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**THE ANDREW MARR SHOW**

**INTERVIEW:**

**YVETTE COOPER, MP**

**SHADOW HOME SECRETARY**

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**ANDREW MARR:**

Now the events under investigation by Sir Malcolm's committee date back to the time when Labour was in office, and there are growing calls – as you heard – for the key figures of that era, including Tony Blair and David Miliband, to face further questions about the shadowy aspects of the special relationship with the United States. I'm joined now by Labour's current home secretary, Yvette Cooper. We're going to be talking about other things too, but let's start with this one, Yvette, if I may.

**YVETTE COOPER:**

Good morning.

**ANDREW MARR:**

You heard Sir Malcolm. There are many people who say yeah that's all very well, but we do need a judge led public inquiry to hold to account people, including former colleagues of yours. What do you say to that?

**YVETTE COOPER:**

Well that's always been our assumption that that would be the way to do it and the government had said that they would do that when they set up the Gibson Inquiry. I

think that was a good thing to do. Clearly that was stopped because of the police investigation, but it left twenty-seven different areas and issues that needed to be answered and I think we've got to have the truth on all of that. There is a very big difference, as you know you've had people saying already this morning, between the US approach where there seem to be really chilling cases of torture, brutal torture, and also in a process that was sanctioned by the Bush administration; whereas here in the UK then you know this is against the law ...

**ANDREW MARR:**

*(over)* And yet they've been very open about it.

**YVETTE COOPER:**

*(over)* ... it's against the ... Well it's a good point. It's against the law and also against the UN convention against torture that we have signed. It's immoral and also against everything that the agencies and the government have always said they stand for and believe in. So you're right, we have to get to the truth, therefore, of any serious allegation, of any kind of complicity, any kind of knowledge. We have to get to the truth about that. I think there are ... Obviously the police investigation needs to run its course - that criminal investigation is immensely important - but we've also got to have the full facts you know as part of an independent investigation as well.

**ANDREW MARR:**

So you want a judge led inquiry which will take public evidence on oath?

**YVETTE COOPER:**

Well I think the government has now said they want the ISC to do that (the Intelligence and Security Committee) instead. I have some ...

**ANDREW MARR:**

*(over)* But it can't be in public and it can't be on oath. We've just heard that.

**YVETTE COOPER:**

Well I have some concerns about the ISC process and whether they have the capacity to be able to do this and the scope to be able to do this. So I think what we need is the

government to set out why they think the ISC is now the best way to do that, whether they think they will have the capacity and resources because clearly they you know are overstre... They've had a lot of different extremely important inquiries. They did a very good inquiry into Woolwich, but there are a lot of things on their plate. So I think this is going to need to be looked at again, as soon as the police investigation is complete, as to what form this inquiry needs to take because I am still concerned that I think the ISC inquiry will not be sufficient to get to the truth and have full confidence in this process.

**ANDREW MARR:**

But as somebody who may be home secretary in a few months' time, your instinct is it's going to need a judge led inquiry in the end?

**YVETTE COOPER:**

My instinct has always been that that would be the right thing to do. But obviously we need to wait until the police investigation has completed and obviously the Intelligence and Security Committee's report we hope will be well underway by then, but certainly that's been my instinct.

**ANDREW MARR:**

And you'd like to see people who were colleagues of yours – Tony Blair, Jack Straw, David Miliband – in front of such an inquiry, answering the clear, tough questions so that the public can get a full picture?

**YVETTE COOPER:**

Well they've always said that they would cooperate with all investigations ...

**ANDREW MARR:**

*(over)* They have.

**YVETTE COOPER:**

... and have said that they would be very keen to do so. But you know I think the situation is very different here because of the legal framework we have, the strong legal framework that rightly prohibits torture. And I think this is also in the end about

making sure that we don't have the shadow of either innuendo or allegations and so on cast over the vital work that the agencies do, rightly do, to keep us all safe every day of the week. I mean they are taking huge risks on our behalf and we need them to be able to do so and continue to do so. We also need the public to have confidence and maintain that confidence in their vital work. So I think it's because so many of us are such strong supporters of the work that they do, that we also need to make sure that you know any concerns or allegations are properly answered.

**ANDREW MARR:**

Some people from the CIA are vigorously defending themselves at the moment saying waterboarding isn't torture. Do you think waterboarding ...

**YVETTE COOPER:**

*(over)* It clearly is.

**ANDREW MARR:**

It clearly is?

**YVETTE COOPER:**

It is. There's no question about that. And I think perhaps the most chilling thing coming out of this senate report has been the way in which some of the former CIA operatives and some of those in the Bush administration have sought to try and defend those techniques even after the senate report has come out. I think President Obama has rightly condemned everything that happened and also rightly revoked the powers and the programme that the CIA had in place as well.

**ANDREW MARR:**

Let's turn, if we may, to the public spending issue. A certain Mr Edward Balls has said that a future Labour government would get the deficit down and would do it by cutting departmental, unprotected departmental budgets year on year on year. That includes your home office budget, so I wonder have you given much thought to where those big, deep cuts are going to come? Have you had words across the breakfast table saying, "Gerroff my patch!" or whatever?

**YVETTE COOPER:**

Well we've already set out ... We've been doing a zero based review of home office budgets and what we're able to do - clearly we don't see the full books in opposition – and identified areas where it is possible to make savings. So, for example, by getting all of the police forces, requiring them to work together on their procurement and the way in which they purchase basic equipment, that could save ...

