

THE ANDREW MARR SHOW

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JEREMY CORBYN MP, Leader of the Labour Party

Andrew Marr: Jeremy Corbyn – do you want to leave the EU?

Jeremy Corbyn: I want us to get a good deal and then have a decision in the public after that.

AM: So you want to get out of the EU?

JC: No. What we fought the General Election on was to respect the result of the referendum, and that we've done, to try to get a deal which guarantees trade and relations with Europe in the future, and if we can get that through parliament, the proposals we've put, then I think it would be reasonable to have a public vote to decide on that in the future.

AM: So in simple terms, if I went down into the streets in Liverpool and put up a big poster which said, 'vote Labour, get Brexit,' that would be a fair assessment?

JC: I think what would – a fair assessment would be to say 'vote Labour, challenge austerity and guarantee living standards for the future.' Not a 'no deal' exit from the European Union which is all that is being offered by the Tory right and in a sense by the Tory party.

AM: But this is an election heavily about whether or not we leave the EU and I just want to be absolutely clear, Labour wants to leave the EU?

JC: We said all along we respect the result of the General Election, obviously, we respect the result of the referendum, obviously, and we do not believe a 'no deal' exit from the European Union can be anything but very bad for the British

economy and very bad for the living standards particularly of the poorest people. All that Farage and the Right are offering is a no deal exit, they're not bothering to tell anybody about the job losses that are going to come as a result of that, they're not bothering to tell anybody about the loss of investment and all the damage that's going to be done. And, the trade deals they will then do with Donald Trump.

AM: But you are a very experienced politician and party leader and I want to know about you yourself. Do you, yourself, wish to leave the EU?

JC: I voted to remain in the EU in the referendum. Indeed I campaigned to remain and reform the EU. That was the position of the Labour Party in the referendum and the position we've taken. We are confronted with the result of the referendum therefore I have put forward the view of a customs union with the European Union and of course trade arrangements and crucially protection of rights at work, consumer rights and environmental protection.

AM: That is a long answer, not necessarily if I may so say, an absolutely clear answer.

JC: Well, it's a very long answer because it's a very serious issue and I think you would be very well aware of the problems that are going to be faced if there is a no deal exit. So you – you present –

AM: I'm just trying to find whether you're in or out, that's all.

JC: You present the whole thing as though it's a rerun of 2016. It's not. What it is, is the situation we now face of what we do in our relations with Europe in the future.

AM: I'm just really asking where you stand now. When it comes to a referendum are you in favour of another referendum or not?

JC: Our party view, taken at conference was that we should keep the option of the public vote there on the table – let me finish.

AM: Option?

JC: (Pause) To make a decision which would be a public vote on what comes out of that parliamentary view. At the moment there's no decision come out of parliament.

AM: The word I jumped on there is 'option', because 'option' can mean anything at all. In other words you haven't taken –

JC: You didn't let me completely answer actually.

AM: I gave you a chance of jumping on that word option. The word 'option' suggests that you could or could not go for another referendum. I'm just asking you which it is.

JC: We would want a vote in order to decide what the future would be, so yes.

AM: So it's not just me that's confused about some of this. Only 13% in a recent poll of voters thought that your position as the Labour Party on Brexit was clear, which is pretty catastrophic from your point of view.

JC: Well, we have put our case to parliament, we've put our case in the recent talks which have now concluded with the government and we will put those issues back to parliament. We've also spent a great deal of time exploring with the European Union and with political leaders all across Europe what the possibilities are for the future of our relationship with Europe.

Hence the arguments for a special customs union which I first put forward more than a year ago which now has quite a lot of quite wide support.

AM: Well let's not listen to Andrew Marr on this, let's listen to somebody who's a great supporter of yours, Paul Mason who's been a loyal supporter of yours, quoting one of your candidates in this election who said: "Corbyn was always about straight, honest politics. Now candidates have to take a breath and launch into a long sentence. That lack of clarity is hurting us."

JC: Paul is a very experienced economist and a very experienced commentator and he's obviously entitled to his opinions. The issue is what is our relationship to be with Europe in the future? If you go down the simplistic no deal exit we have problems. If you simply say remain when there's already been a referendum which says we're leaving, then you either have to win that vote in parliament which hasn't happened, or you have to ensure there is a real choice in the future which would protect jobs and living standards in this country.

AM: I'm just saying that out there an awful lot of people don't understand really whether Brexit is – Labour is a pro-Brexit party or an anti-Brexit party. ..

JC: We are the – can I explain before you bring Jess into it. That the Labour supporters voted both leave and remain and every other party in this European election is appealing to either one side or the other defining everybody on 2016. We're not. We're defining people as hopefully supporters of us, but also people that have common problems, however they voted, the levels of poverty in remain and leave areas are very similar, the levels of child poverty remain in both areas. I think we have to be responsible about this and appeal to people all across those views. If I may say so Andrew, it's yourself and the British media

that are obsessed with defining everybody by how they voted three years ago.

