THE ANDREW MARR SHOW

INTERVIEW:

(Presented by Jeremy Vine)

LORD MANDELSOON, MP

LABOUR

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JEREMY VINE:
Over the past few weeks we’ve heard from several so-called “big beasts” on the anti-
side of the debate about the UK’s membership of the EU with the former Tory cabinet
ministers Lord Lawson and Michael Portillo both declaring they would vote to leave
when a referendum takes place. But what about the pro-Europeans? Well now Lord
Mandelson, who served as EU Trade Commissioner when he wasn’t at the forefront
of the last Labour Government, is having his say. Quitting would be a “colossal
indulgence”, he believes, and he joins me now to explain why. Welcome.

LORD MANDELSOON:
Good morning. Nice to be here.

JEREMY VINE:
So a colossal indulgence? Why?

LORD MANDELSOON:
Because we have huge benefits from Europe - primarily Europe’s single market. It
scales up our ability to trade in Europe and with the rest of the world; it creates huge business opportunities for our small and medium sized enterprises in the production networks, in supply chains of Europe; and it also brings a colossal amount of foreign investment into our country because people are investing here in order to get access to Europe’s vast single market. Now if we pull …

JEREMY VINE:

(over) The poll today says 46 per cent of people want us out.

LORD MANDELSON:

If we pulled out of the European Union, we would not have unfettered access to the single market and we wouldn’t have our share in the decision making, and the rulemaking in the single market and that would be a great setback economically for Britain.

JEREMY VINE:

But, as I mention, a poll today suggests nearly half the people want us out …

LORD MANDELSON:

Yeah …

JEREMY VINE:

… so after all these years, they’re not convinced by that.

LORD MANDELSON:

Yeah, if there was a vote tomorrow, but there wouldn’t be a vote tomorrow without a very big national debate during which time all the benefits that Britain derives from being in the European Union would be brought out. And all the evidence is that the public are basically, if they’re not violently pro or violently anti-Europe, they’re basically sort of sceptical. They’re open to persuasion. They take a rather more pragmatic view. They want to know where Britain serves to gain from its membership of the European Union, they want to see the balance between the advantages of being in and also the compromises we have to make by being a member of that organisation. Now a pragmatic view, I think leads to only one conclusion and that is to stay in, but
the debate would have to be had first.

**JEREMY VINE:**
But of course you wanted us to go into the euro. At what point will you be apologising for that?

**LORD MANDELSON:**
I don’t have to apologise for saying …

**JEREMY VINE:**
*(over)* It’s been a disaster, hasn’t it?

**LORD MANDELSON:**
As I said then, I don’t have to apologise for making the point that if the circumstances are such and the conditions are such that it would be in Britain’s interests to be in the single currency, then we should consider doing so. Those circumstances …

**JEREMY VINE:**
*(over)* Even now, even now?

**LORD MANDELSON:**
… those circumstances and those conditions have not arisen. But I would make another point to you, Jeremy. If we were to make a move like that, it would involve us in a significant change in our relationship with the European Union, and in those circumstances I can see that we would need to have a referendum. But just to have a sort of in/out referendum now just for the sake of having it, it would be a gigantic lottery. Nobody could predict what the outcome would be. People are more likely to vote for any number of reasons other than the advantages for us of being in Europe …

**JEREMY VINE:**
*(over)* So be clear, you’re not …

**LORD MANDELSON:**
… and I think it would not be the right thing for Britain to do.
JEREMY VINE:
You’re not just against us coming out? You’re against us having a vote on coming out even though lots of people want that?

LORD MANDELSON:
No, I don’t think that would be the right …

JEREMY VINE:
You don’t want an in/out referendum?

LORD MANDELSON:
I do not want an in/out referendum. I don’t think it would be right for Britain. I think what we need to do is to say fine, let’s get on with reforming the European Union. And I’ve been a member of the European Commission. I know about the changes and the reforms that need to be made inside the European Union perhaps better than anyone else. Let’s make sure that we have as a country a proper relationship with the Eurozone members - of which we are not part - that respects our interests and our rights within the EU as a whole and notably in the single market, and let’s get on too with making those changes that are needed to shake up the economic performance of Europe but also to change the way in which decisions are taken in the European Union …

JEREMY VINE:
(over) Sure, but what you’re saying …

LORD MANDELSON:
… and bring those closer to the public.

JEREMY VINE:
What you’re saying is very much like what David Cameron is offering in his renegotiation and all he then adds on the end is when he’s got the answers back, which might not be satisfactory, then we decide if we stay in. What’s wrong with that?
LORD MANDELSON:
But therein lies the difference between David Cameron and those who support him in the government, and others in the Conservative Party like Nigel Lawson and John Redwood who are essentially fellow travellers of the UK Isolation Party. The point that David Cameron is making is that we need change and reform in the European Union and we in Britain need a good, respectful relationship between ourselves and the Eurozone, but at the end of the day the advantages of being in outweigh the compromises we have to make. On the other hand, what UKIP are saying is we love the trade, we love the single market, but we don’t want to have anything to do with the European Union. Well I’m afraid you can’t love the single market and the benefits it brings us whilst hating the European Union because it’s the European Union that provides us with that single market and those economic advantages.

JEREMY VINE:
This is pure party politics, isn’t it - Labour opposes a referendum because a referendum would probably kill UKIP, and UKIP are rather handy for you because they destabilise your opponents?