**ANDREW MARR:**

*(over)* Now you could make some savings that way, but what actually merging police forces?

**YVETTE COOPER:**

That would ... Just let me complete, because that will actually save about £400 million a year as a result. That's quite significant. That allows us to prevent thousands of police officers from being cut, which they will be under Theresa May's plans, and I think we've got to keep the frontline police in place.

**ANDREW MARR:**

You know what I'm going to say. It's a start. It's not very, very much in terms of the total global figures you need to save. What happens if your savings would result in you having fewer police officers on the ground in this country to protect people? Would you stand your ground and say I'm not having that?

**YVETTE COOPER:**

Well in fact actually for 2015/16, which is the first year that we've already got the budget set out, the savings that we've made and proposed, including procurement but also getting rid of police and crime commissioners, I don't think that they are the right way forward. We could save £50 million immediately by getting rid of the police and crime commissioners, put that into frontline policing. Under Theresa May's plans a thousand police officers will go next year. Under our plans, under Labour's plans, we could prevent every one of those thousand police officers going. So of course I will always argue for protection for frontline policing, for the neighbourhood policing that we believe is so important. But at the same time as doing that, I'm also identifying areas where we can make savings in order to keep those frontline police on the beat.

**ANDREW MARR:**

Which is why tediously I'm coming back to the numbers because £50 million sounds like a lot of money, but in the context of an £8 billion budget it's not so much. You're going to have make deeper savings than you've described so far on the programme, aren't you?

**YVETTE COOPER:**

Well in fact the savings that I've set out actually go considerably further than anything Theresa May has said, so in fact the government have set out rather less in savings than we have. So as well as the procurement, we've also set out police and crime commissioners, we've set out other areas – for example where we should end the government subsidy to gun licences. Gun licences are currently cheaper to get than fishing licences in this country. We should end that subsidy. That would also save us money. So we are part way through a zero based review, which is going through area by area ...

**ANDREW MARR:**

*(over)* But not the kind of cuts that would ...

**YVETTE COOPER:**

*(over)* ... and have come through substantial ... Well we've come forward with substantial savings in fact that do help us save thousands of police officers, so I think it does make a very big difference and is significant given the scale of the home office budget.

**ANDREW MARR:**

Okay let's move on now to immigration. Do you think there are too many immigrants coming into this country?

**YVETTE COOPER:**

We've said that – and you and I, I think, have had exactly this conversation before – that you know immigration has been too high, particularly because of the level of low skilled migration, and we would like to see low skilled migration lower. But we are not going to do what the government's done, which is set this no ifs, no buts promise

to reach a particular target which is now in tatters. We know that over very many centuries people have ... Britain has benefited from people coming into Britain, setting up some of our biggest businesses, supporting our public services. That's going to be important in the future, but immigration's also got to be controlled and managed so that the system is fair.

**ANDREW MARR:**

It sounds slightly to me as if you regard this country as such an attractive magnet that in the end, when it comes to the numbers, not much can be done?

**YVETTE COOPER:**

Well I think there are areas. For example, I think there are areas around these student visitor visas where the numbers have doubled coming in on the student visitor visas in the last few years. This is for short-term temporary students, not the university students. We want to see more university students. Student visitor visas have escalated dramatically even though those we know are visas that are frequently abused according to the independent inspectorate. So there, for example, we would have much tighter restrictions in place. Also think that there is a big problem with recruitment agencies who are only recruiting from abroad and then using immigration, exploiting immigration to undercut local wages and jobs. That's not fair. That's just unfair and it's unfair on people who are being exploited, unfair on local workers who find themselves being undercut, and also on other businesses who want to pay a fair wage. So we want much stronger action to stop that undercutting and we are the only party that's proposing changes to do so.

**ANDREW MARR:**

*(over)* Okay, but no caps, no overall figures?

**YVETTE COOPER:**

Well we would keep the cap on the skilled migration that the government has in place.

**ANDREW MARR:**

But no other caps. Okay. Can we move finally to the big row going on at the moment about the ease with which people are getting British passports without criminal

checks? Can you explain to us exactly what you would do as home secretary that is not being done now?

**YVETTE COOPER:**

I think it's shocking that we've had people, including serious criminals and killers, be given British passports and British citizenship because the home office failed to do basic checks. So I think we need much stronger checks in place. That must include a requirement on people applying for British citizenship to provide the equivalent of the Criminal Records Bureau checks from their own country and also stronger checks in place. And we would have additional border staff that we would pay for – because we've said how we would pay for everything – through visa waiver charges in the same way that other countries do.

**ANDREW MARR:**

And you're keen on this even though it would take a lot longer to get a British passport presumably with all these checks being done? You're prepared to do that?

**YVETTE COOPER:**

I think you've got to have proper checks on people who want to become British citizens. I think we don't want those who have committed serious crimes abroad able to take advantage of British citizenship. We should have fair rules in place ...

**ANDREW MARR:**

Alright.

**YVETTE COOPER:**

... because immigration's important to Britain, but the system's got to be fair.

**ANDREW MARR:**

Yvette Cooper, thank you very much indeed for joining us this morning.

**YVETTE COOPER:**

Thank you.

**INTERVIEW ENDS**