ANGELA EAGLE

THE ANDREW MARR SHOW
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AM: Your Prime Minister, one of the first things that might well happen is Nicola Sturgeon comes to you and says, ‘I want a second referendum on Scottish independence.’ As Prime Minister you could block that legally. Would you?
AE: Look, London voted to remain, and we’re in a situation where we’re leaving. Liverpool and Merseyside voted to remain. So I think that it’s important that we actually get the – we need to get the terms of leaving right, and we’ve got to have all-party agreement on that. That’s a really important part of where we are now. And let’s see where we are when we’ve got those terms of reference.

AM: That’s slightly different, because if Nicola Sturgeon wants there to be a second referendum, thinks she can win it, she has to come, at the moment, to the Prime Minister and say, ‘can I get permission?’ My question is do you stop that happening?
AE: Well, I don’t think she will, because I don’t think that there’s a majority in Scotland at the moment. We have to concentrate in the interests of the country on getting the terms on which we will negotiate leaving right. And that is the immediate thing we all have to do.

AM: Okay. July 2015, the Welfare Bill comes to the House of Commons and you abstain. You abstain on a Bill which reduces the cap for families and gets rid of child tax benefits. Why do you abstain on that?
AE: We abstained on second reading to see if we could actually get some changes during the passage of the Bill through parliament. We all voted against, at third reading. That is a perfectly normal parliamentary process.
AM: Jeremy Corbyn voted against it, and I’d have thought in principle –
AE: That’s what he’s done all his life.
AM: - it would be something that you’re against.
AE: We all voted against it at third reading. We were using parliamentary processes to see if we could get some change. And We’ve been successful in getting change to other welfare Bills.

AM: Alright. Now, again you’ve been under criticism for your Iraq vote and you’ve talked about that and explained that, and in a sense that’s probably history. But you also voted three times against there being an inquiry into the Iraq war. We’ve now had the Chilcot Inquiry and everyone can start to understand how it happened and learn lessons from that. You were against that. Why?
AE: No, we weren’t against.
AM: You voted against it.
AE: I wasn’t against the Chilcot Report, but there were still troops in Iraq. The issue is that you have an inquiry into something like that when the action is over and your troops aren’t in danger. That is why those votes happened. I think we need to learn the lessons of the Chilcot Report going forward to make certain that mistakes that were made over Iraq are never made if we have to contemplate putting our troops into danger again. Particularly organising the aftermath properly.

AM: So it was a question of timing, you weren’t against an inquiry generally?
AE: Yes, absolutely, absolutely.
AM: Now, again there was the vote to go into Libya. And you were in favour of that military action. And when you think about it, it was a smaller event in a way, but we had Iraq as an example, and then we did exactly the same thing in Libya with the same result. We removed a tyrant and we produced chaos. Isis
have moved in. Looking back on that, do you wish you had opposed that, as Jeremy Corbyn did at the time?
AE: I don’t think Libya was actually the same as Iraq. I think you have to be part of international coalitions to make certain that you have the rule of law in the world. Otherwise –

AM: No regrets about that? I mean, we went in and we made things a lot worse.

AE: There are no easy answers to these issues. But we are part of an international community via the UN, we’re part of the NATO alliance, we have to do what we can to make certain that we help the world live by international rules and human decency, and we ought to keep doing that.

AM: Now, you’ve had some very, very unpleasant things said about you and some threats and the brick through the window and all the rest of it. Jeremy Corbyn has also had death threats and so forth. But yours have come particularly from the left of the party, or the hard left, and some people think they come from this group Momentum. If you were elected leader would you make joint membership of the Labour Party and Momentum impossible?
AE: Look, I think it’s important and a good thing that many, many more people have joined the party. We now need to engage them much more in our day to day work and we need to listen to our members. But what’s been happening recently isn’t the kinder gentle politics that we were promised. We have to stamp it out. It has no place in our political discussion. We’ve got to keep it comradely, which is why I launched that hashtag, and I’m asking everybody who’s involved in the discussions that we’re going to be having in the next few months to keep it comradely.

AM: You wouldn’t crack down on Momentum as such, as an organisation? And there is evidence that Momentum were behind any of these things sent to you.
AE: Exactly. I think we need to welcome the involvement of people in politics. That is a good thing.
AM: Some people see Momentum as a kind of back door through which Trotskyists, Communists, anarcho-syndicalists, come into the Labour Party.

AE: Look, I think there have been some people who were thrown out in the 1990s who’ve come back into the party, some of whom are behaving in the way we’d expect. We have to ensure that our Labour Party membership isn’t compromised by that. But that’s not about Momentum.

AM: Finally and very quickly, you’ve said that Jeremy Corbyn has lost the support of MPs and therefore should go. If you lose a vote of confidence in your constituency party will you stand down?

AE: The constituency parties have been suspended for this entire election. There are no official meetings going on.

(ends)