PRITI PATEL

ANDREW MARR SHOW

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AM: We just heard from Nick Clegg saying there that there should be a vote on the floor of the House of Commons about the terms of the Brexit vote and making the strong point that parliament is supposed to be sovereign in this country.

PP: Well, good morning, Andrew. I think the Prime Minister couldn’t be clearer when it comes to parliament and the discussions and the debate that will be forthcoming in the House of Commons.

AM: She’s not going to allow a vote.

PP: Already what we have seen, we’re seeing debates and questions in the House of Commons nearly every single day right now. But also there’ll be a very full discussion when we have the great Repeal Bill, which of course will be about repealing the European Communities Act from 1972, and that will go through, rightfully, the parliamentary process and give plenty of parliamentarians enough time and the right kind of time to discuss the actual repeal of that Bill.

AM: People like Nick Clegg would say that the great Repeal Bill comes to late in the process, that we need before, before Article 50 is triggered, a proper discussion on the floor of the House of Commons about what kind of relationship we want with the EU after we leave it.

PP: Well, I think, Andrew, on that point in particular we’re having that debate right now. You know, we’ve had statements and debates in the House of Commons, I think twice this week alone. So that debate and discussion is happening. The point about the great Repeal Bill is that is a milestone, it is the first significant
milestone in terms of repealing legislation. And absolutely, yes, having the parliamentary conventions, the discussions of the debate, but also focusing on aspects of EU law that simply do not work for Britain. And we have to do that so that we can get the right kind of deal that works in our national interest.

AM: It’s a very important Bill but it comes later in the process, in a sense. So what is your message to Nick Clegg and those people who say in the end we ought to have a vote on the floor of the House of Commons about our new relationship with the EU, before we start negotiations, before it’s too late?

PP: Well, I’d say, respectfully, that the job of the government is to deliver the result of the referendum. The Prime Minister has said a number of times ‘Brexit means Brexit’. We’ve seen the largest vote in this country this year through the EU referendum. The British people have spoken, and we’re going to deliver for them. This is not about using parliament as a vehicle to subvert the democratic will of the British public. Debates are happening. There will be a very significant debate – several debates I suspect – around the great Repeal Bill. We have new committees, a select committee in the House of Commons, we have a new Secretary of State in David Davis and his new government department. They are in and out of the Commons on a near-daily basis. So yes, these are debates taking place right now. But importantly, we as government are focused on delivering Brexit and delivering that important vote that the British public voted on this June.

AM: Now, you’ve talked about using parliament. In fact, parliament is the sovereign body. Let me read to you something that one of your colleagues, the Conservative MP Stephen Phillips, said today. And he voted for Brexit, I think. ‘I and many others did not,’ actually so he did, ‘did not exercise our vote on the referendum so as to restore the sovereignty of this parliament only to see what we regarded as the tyranny of the European
Union replaced by that of a government that apparently wishes to ignore the views of the House on the most important issue facing the nation.’

PP: Well, there’s no ignoring any views whatsoever of the House and my colleagues in parliament, this is the point that I’m making.

AM: If you don’t have a vote, it’s just talk.

PP: But there will be votes on the great Repeal Bill and of course...

AM: - much later in the process.

PP: - there are discussions taking place, Andrew, every day in the Commons right now, as I’ve highlighted. And obviously my colleague, David Davis is assiduous at answering questions in the House of Commons. He’s been doing that on a near-daily basis. And rightly so. You know, he is being held to account by the House of Commons, and parliament as well. But I think the other point that I would like to make, and this is a much broader point about the negotiations, we’re not going to come on every single day and give a running commentary. If I were to sit down and play poker with you this morning I’m not going to show you my cards before we even start playing the game.

AM: Alright, just one more on this, however. The Commons is going to have a series of votes, but these MPs are determined to have an early vote, and in the, as a Cabinet Minister, you can’t stop that happening. What happens to the government if there’s a vote on Article 50 and their attitude to Article 50 and the Government loses?

PP: Look, we look at everything that happens in parliament, and obviously the debates that are talking place now, and the debates that people are alluding to as well. We’ll work with all colleagues.
And I think the point to make here is that this isn’t about a them or us mentality whatsoever. We are listening to colleagues respectfully as we’ve had the debate this week. There’s been one debate, there’s been a statement in the House of Commons, there’s select committee discussions taking place as well. We’ll work with all colleagues. And the point is, though, we’re clear, we have to deliver for the British public, and we will do that in the right way, government has set the mechanisms, we have two government departments, we have Cabinet committees, we have colleagues working together. And we will continue to do that.

