ANDREW MARR SHOW, JEREMY CORBYN, 15TH JANUARY, 2017

JEREMY CORBYN

AM: Now Theresa May pretty clearly is going to say that we should leave the single European market and the customs union. What is your reaction, as Leader of the Opposition to that?

JC: She appears to be heading us in the direction of a sort of bargain basement economy on the shores of Europe where we have low levels of corporate taxation. We will lose access to half of our export markets, it seems to me an extremely risky strategy. I think there needs to be more discussion, more consultation and recognise there is a close economic cooperation with Europe that’s going to have to continue when we’re outside the EU.

AM: And you’ve read this morning possibly the Chancellor, Philip Hammond, suggesting or implying that if we don’t get access to those markets we could cut corporation tax quite dramatically in this country and be at a low tax alternative to the EU –

JC: Yeah. He appears to be making a sort of threat to the European community saying well if you don’t give us exactly what we want we’re going to become this sort of strange entity on the shores of Europe where there’ll be very low levels of corporation taxation and designed to undermine the effectiveness or otherwise of industry across Europe. It seems to me a recipe for some kind of trade war with Europe in the future. That really isn’t a very sensible way forward.

AM: So trade war, a very, very risky option and a bargain basement economy.
JC: Yeah.
AM: And this is all triggered by Article 50 which Labour is going to vote for.

JC: The referendum voted to leave the European Union. That parliament has to live with and has to work around, therefore we won’t block Article 50 but we will make the point, very clearly, in the run up to the vote about the question of access to European markets and also of course things we are going to have to cooperate on the future such as environmental regulation, consumer rights, all those issues we’ve got to cooperate with them.

AM: But you now know that she is heading for a version of Brexit you think is disastrous. Doesn’t that change - you say you make your point.

JC: Hang on. This is what’s trailed this morning in a speech she’s yet to give so –
AM: You don’t believe it?
JC: Well, I don’t say I don’t believe it, I’m just saying sometimes the media frenzy can get slightly ahead of the facts.

AM: It certainly can. We’ll find out in the middle of the week nonetheless, but assuming that’s if that is the case, that she is taking us to a version of Brexit that you think is disastrous why is it that you are saying, there is the cliff edge, let’s march towards it?

JC: No, I’m not saying march towards the cliff edge.
AM: Well you’re voting for Article 50.
JC: No, listen. The referendum made a decision. Parliament voted to have a referendum. A decision was made. We have to work around it. Now the question then is how the negotiations are conducted, what they are, which is why I’ve been reaching out to
colleagues all across Europe, why we’re having a large conference of socialist parties across Europe at the end of February in London in order to build up alliances. Because remember, the Brexit vote isn’t a one off thing. It’s got to be agreed by 27 national parliaments. It’s got to be agreed by the European Parliament. There’s quite a long way to go on this.

AM: You think European countries could block the version of Brexit that Theresa May wants?

JC: I think many European countries would want to maintain the links between universities in their country and Britain, they would want to maintain that trade relationship. An awful lot of industries. Think of all the big names in Britain. Rolls Royce, Airbus and so on, all rely on a European cooperation.

AM: Now you said that you would carry on making the points here. Is there any way at all after Article 50 is triggered that you think you can get your version of Brexit through the House of Commons and actually it happening through the British political system?

JC: It’s going to have to keep coming back to the House of Commons and we’ll make sure it does keep coming back to the House of Commons. I know there’s a court case going on at the moment. We will keep on pressing the government on this and there are MPs in all parties that must be concerned about the future of industries in their constituencies, must be concerned about the future trade relationships we have, and also what kind of trade arrangements we have with the rest of the world in the future. If we’re part of the customs union then clearly trade is done by the customs union. If we’re not part of the customs union then we’ve got to start making our own trade arrangements which will be the first time for 40 years Britain’s done that.
AM: Forgive this ghastly cliché, or propagandistic thing, but is there a majority in the House of Commons if Labour works with other parties for a soft Brexit?

