ANDREW MARR:
Now then to the Labour Party. And if the party is to recover from last month’s defeat – if - then an important first step would be to win the election next year for the Mayor of London, the post currently held by a certain Boris Johnson. But first there has to be a contest to choose the Labour candidate. The shortlist was announced last night and one of the leading hopefuls is the former cabinet minister Tessa Jowell who joins me now. Good morning.

TESSA JOWELL:
Good morning.

ANDREW MARR:
Tessa Jowell, let me talk first about your position. You’ve had by far the largest number of nominations from the Labour Party, but your leading opponent Sadiq has got, Sadiq Khan, has got the big support of the big unions. What do you feel about that?

TESSA JOWELL:
Well all union members will have a vote. I mean this is one member, one vote. If they
register as members of the Labour Party, they too will take part in this election. And there’s much more that unites us than divides us in this. The important thing is that we get to the end of this with as wide a franchise as possible, registered supporters, opening it up to affiliates. But the important thing is that Labour chooses a candidate who can win this election …

ANDREW MARR:
Sure.

TESSA JOWELL:
… because the scale of our defeat five or six weeks ago shows that we’ve kind of lost the art of winning the election. We’ve got to get that back again.

ANDREW MARR:
A lot of people think it’s impossible for you to come back nationally. You have lost so much across England, you have been so slaughtered in Scotland; you know, the boundaries are going to change, everything changes. It’s an almost impossible task. Whoever becomes the next Labour leader will not be prime minister.

TESSA JOWELL:
No well you know I certainly … I’m certainly not in the business of writing …

ANDREW MARR:
(over) Well you’d like that not to be true, but …

TESSA JOWELL:
(over) It was very … I was listening to Michael Heseltine. Michael Heseltine and Tony Blair had a conversation in 1994 when Tony Blair said, “When do you think Labour’s going to win again?” Michael Heseltine said, “Labour will win again when Labour wants to win again.”

ANDREW MARR:
Ah.
TESSA JOWELL:
And so we’ve got to get that winning determination back and we start in London. We start with the possibility of winning the London mayoral election next May. If we don’t win, if we don’t win next May, then Labour will not have won a big election by the time we get to 2020 for 15 years. That is really serious.

ANDREW MARR:
So it’s a very big moment for the Labour Party?

TESSA JOWELL:
It’s a very big moment, and that’s why Labour has to choose a candidate who can win, who can unite London and build one London. I think I’m that candidate.

ANDREW MARR:
Alright. And you’ve put housing absolutely at the centre of your campaign so far. Now I don’t want to kind of say anything rude on air, but if I could use the words ‘Ed Miliband’ briefly. Ed Miliband’s policies on rent controls and on helping first time buyers might very well have been hugely popular in London. Were they so terrible?

TESSA JOWELL:
Well, there is a crisis facing London. Let’s look at what needs to be done. There is a crisis facing London and it starts with homes. We’re building about 25,000 fewer homes than are needed for an expanding London every year. So what would I do? It would be my number one priority. It threatens London’s economy; everything else about London starts with having enough homes for people to live in. My number one priority would be to set up homes for Londoners which focuses in City Hall the ability to start building homes again, the first time since 1983, starting on the Mayor’s own land.

ANDREW MARR:
Okay all my adult lifetime politicians have been promising to build more homes and saying it’s absolutely essential and it’s never really happened, so what makes your proposals different?
TESSA JOWELL:
Well because I know how to do it. I mean I led the Olympics. During the course of the Olympics, we built 3,000 homes in the Olympic Park. It’s a matter of will, it’s a matter of assembling a team …

ANDREW MARR:
(over) But it’s land and it’s money and it’s also you having …

TESSA JOWELL:
(over) Yeah these are …

ANDREW MARR:
(over) … as mayor the powers you need.

TESSA JOWELL:
Yeah these are all excuses. You know the land is there, the money is there, developers will broker those deals. And the powers are there. There are additional powers I would like in order to accelerate housebuilding …

ANDREW MARR:
What would you need?

TESSA JOWELL:
… and that’s the power to call in smaller planning permissions where it’s quite clear that planning consent is being provi… being granted for homes, but nothing has happened. But also we’ve got to do more to improve the condition, the appalling conditions of the private rented sector in London.

ANDREW MARR:
What about another issue that’s very, very current in the House of Commons at the moment, which is cutting the welfare cap from £26,000 per household to £23,000 because that will put a lot of pressure on London families? What do you feel about that?
TESSA JOWELL:
Well in principle I’m in favour of a welfare cap. It does however raise very particular problems for London because the unaffordability of London – homes, transport – is one of the things which is defining this crisis for London …

ANDREW MARR:
Okay.

TESSA JOWELL:
... and it’s one of the reasons that I’m campaigning so hard for the powers to introduce a higher London minimum wage. Everybody else has London weighting. Our lowest paid workers should also have a London weighting equivalent in relation to the minimum wage.

ANDREW MARR:
You mentioned transport just now. What’s your view on HS2 which is, some people say, very much needed for the national infrastructure and yet is going to have a devastating effect, including on a lot of the social housing in North London?

TESSA JOWELL:
Well I’m in broad terms in favour of the new infrastructure that the country needs in order to remain competitive. I am concerned about the highly disruptive effect that HS2 will have as presently planned in Central London round Euston.

ANDREW MARR:
So what should happen?

TESSA JOWELL:
Well I think there are two things. I welcome the Mayoral Development Corporation based at Old Oak Common. I would like to see how this confluence of Crossrail and HS2 at Old Oak Common can see more homes built on the land there but also to reduce the disruption in the centre of London, in Euston.
Alright, Heathrow or Gatwick or somewhere else entirely?

TESSA JOWELL:
Wait for Davies, but take a blooming decision, act on it but with safeguards on necessary infrastructure, on noise and on pollution.

ANDREW MARR:
Any personal preference at all? Will you be lying alongside Boris Johnson in front of the bulldozers if Heathrow …?

TESSA JOWELL:
(over) No I’m going to … I’ve already voted in the cabinet for expansion of capacity at Heathrow, but if you commission somebody with an expert … members of a commission to come up with recommendations, wait and see what they have to say -- but then act.

ANDREW MARR:
Tessa Jowell, if you win this thing you will be a big figure in the Labour family. So I ask you with a particular underlining which of the candidates for the leadership has impressed you so far most?

TESSA JOWELL:
Well they’re all people of talent. I’m not …

ANDREW MARR:
You have to choose one. (laughs)

TESSA JOWELL:
No, no, no, no, no, I’m not going to get drawn into that. You know I don’t expect any of them to endorse me. You know, they’re all friends of mine, I’ve worked with them …

ANDREW MARR:
Alright.
TESSA JOWELL:
… they’re all people of talent. And you know the future of the Labour Party has got to be secured, but it’s got to start with winning in London.

ANDREW MARR:
And do you really see future prime ministers in that cadre of people who are trying to become leader?

TESSA JOWELL:
You can go on trying to draw me on this, Andrew.

ANDREW MARR:
I am.

TESSA JOWELL:
I’m focusing on winning in London …

ANDREW MARR:
Alright, well …

TESSA JOWELL:
… because the first step the Labour Party takes to coming back is by winning in London.

ANDREW MARR:
Well in that case, I’ll stop trying to draw you. Thank you very much indeed for joining us today, Tessa Jowell.

TESSA JOWELL:
(over) Thank you.

INTERVIEW ENDS