AM: In terms of the substance, what you will deliver, can we clear one thing up, that it is not possible for us to stay inside a tariff-free single market?

PP: Well, look, I’m not going to, as I’ve already indicated – you know, I’m not going to be specific about this, because this is a long-standing negotiation. We are negotiating how we are going to reform our relationship with the European Union. The Prime Minister is leading and rightly so. But actually, Andrew, we should talk about –

AM: - you said during the campaign that we’d be outside the single market, do did Michael Gove. Nobody can see any way that we can stay inside the single market if we are genuinely going to take back control over immigration. That’s impossible. Everybody around Europe says it’s impossible. Why can the government not acknowledge what is obvious?

PP: Well, actually I think we look at this from a slightly different perspective. We are now looking at the new opportunities that leaving the European Union will bring. And that is new trading opportunities.

AM: Entirely different question.
PP: But also new opportunities in terms of taking back control of immigration as well in the way in which the British public have asked us to through the vote that took place in June. And we have to be open-minded. We’re looking at all options, and rightly so. That is the job of the government, to look at all options as we enter the negotiations.

AM: The Prime Minister is heading off to India for her first big overseas trade visit very shortly. You said during the campaign – I know it’s Bangladesh, not India – it would be very good news for curry houses, we’d get more curry chefs if we left the EU because we can adjust our immigration accordingly. But if we’re going to get down to tens of thousands, and if non-EU immigration is now 190,000, then you would have to have very severe measures to cut back non-EU immigration, including from India.

PP: Well, the point is that - I was clear during the referendum campaign, I spoke about this myself. The objective was to take back control of our immigration controls, importantly. That’s what the British public want. But also we want to continue to attract the brightest and the best in the right way. And yes, there are sensitivities, people have concerns and anxieties about EU immigration and the fact because of free movement we’ve not been in control of policies. Now, the point about, you know, immigration outside of the European Union, of course we’ll look at all options to support the brightest and the best. We are an open economy. We want to make sure that we have those that have the talents to sustain our economy, grow our economy, continued. And I think the point –

AM: Then how are you going to cut the numbers?

PP: Well, the point about the Prime Minister’s visit as well, is about you know, building on those links between new countries, new trading opportunities, but in terms of reducing numbers the
Home Secretary and obviously alongside the Cabinet, will develop an immigration policy that works for Britain and is not subject to what we’ve seen with free movement and the fact that we’ve not been able to control our immigration because of our membership of the European Union.

AM: You were very vociferous in your criticism of the department that you lead before you led it. You were pretty critical about their attitude to overseas aid. You’re announcing today a lot more aid for Haiti. First of all, what is that about? And secondly, are you going native already?

PP: Well, first of all, Andrew, our aid plays a crucial role in terms of Britain’s standing and Britain’s place in the world. And I’ve been unequivocal in terms of our commitment to the point seven per cent as well of our aid budget.

AM: You’re not going to underspend that?

PP: Absolutely not. But I think it’s important when you look at, you know, the state of the world right now. Haiti is a very good example. We are spending over seven million pounds in Haiti. Haiti’s a catastrophe, a human disaster. I’ve just announced an additional three million pounds to go to support the people of Haiti. There is a cholera epidemic that’s taking place there right now. We’re sending if food, shelter kits, water purification units and things of that nature. But also I think, importantly, when it comes to aid we need to be much more coordinated. We need to spend our aid better, much more strategically, following the money, following people and outcomes. And I’m make no apologies to anyone when it comes to actually targeting the money so that it serves our national interest, absolutely, but also serves the poorest in the world. And want better outcomes for the poorest in the world, who quite frankly don’t have the same opportunities and the access to the opportunities that we do. And
also through developing new trading relationships as well. You know, these will be many countries that are poor countries.

AM: So we’re going to see a different kind of DFID policy under Priti Patel?

PP: Well, I will focus on prosperity, jobs, livelihoods and economic development. These are the things that take people out of poverty but also ensure that we have trading relationships for the future as well.

(ends)