JC: I think there’s a majority in the House in Commons of people that are very concerned about the implications of a Brexit that leads us into the sort of Philip Hammond area of bargain basement on the shores of Europe economy. I think there are people who are worried on the points I’ve made about universities, about education. They’re also worried about the practicalities of all it, because clearly air pollution is an issue, clearly management of the seas and fish is an issue, there are many issues on which there’s going to be an awful lot more debate and discussion. This is not a one off simple thing that’s going to happen in two days time.

AM: Now it sounds unlikely but you made a speech this week which does have a whiff of Donald Trump about it, a whiff of the whole system’s rigged against the ordinary Joe and something needs to change.

JC: I’m really interested about the similarities between me and Donald Trump.

AM: Well so am I. It’s unexpected and the hair needs to change.

JC: Is it the hair or something?

AM: The hair needs to change. Let me read you one of the things you said however.

JC: I’ve got my own.
AM: “The people who run Britain, whoever they may be have been taking our country for a ride, they have stitched up our political system to protect the powerful.” That is a big charge. What do you mean by it?

JC: What I mean by it is the very wealthiest in this country outsource and offshore their profits into tax havens around the world. That we have been privatising –

AM: You said the political system.

JC: Wait a minute. We’ve been privatising services for a very long time. We have a growing gap between the richest and the poorest and we have a political system that leads an awful lot of people behind. That surely was one, there were many others, but one of the message in the EU referendum campaign and in some areas in the low participation in elections. I think people –

AM: But you say the political system itself is rigged or stitched up. What is it about the political system which is rigged or stitched up?

JC: We have a house of Lords which is dominated by a small number of people from London and the south east.

AM: So would you get rid of it?

JC: I would want to see an elected second chamber that is representative of all regions and nations of the United Kingdom. I think that’s very, very important. I think it should have an electoral mandate to go with it. I don’t think it’s anything you can defend –
AM: so the abolition of the House of Lords and it’s replaced by an elected second chamber would be part of a Labour Manifesto?

JC – which is not a new concept. It’s been in debate for a very long time.

AM: But it hasn’t been in the Manifesto for a while.

JC: I would like us to get to that position by 2020. Now obviously there are debates in the party. John Trickett made a very interesting speech on Friday about the need for more political representation of the north of England and we’re going to be continuing these discussions in Scotland next Friday. We are setting up a constitutional convention so that when we get towards the General Election, whenever that may be, we’ll be in a position of some degree of consensus about the kind of constitutional structures we’re looking for. But it’s also a question about properly funding of local government.

AM: Just pull back if I might. A constitutional convention in Scotland lead to the Scottish Assembly, which lead to the Scottish Parliament. Would you like to see the same process happening in the north of England? Should there be a north of England parliament?

JC: I think there is an appetite for a stronger form of regional government in Britain. An electoral mandate to do that, but also the levels of investment have got to be shared out fairly across the country. They’re not. I’ll give you a figure. 19 hundred a year is spent on transport in the south east of England, £300 per head in the north east. That’s not fair.

AM: So the north is not getting a proper deal and it might have a parliament as a result?
JC: Well, I’m not saying it would be a parliament of the north. It could be a stronger local government, but there has to be a much greater emphasis on the disparity between regions in Britain, the disparity between investment in Britain. There has also - it’s got to be an issue surely about the gap between the richest and the poorest and the amount of money that disappears into tax havens.

AM: Do you think we get a fair ride in the media and do you think media ownership’s an issue?

JC: I don’t think the media are very fair in many ways, particularly towards the Labour Party. An analysis done over the first year since the General Election showed that over 80% of the print media was actively hostile to Labour. 80% to the major opposition party.

AM: So what would you do about that as prime minister?

JC: Well I think we need a process where there is a right of reply. I think we also need to remove –

AM: A statutory right of reply?

JC: - remove the levels of concentration of ownership between - in certain organisations. I think that is important.

AM: So you would attack Rupert Murdoch, the Rothermeres and you would insist on the right of reply?