LORD MANDELSON:
No, I think that what all the political parties need to do is to think long-term, focus on what is in Britain’s national interest, and to lead rather than follow. Look we all know what’s going on inside the Conservative Party. The UK Isolation Party and their fellow travellers in the Conservative Party are sort of operating a Soprano style protection racket inside the Conservative Party. They’re saying do what we want, give us what we are demanding, or we’re going to burn your home down. Now in my view the Prime Minister has got to say enough is enough. You guys have got to clear off. Take your tanks off my lawn. I am going to lead this party and govern this country in the way that serves its true economic national interests, and I’m going to do so without being bullied around by a bunch of people whose only interest is to be separate from Europe, not to create the prosperity for Britain and the trade and other economic opportunities by staying within Europe and its single market.

JEREMY VINE:
Of course we haven’t yet mentioned Labour and your party has its own struggles. An unimpressive …

**LORD MANDELSON:**

*(over)* But it’s absolutely right on this issue. On this issue, I think they’re right. They’re saying yes to a referendum if there’s some significant change in the relationship …

**JEREMY VINE:**

*(over)* They disagree with you then?

**LORD MANDELSON:**

… but no … not an in/out referendum just for the sake of having a referendum which, as I say, would be a lottery. You couldn’t predict what the outcome would be.

**JEREMY VINE:**

You’re against a referendum now and you say they’re right for being in favour of one?

**LORD MANDELSON:**

No, I’ve always said, Jeremy, that if there is a significant change in the relationship between Britain and the European Union, then of course the British public have to be consulted on that either at a General Election or in a referendum. I’ve always been clear about that. But to have a referendum just because the UK Isolation Party tells us that that’s what we’ve got to do and just because one wing, the provisional wing of the Conservative Party want to bring down their leader and change their party’s policy and are using this as an issue to do so, is not a good reason to hold a referendum.

**JEREMY VINE:**

Are you sure you’re not opposing a referendum because you are, in the old word, frit; you know you’ll lose?

**LORD MANDELSON:**

I don’t think I’ve ever been accused of being frit on anything in my political life, Jeremy, and I’m not going to start now. *(laughs)*
JEREMY VINE:
Alright. Let’s talk about your party off the issue of Europe. Unimpressive local election result and then one of the party grandees is asked if Labour had a sufficiently robust platform to win the next election and he says, “Well patently not”. And you’re familiar with that quote because it was you.

LORD MANDELSON:
No what I actually said was, as opposed to the sort of Conservative Party handout that abridged what I said, was that yes, I’m a one nation Labour man. Why wouldn’t I be? That’s a rather familiar theme from the New Labour days. But you need to put the contents in the tin. The label’s good, but you’ve got to make sure you have the policies to back it up. And that’s what I said and that’s what I believe.

JEREMY VINE:
So why is Labour slipping in the polls 35 per cent today?

LORD MANDELSON:
Well actually there are three polls today, each of them showing the Labour Party and the Conservatives at different positions, so I wouldn’t be swayed by the opinion polls.

JEREMY VINE:
But it doesn’t look good.

LORD MANDELSON:
Well I think it does look good for this reason. What Ed Miliband is doing, and his colleagues in the Labour Party, is basically demonstrating their relevance to people. They’re refreshing, they’re thinking their policies in the wake of a huge breakdown of trust between the public and the political parties that occurred following the financial crisis. But I think that Ed Miliband has two tasks. He has, one, to continue building up his economic credibility and the confidence people have in Labour’s ability to manage the public finances and people’s own money. He’s made a very good start at doing that. And he’s got to …
JEREMY VINE:
(over) Sack Ed Balls as part of that?

LORD MANDELSON:
… and he’s got to continue doing that.

JEREMY VINE:
Would you sack Ed Balls?

LORD MANDELSON:
No I wouldn’t. But, secondly, he’s got to do something even harder. What he’s got to do is to show that he is not simply a business as usual politician and the Labour Party are simply going to carry on exactly the same policies of the present Coalition Government or even, to a certain extent, some of the policies of the previous New Labour Government. Now that’s harder to do - to show, at a time when many in the public are very sceptical about any politician’s ability to deliver anything at all, to demonstrate how he is going to make a difference. I think he has started well on that course. By his own admission, he has still some further way to travel.

JEREMY VINE:
He’s also - according to Lord Sainsbury, one of the big backers - a “mediocre” politician. And that is why Sainsbury is taking his money away, which of course means the unions (who you’re not particularly happy with) have even more leverage.

LORD MANDELSON:
Well if that is David Sainsbury’s view …

JEREMY VINE:
Mediocre.

LORD MANDELSON:
… I don’t share it. I judge a politician and a political leader by his or her character - by the steel they have inside them and their ability to face up to some very tough choices in what, frankly, are very different circumstances and times from those that we faced in New Labour when we fought the election and came to power in the
1990s. Times have changed. The Labour Party’s going to move on and I think Ed Miliband recognises that.

**JEREMY VINE:**
You had the famous phone call from Gordon Brown and came up to Downing Street to help him. Surprised all the pundits. So what happens if Ed Miliband calls? You’d do the same?

**LORD MANDELSON:**
Well I don’t think he’s likely to do that because what he’s trying to demonstrate is that sort of Blair, Brown, sort of Mandelson era you know ended when we lost power in May 2010 and that he’s moving on with a new generation with new ideas.

**JEREMY VINE:**
But you’re available, right, if he rings?

**LORD MANDELSON:**
I’m available indeed, but to support him from the sidelines.

**JEREMY VINE:**
Peter Mandelson, thank you very much indeed.

**INTERVIEW ENDS**