ANDREW MARR:

And so to David Blunkett, a man of the left who moved to become a crucial figure in New Labour modernisation. He’s let off both barrels, as we were hearing, against the Corbyn revolution in The Mail on Sunday this morning, warning that disillusion will follow the euphoria as night follows day. The former Home Secretary joins me now from Sheffield. Good morning Mr Blunkett.

DAVID BLUNKETT:

Good morning, Andrew.

ANDREW MARR:

First of all, New Labour is now dead, is it not? For Liz Kendall to get less than 5 per cent in this vote is a shattering defeat for New Labour.

DAVID BLUNKETT:

Well I don’t think it was between New Labour and Old Labour. I think it was between modernity and the future and a real desire, which I understand, to actually have a more rigorous, more open opposition, and the party voted yesterday in very large numbers for the opposition rather than the modernity and the future. I backed Andy
Burnham and Caroline Flint. I’m disappointed for them. Incidentally, I was very entertained by Polly Toynbee’s attack on me. You see Polly joined the Social Democratic Party. I was in the Labour Party for over 50 years. I’ve seen it. I believe that people of my age and above have a point to make and experience to bring to bear. But more importantly, we can say things, we can provide if you like protection, an envelope to say to people you can speak out, you can be heard, you won’t be intimidated. We are prepared to speak even if you feel you’re worried about doing that. And we can do so with loyalty. I want the party membership and I want us as oldies to be more loyal to Jeremy Corbyn and Tom Watson than either Jeremy or Tom have ever been to previous leaders.

ANDREW MARR:
Not very difficult some people might say. Nonetheless …

DAVID BLUNKETT:
(over) Well you can say it. (laughs)

ANDREW MARR:
The real question, I suppose, is this. There’s been a huge upsurge of optimism and enthusiasm for change behind the Corbyn campaign. Are you sure that this cannot be carried through to government? Are you sure that Jeremy Corbyn is unelectable as prime minister?

DAVID BLUNKETT:
No, I’m not sure that Jeremy’s not electable. I mean if people would do me the service of reading the article I’ve written in The Mail on Sunday, which I stand by, I make it absolutely clear that there is the possibility of winning the election but there needs to be precepts. We must not have people told that they cannot speak out; we must not have a drive to deselect, to throw out Members of Parliament who speak their mind or have an alternative view; we must not have the intimidation that had people shaking in their seats in meetings in the 1980s or intimidation online because that’s a new feature of British politics. But we can actually mobilise people with the energy that came through this campaign of Jeremy Corbyn’s, we can mobilise them for a victory. The reason I talked about disillusionment is twofold: one, either Jeremy adapts –
which I hope he will – and his most zealous supporters will be disillusioned; or he
won’t actually listen to the electorate and adjust and it will be the electorate that will
be disillusioned. Either way, we’ve got a challenge because democracy relies on us
being able to develop energy and drive, but with trust and with an understanding that
you know that unless you get into power you can’t deliver any of the things that you
want to do.

ANDREW MARR:
So in terms of the policy programme that you think he’s going to have to ditch parts
of and so forth, which bits most worry you, which bits are the most difficult? Is it the
foreign policy, NATO, Trident? Or is it anti-austerity politics, which among a huge
number of Labour supporters are very, very popular indeed?

DAVID BLUNKETT:
Well the problem is that I actually have a great deal of sympathy with Jeremy Corbyn
in relation to austerity. I would have wanted the Labour Party to commit itself to
moving the … removal of the deficit into the next parliament, into 2025, which would
have been in line with most international economists given that the Tories had moved
the goalpost to 2018. Very complicated issues. The problem for Jeremy is that by
2020, this won’t be the issue. The austerity programme will have been carried
through. And I just want to make this point very clearly, Andrew. You can fill the
streets and the halls, as I did in the 1980s, but you’ve got to fill the benches. And
unfortunately the benches are not full of Labour MPs and as a consequence the Tories
are going to carry through the austerity programme in the next four and a half years
and what Jeremy will inherit will be a very different Britain.

ANDREW MARR:
Yeah.

DAVID BLUNKETT:
And I want him to adjust his policies and I want the shadow cabinet to adjust their
policies to the world of tomorrow, not the world of today.

ANDREW MARR:
Okay one final question. He’s won this huge victory. He’s barely got his seat on …

his backside on the seat, as it were, and already some of your colleagues are talking
about a putsch against him. Do you think that is sort of disgraceful talk? Even if he’s
been disloyal in the past and so forth, it’s wrong when he’s got that big majority to be
talking about getting rid of him so quickly?

DAVID BLUNKETT:
Yes I’m deeply concerned about the people around him. I’m very worried about the
direction. But I do not want people – I make this absolutely clear – I do not want
people to engage in a putsch. I want him to be given the time to demonstrate his
leadership qualities and the ability to be able to pull people together not just within
the Labour Party but more crucially across the country – to reach out, to have a much
bigger tent than the one I experienced in the Queen Elizabeth Centre yesterday.

ANDREW MARR:
David Blunkett, great to talk to you. Thanks very much for coming on.

ENDS