JC: I think the problem of Murdoch taking over completely Sky for example is a problem. Also there’s the question of the BBC Charter renewal which we would support the renewal of the BBC Charter
and the role of the BBC as an organisation that must educate, entertain and inform.

AM: Now in the same speech you made a big amount of the speech about the NHS and we've been talking about it this morning in the paper review and so forth and the crisis and you say in terms, that the Labour Party would find a long term funding solution to the NHS. But I put it to you that means nothing unless you tell us what it is, and we've seen a poll in today's papers saying that if people were told that a specific hypothecated tax would go to the NHS the majority would support that. Would you go down that route?

JC: I am not one that's generally in favour of hypothecated taxation but I'm prepared to consider it and look at it. The party will obviously consider it and look at it. Now the reality is over the next four years there's going to be £70 billion less than could be achieved because of cuts in corporate taxation and cuts in the top rate of taxation.

AM: So that kind of figure that the NHS needs over the next four years?

JC: The NHS has been cut but social care has been cut. The crisis in A&E departments is the symptom, not the cause of the crisis. I spent Friday afternoon talking to a group of GPs and what they go through and the Prime Minister has to go at GPs. I'll just simply say this. A ten minute appointment with a GP actually ends up with half an hour to an hour's work for a GP doing other things as a result of it. It's too simple just to attack GPs and actually very unfair.

AM: Absolutely. So I come back to the question. How much more does the NHS need and how would you pay for it?
JC: We’d stop the cuts that have taken place in the NHS but above all we would put more money into social care. Social care needs several billion pounds more very, very quickly. The idea of £2 billion is a figure that has been put by a number of people. The rise in council tax to pay for social care only raises 400 million, rather less than that. So you have to raise it through ending the corporate tax cuts.

AM: This is a really important moment in the history of the NHS. So long as I can remember governments have been saying we’ve given the NHS enough money and the opposition has been saying no you haven’t. There’s been a few billion here or there moved around the board, but this is a moment when we have to think about the future of the NHS. You said, ‘long term funding solution’. Can I put it to you that that can be and should be and under you would be a specific tax paid for by everybody to put the NHS into a good place and keep it there?

JC: We would guarantee the funding for the NHS. Whether we’d have a specific tax I doubt, but I’m prepared to consider it and discuss it as I’m sure all my colleagues are. But if you go down the road of hypothecated taxation then you’re going to do hypothecated taxation for every other service. That’s an issue. But I’ll just say this: It was Labour that founded the NHS. The NHS is a point of principle in our society. It’s a human rights to get health care at the point of need. The problem we have is the lack of social care, the underfunding of the mental health service is putting massive strain on A&E departments. The Prime Minister blames the GPs for this. Surely let’s look at the overall issue of the lack of funding of the needs of often very vulnerable people in our society.
AM: I think you've already allocated the corporation tax money for education. You can't allocate it twice, so how much more are you going to get from corporation tax?

JC: I gave you the figure. £70 billion that is going to be reduced from public income over the next four years because of the long term effects of the cuts in corporation tax and profit tax.

AM: So why is that when they're asked do you trust Jeremy Corbyn and the Labour Party or Theresa May and the Tories to deal with the NHS crisis more people now back Theresa May and the Tories. That's disastrous for you isn't it?

JC: I think the more people see the reality of the underfunding of the NHS, the reality of the hiving off and privatising of services, the outsourcing of NHS facilities, the more and more disappointed and angry they're going to get and they will understand the case that we are making. We need to say set a stage. The NHS is something – it's about our mindset, our security. We're not frightened of getting ill in this country because we can't afford to pay for it. We're all frightened of getting ill. In the USA the first question you ask somebody who's ill is what kind of health insurance have you got? Do we want that here? No.

