between the certainty that the business community are looking for that is good for our security, is good for citizens' rights. There's a lot in this deal that members of all sides of the House.

AM: It's almost certainly going to be voted down. It might not be but it's likely to be voted down and the country has the right to know if it's voted down what the government's going to do next and that's what I'm asking you.

SB: Well the country does have a right to know what Members of Parliament are for, not just what they are against and it's important that the House comes to a view as to what it can back. There's lots of different plans been put forward by Members of Parliament that don't respect the referendum result of the risk of

no deal which will give not just project fear which people say but project reality in terms of real term consequences.

AM: I kind of thought you were pro no deal in the end. If that's what it had to be you'd go for no deal rather than any other option, wouldn't you?

SB: Well, what I support is the deal that gives certainty that responds to the concerns of businesses.

AM: As I keep saying that might fall. I'm asking you what happens if it falls?

SB: Well it will be for the House to decide what it is able to support and I suspect it will be along the lines of this deal, because this is the deal that delivers on what people like me, Brexiteers like me campaigned for, whether that's control of our immigration, putting an end to the vast sums of money, taking control of fishing and agriculture. So this delivers for Brexiteers but does so in a way that respects the needs of the business community. And MPs that vote for it will own the consequences of that.

AM: As the man at the heart of this process can you tell people watching is it true, so far as you're aware, that there is a plot oo a conspiracy or whatever you call it, going on inside parliament between the Speaker's office and senior Conservatives to wrest back control of the parliamentary agenda from the government? Is that true or not? Is that happening?

SB: Well I think what recent events have shown for Brexiteers like me that the risk –

AM: Is it happening or not?

SB: Well if I may answer it. What recent events have shown with events over the last week with what happened for example on the legal advice where government was forced to act in a way that it didn't want to, is that the uncertainty in terms of what will happen in the House has increased. And so those on the Brexiteer side seeking ideological purity with a deal are risking Brexit because

there is a growing risk that events could unfold in ways so they're leaving the door ajar to ways that increase the risk to Brexit. And I think it's essential –

AM: You're not offended by the role of the Speaker in all of this? He is doing his job defending the rights of parliamentarians and backbenchers against the Executive, isn't he?

SB: Well I respect the role of the Speaker – and I was surprised, as many MPs were by the decisions this week, but I respect the Chair and we will operate with it. But the point for Brexiteers like me is that the risk that is posed by people in parliament who stood – the vast majority stood on a manifesto to respect Brexit, both the Labour Party and the Conservative Party Manifestos said they would respect the referendum result. But this is self-evidently the case that the risk of parliament acting in a way that frustrates what was the biggest vote in our history has increased. And I think this is a deal that delivers on the key asks of Brexiteers –

AM: No, you've said that several times. Can I ask you also as Brexit Secretary, we may end up with no deal. How well prepared are you?

SB: Well, we're working extremely hard on that. Plans have been in place over the last two years. We have increased the tempo –

AM: Let me ask you a few questions in detail about that in that case. The National Audit Office says there are 12 computer systems that are absolutely critical to no deal. How many of them are up and running now?

BS: Well we have weekly meetings looking at all the key programmes.

AM: Of the 12 how many are there?

BS: Let me come onto it. So the number of no deal plans off track have actually improved, so there's been a 5% increase in terms of those are that on off track.

AM: How many of the computer programmes are working now?

BS: Well I'm not going to get into every single programme but the key –

AM: You should know this, it's really important.

BS: The key issue is we are moving resource in Whitehall, we are stepping up our plans, we're engaging very actively on it.

AM: You don't seem to know the answer to this. The answer is one of the 12 are working so far. 11 of the 12 are not yet working. So that doesn't like we're ready. Let me move something else –

BS: No, because this is happening in real time. We are moving resource in Whitehall and we are stepping up on our programme.

AM: And we're not ready. Portsmouth is set to be the relief port for Dover in terms of traffic coming across if there is no deal. Where are lorries going to queue and park waiting to get onto the Portsmouth docks?

BS: Well I've discussed this issue with Caroline Dinenage who is one of the local MPs there because that is part of –

AM: So what's the answer?

BS: Well these are issues that the Department for Transport have as part of their contingency and that they are working on. But the key issue is no one wants a no deal scenario. It is the sort of issues that you're highlighting –

AM: I'm sorry, I'm asking what is the answer? I have the answer here, according to the Local Relief Plan. The answer is the M3.

BS: Well, we've been testing these. You saw in the events last week the Department for Transport are running a number of contingency plans. But what you're drawing attention to the fact –

AM: I am and I will be carrying on.

BS: - there will be challenges in no deal. And this is the very essence – well if you let me finish, but this is the very essence of why we need to secure the Prime Minister's deal, because that is what will offer the certainty that businesses need.

AM: Let me ask you one more. There are said to be 50 areas of legislation or pieces of legislation that need to be passed before no deal can work properly. We have 9 parliamentary weeks left to

do that. Of those 50 how many are you confident getting through parliament in that time?

SB: Well I don't accept actually that the figure is 50, but the reality is – what you're drawing to is when people say that they're supremely relaxed about the consequence of no deal, there are risks to no deal. So we are doing all we can within government to manage those risks but not all of those are things within our control because often it's reliant on what businesses do, what other member states do. But the best way to manage the risks of no deal –

AM: How many pieces of legislation do you think you'll need?

SB: - is actually to pass the Prime Minister's deal. And I think what you're alluding to is that –

AM: We've got that message, I'm just trying to find out what happens otherwise. Can I ask you about Jaguar Land Rover who announced 4,500 redundancies this week. Like lots of car manufacturers and other engineering companies they're really worried about the effect of no deal on just in time delivery of their systems back and forth across the Channel. What are you doing to reassure them? Have you spoken to Jaguar Land Rover?

SB: Well there the Business Secretary and others have been liaising very closely with them and you're right in terms of the risks to the automotive sector. It's one percent of jobs in the UK are linked to that industry yet less than half of their goods and supply parts are actually sourced within the UK. So you're absolutely right in terms of the flow of goods is hugely important to them, but as they themselves said there were many other reasons for the announcement we saw this week. It was to do with what is happening globally, what is happening in terms of diesel cars, it wasn't down to Brexit, even if many of the stories presented it as a Brexit story.

AM: In terms of percentages how confident are you this vote's going to go through your way?

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SB: Well we're working very hard. I accept it is challenging but there is movement in our direction.

AM: Go on give us a percentage.

SB: No, I'm not going to play a numbers game. It is challenging. We are working hard on it and I think the clear message from the business community, from citizens who want the certainty, the clear message is that they want this deal. It delivers for Brexiteers like me, but does so in a way that protects the jobs of your viewers and that is what matters.

Ends