ANDREW MARR SHOW
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ANDREW GWYNNE

AM: Welcome Mr Gwynne. Are you going to try to bring down this government before Christmas?
AG: Well, look, the main thing that we want next week is to have that meaningful vote on the withdrawal agreement. We were promised it last week. It was pulled. We want it before Christmas. Parliament has to decide whether or not it supports the prime minister’s deal. We will assess our tactics on a day-to-day basis, but fundamentally we’ve secured that meaningful vote for parliament, we can’t move to the next stage until parliament has decided whether or not to back the prime minister’s deal.

AM: So, to be absolutely crystal clear, you will not put down a motion of no confidence in this government until you’ve had the meaningful vote on the Brexit arrangements?
AG: Well, we think that that’s the next logical step, because we want to make sure that parliament has its say on what is a catastrophically bad deal for this country. We can then move on beyond that. But, you know, I’m not interested in the theatrics of what goes on in the House of Commons. I want to make sure that parliament takes that control of this process and has a say on Theresa May’s deal.

AM: The problem is, when you say parliament takes control, on your argument it’s really Theresa May who’s in control, because she can decide when she has that meaningful vote, and all the signs are that that won’t happen until the middle of January. So what we are saying is that from your point of view the government is safe until Christmas at least.
AG: Well, no, I’m not saying that. And we will be using whatever mechanisms we have at our disposal next week to try and force
the government to bring forward that deal for a vote before Christmas. Because, Andrew, this is absolutely crucial –

AM: I’m going to stop you there. How do you force the government to bring forward a vote?

AG: Well, there are a number of mechanisms that we can use – and I’m not going to explain parliamentary tactics on live TV, but we will be using everything at our disposal next week to try and force the government to bring that deal before parliament before we rise for Christmas. And this is absolutely crucial because the clock is ticking, and the point here, Andrew, is that, you know, this government is continuing to attempt to govern as though it has a majority, and this is Theresa May’s problem. She doesn’t have a majority. She could have reached out at any point over the last 18 months across the House of Commons to get that consensus to get a deal through that commands a majority in the House of Commons.

AM: Right. Sorry to jump in, but your problem is that you don’t have a majority either. And to win a vote of no confidence you need to talk at least to the DUP, and probably some Tory MPs as well. So it is, as John McDonnell said, very difficult for you to do that. Is that why Peter Mandelson’s phrase, curious hesitancy, about the Labour Party’s is fair?

AG: Well, no. And of course we are always talking to colleagues across parties in the House of Commons to discuss the next steps. But the important thing here, Andrew, is that it’s not just about Brexit, this government is now stuck in the mire and it means that the day-to-day business of a functioning government is not happening. So last week we had the local government finance review finally announced, pushing massive burdens, an inflation-busting increase onto council tax, at the same time as public services, children’s and adult services are being cut. These are the day-to-day issues that we actually have to move onto and we’re not doing because of the government’s hesitance over Brexit.
AM: I hear you very loud and clear. But if so, why not go to the House of Commons tomorrow and put down a vote of no confidence in this government and try and win it?

AG: Because we want to do that when we can succeed, and the first step is to get this Brexit deal decided on by the House of Commons. Until the Commons has had its view on Theresa May’s deal she’s going to limp on, pretending that this can get through. The reality is this can’t get through and we can only move on both to securing a different kind of deal for Brexit, but also on the day-to-day running of this country. We should have had the ten-year NHS plan announced before Christmas. That’s now not going to happen. These are crucially important issues, Andrew.

AM: And we go on at least until mid-January as things stand. Can I ask you, is it still clearly the position as far as you’re concerned that if you don’t get that second general election you will vote for a second referendum?

AG: Well, look, we’ve said that we want a general election –

AM: That is the party policy.

AG: - and that is the party policy, and it was agreed unanimously at Labour Party conference. Clearly, if we get beyond that period then everything has to be on the table, Andrew.

AM: In that circumstance, if there is a second referendum, if that is voted through by the House of Commons and happens, is the Labour Party going to go into that second referendum advocating that we should stay in the EU or that we should leave the EU?

AG: Well, look, we’re going to have to discuss tactics if and when we come to that-

AM: You don’t know whether you’re in or out.

AG: The policy is – Andrew, policy is decided by our members in a democratic and open way. That’s why we want a general election,
because we actually have more to offer to this country than just a Brexit deal. We want to make sure that we live in a fair and more equal, more prosperous society with public services that work for the many and not the few.

AM: But we have this issue in front of us right at the moment. In your view, because you’ll have influence in this, what should the question be in a second referendum?
AG: Well, that’s something that parliament would have to decide, and what worries me –
AM: I’m asking you.
AG: Well, what worries me, of course, is that if we move on to a second referendum without having had the proper discussion and debate about Theresa May’s deal then –
AM: I’m just asking you what you think the question should be.
AG: Well, we’re getting into very tricky democratic accountability issues here. And that’s why I think we have to go through this, rather than the theatrics of it all, we have to go through it in a proper cohesive way and the first thing we have to do is for parliament to have a say on Theresa May’s deal, and then to work out a consensual way forward across party within the House of Commons.

AM: Well, I’m going to ask you one more time in a non-theatrical and gentle and direct way, if there is a second referendum what do you, Andrew Gwynne, think the question should be?
AG: Well, Labour Party policy is that all things should be on the table and that we would be pushing for a Labour deal, a Labour deal that protects workers’ rights, a Labour deal that protects our consumer protections and our environmental protections, one that has that frictionless trade that the prime minister promised but has failed to deliver.

AM: I’m sorry to jump in again, but I think we’ve got a very clear answer there, which is that in a second referendum, from your
point of view, Labour would advocate leaving the EU, Brexiting but with a Labour deal. That’s your position.
AG: Well, we have said we’d respect the referendum result of 2016. We want the opportunity to put our values into practice ahead of a general election or whatever follows from that.

AM: So you’d go into a referendum as into a general election, as a pro-Brexit party?
AG: Well, let’s wait and see. These things are moving very quickly. We are a democratic party and we will put our decision to the party members in a democratic way before we decide what the next steps are.
AM: Andrew Gwynne from Salford, thanks very much indeed for talking to us.
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