AM: Can I turn to another big issue in front of you? You've got a by-election coming up in Stoke-on-Trent Central. That's a core Labour constituency. So long as there has been a constituency, Stoke-on-Trent Central, its voted Labour. It was also a constituency which voted 70 per cent to leave the EU, heavily on the immigration issue. And your policy on immigration is something that most people simply don't understand. You've said both that you're in favour of managed – controlling immigration, and also that you don't rule out changing it. It's very unclear what
you really think. Can I ask you in clear terms do you think immigration should come down?

JC: What I think should happen is the end of the exploitation of people, the undercutting and the destruction of working conditions by the bringing in wholesale of workforces to destroy existing conditions. And also, I would suggest, that we think seriously about the contribution that migrant workers have made to this country, in the NHS, in transport and in education. And at this very moment the NHS is recruiting doctors all over Europe to try to fill the gap caused by the age profile of our existing GPs. And so yes, we do need migrant workers in this country.

AM: Even if you put to one side the gang masters and the gangs and the recruitment going on in Poland and so forth, 82,000 people from the EU came to this country without a job on their own last year to look for work and that therefore they would have a better life. Now, I’m asking you, do you think that is too many? Would you like to see fewer such people? What would you do?

JC: Look, it’s going to be part of the negotiations of our access to Europe, if we are going to have access to a single market there is going to be an issue surrounding that. So what I’ve been talking about all along is the question of ending the grotesque levels of exploitation and the undercutting that goes on. Let’s look at the issue of the flow of people in the context of access to a free market, but let’s not blame migrants for the problems that we have. Let’s look instead at an economic system that has created these levels of inequality and injustice in our society.

AM: So you seem to be saying both that you’re in favour of some – you accept there’ll be some kind of control, but also that you’re against – let me remind you what you actually said about this, because there’s an awful lot of words involved. You said – I’ve got
it here now – ‘Labour is not wedded to free movement for EU citizens as a point of principle. Not wedded to free movement. But I don’t want to be misinterpreted, nor do we rule it out.’ That’s a lot of words to put on a poster.

JC: Well, it won’t be on a poster because it’s far too long. What we’re going to be doing is negotiating a trade arrangement with Europe to make sure that we are able to access those markets. It will involve people from Europe working here just as much as there are two million British people living and working in the European Union. Are we going to cut ourselves off from Europe completely? I don’t think so.

AM: Can I ask you one other thing about this, because when we talk about this you always talk about exploitation and economics.

JC: Well, it happens.

AM: Absolutely. But for an awful lot of people in Stoke and elsewhere this is a matter of identity and culture. Do you accept that or do you think that that is all a form of racism?

JC: No, I think identity is an important thing, and I think I’m saying –

AM: They saw our communities are changing too fast.

JC: Well, communities all do change. But it’s also a question of inclusion of people within that process, and so the government, for example, underfunding, indeed cutting English language classes, is part of the problem. The lack of local authority funding leads to a blame culture which is unbelievably unfair on people. Let’s instead look at the issues of how we develop our community and society and look at the huge contribution made to our health
service and education and local government by those who have come and lived here. Just like British people in France and Spain and Germany make a huge contribution.

AM: Let me read you another thing that you’ve said recently on the wage cap. ‘I would like there to be some kind of high earnings cap, quite honestly.’ You said that this week, do you still agree with yourself?

JC: What we’re doing is having a consultation on this. That’s one idea. I think a better idea is the ratio, and the ratio concept, which we are putting forward, saying - 20 to 1 is one that’s been put forward.

AM: So nobody in the company earns more than 20 times the lowest of the lowest.

JC: The idea being the Chief Executive would be tied to the wage level of the lowest paid in the company. So, for example, the John Lewis partnership...

AM: ... in the country.

JC: The John Lewis partnership operate this. We would use it first of all in the public sector where it broadly applies at the moment. But we’d also use it as part of the procurement power of central government and local government towards those companies that wish to do business with central government and wish to benefit from very big levels of capital investment in projects all over the country. This would make it a much fairer Britain.

AM: But it wouldn’t apply to most private companies, however. It wouldn’t apply to the banks.
JC: I would like it to. I would like it to. That’s why I’ve put the idea out there. And interestingly –

AM: It’s a very popular idea.

JC: It’s a very popular idea indeed. I was looking at an opinion poll on this this morning, not that I want to comment on opinion polls, but I understand that it is a popular idea, and certainly the word on the street I’ve had is that people quite like the idea and want to think about it and discuss it. And we’ve had some quite interesting responses already both from businesses as well as unions and as well as individuals.

AM: To be absolutely clear, this wouldn’t apply to people like footballers, pop stars..

JC: Well, footballers are not CEOs usually of their companies. So I think we have to look at it in that form of structure. But also footballers, whilst they are paid ludicrous sums of money, which I suppose we all pay for through our tickets, in reality they’re employees for quite a short time with those clubs.

AM: Yes. You’re going to be contributing to Mesut Ozil’s reported 15 million pound a year wage package.

JC: I already do as an Arsenal supporter.

AM: Do you think he’s paid too much?

JC: Yes, I do actually. But –

AM: Would you like to tell him? He’s probably watching. Just –
JC: Thanks for your game, you are a fantastic player, but can you just live with what you’ve got at the moment? He’s a lovely player and it’s a great club.

AM: Let me turn to – I mentioned Stoke-on-Trent but there’s also the Copeland by-election coming up. You have been absolutely clear in the past that you are against nuclear power and you want to see nuclear power stations decommissioned. Is that your message to the voters of Copeland?

JC: My message to the voters of Copeland is the NHS is in crisis, your hospital is about to be continuing underfunded and understaffed, and your A&E department is at risk. This is a by-election about that. We will be protecting jobs for that area and we will also be trying to protect the pensions of those people that have worked so very hard for so very long to keep the nuclear industry safe.

AM: Are you against nuclear power?

JC: I want to see a mix. I want to see a much greater emphasis in the long term on renewables in the way that Germany and other countries have done. But we do have nuclear power stations, we do have a nuclear base at the moment, and that’s going to continue for a long time.

AM: ‘I say no to nuclear power, let’s decommission the power stations.’ Does Jeremy Corbyn still agree with himself?

JC: We have a system which is a mix at the moment. Nuclear power stations last for a very long time. But I’ve made very clear that – no, wait...

AM: Could Sellafield expand?
JC: Sellafield is going to be there for a long time as a reprocessing plant anyway, whatever happens.

AM: There’s a big new development, as you know, at Moorfield.

JC: That is being – that is being considered.

AM: And would you be happy for that to go ahead?

JC: I want to make sure there’s an energy mix in this country. We have to first of all make sure there is sufficient energy supplies and there has to be an energy platform. So what happens in Moorfield is pretty key to ensuring that actually happens. But we have to have a much better energy mix, otherwise what do we do? Go to coal-fired power stations, or do we end up with energy shortages?

AM: Now, the party is way, way behind in the opinion polls, you are way, way behind in the opinion polls. You face a series of big by-elections in core Labour seats. If you don’t win Copeland and if you don’t win Stoke-on-Trent Central you’re toast aren’t you?

JC: No. Our party is going to fight very hard in those elections, as we are in the local election, to put those policies out there.

AM: But millions of people depend upon you, and yours are not getting any better, they’re getting worse.

JC: You’re making the assumption that everything is a problem. It’s an opportunity. It’s an opportunity to challenge the government on the NHS, it’s an opportunity to challenge them on the chaos of Brexit, it’s an opportunity to challenge them on the housing shortage, it’s an opportunity to challenge them on zero hours contracts. That’s what we’re going to be doing.
AM: Is there ever a moment that you look in the mirror and think, do you know what, I’ve done my best but this might not be for me?

JC: I look in the mirror every day and I think let’s go out there and try and create a society where there are opportunities for all, where there aren’t these terrible levels of poverty, where there isn’t homelessness, where there are houses for all and where young people aren’t frightened of going to university because of the debts they’re going to end up with at the end of their course.

(ends)