AM: But this is very much a European election about Brexit. Jess Phillips, I'm going to bring her in now – she says: "The Labour Party need to genuinely decide whether it's a party that backs Brexit or a party that doesn't back Brexit. We haven't had a clear message." And she's right.

JC: No, she's not right because she fought the last General Election just like I did on a manifesto that said we respect the results of the referendum and we would seek to negotiate the best deal we could with Europe and then be prepared to put that to a public vote and that is exactly what the position is.

AM: This complicated position reflects a division inside your party. You said in your letter to the Prime Minister about the ending of these talks. You said: "Not infrequently proposals by your negotiating team have been publicly contradicted by statements from other members of the Cabinet," and that is clearly true and it clearly has caused a problem for the Labour Party. You don't know who you're negotiating with. But can I put it to you that divisions in the Cabinet are just matched by divisions in the Shadow Cabinet. They are just as big.

JC: No, not at all. When we put our overall case to parliament the vast, vast majority of Labour MPs voted for it. And the Shadow Cabinet was agreed on the position that I put forward.

AM: Okay. Labour is a remain and reform party. True?

JC: That was what we fought in the referendum and we said, as I've told you I think three times already in this interview, that we fought the General Election respecting the result of the referendum.

AM: I understand that, but Tom Watson, your Deputy said it very recently. He still says that Labour is a remain and reform party. Again, is that true now?

JC: That is what we put forward and those are the question we've raised in all the negotiations about the future trading relationship with Europe. There has to be I think changes in Europe in the competitions policy for example. There are areas such as that that do need reform.

AM: Because another member of your Shadow Cabinet said: "Labour is not a remain party now." Is that true?

JC: There are people who you're not naming who've made-

AM: That's Barry Gardiner.

JC: Oh Barry Gardiner, okay. Who've made remarks. The position is as I've set out, negotiate, take it to parliament and then have an option of a public vote after that.

AM: So one senior member of the Shadow Cabinet says you are a remain party, another senior member of the Shadow Cabinet says you are not a remain party. Let's move on to the referendum issue. Do you think another referendum would be disastrous for Britain?

JC: No, I don't think any – anything like that is disastrous but I think it has to be an opportunity for obviously public debate and public discussion but it has to be about something and that's why I have made the point clear about a customs union, trade and rights protection.

AM: So you disagree – that was Angela Raynor saying it would be disastrous for Britain to have another referendum. Do you therefore agree with Emily Thornberry who says it's the only way out to have another referendum?

JC: Listen. Party conference in this very city said that the public vote has to be an opportunity that's kept there and indeed it is there and everyone agrees with that.

AM: Well this is the Shadow Foreign Secretary, the person who stands in for you at Prime Minister's Questions when you're not there and she says: "My prediction is we're going to need to go back to the people and say, did you vote for this? Do you want us to leave like this or shall we remain? That is in the end the only way we're going to break the impasse."

JC: She was assuming that what would be put would be the Theresa May deal and the Theresa May deal having now been defeated three times in parliament I find it very strange - even the idea that the May deal would be brought back for a fourth attempt. And that's what she was saying at that point.

AM: Now I understand there's blame on both sides. This may be part of the reason why the talks with the Prime Minister broke down. In your letter to the Prime Minister you said: "it's only right the government now wishes again to test the will of parliament" and you said, "We will carefully consider any proposals the government wishes to bring forward to break the Brexit deadlock." So can I test the question as to whether these talks have really broken down? If Theresa May comes to you now, picks up the phone or says something which seems to go in the direction of what you want, the kind of Brexit you want, is your door now closed or even at the 11<sup>th</sup> hour is it still open?

JC: No, we've concluded the talks. We think there weren't any -

AM: So no more talks?

JC: No, there's no more talks. What I said in my letter was I think they'd reached a conclusion. We put forward our case to the government; we pressed them very hard on all the things that I've set out. Fundamentally there's two problems. The government hasn't changed its red lines because it still wants the Withdrawal Agreement in its current form, and therefore we can't continue with it, because they cannot deliver it either in parliament.

AM: Well, let's come to –

JC: The only thing that parliament has agreed on is actually voting to take no deal off the table and that has been achieved because Labour pushed it.

AM: You would have seen probably some briefing in the papers this morning, the Saturday papers suggesting that Theresa May is going to come back to you with various offers. For instance, including a separate piece of legislation to entrench dynamic workers' rights as you want in law. Would you vote for that if it came back?

JC: Well, if a Bill comes up which entrenches workers' rights in law, obviously we'd look at it very carefully. All that's been offered so far is to say they would accept the rights as there are from the European Union at the present time and parliament would have the opportunity to align itself with them in the future. Our proposal was for a dynamic relationship which meant that anything that Europe does would be a flaw, from which an incoming Labour government could build.

AM: If she brought back something like that and said I'd put it into law presumably you'd agree with that - 'cause that's what you want.

JC: Well we would look at it very carefully in parliament and we would obviously reserve our right to either amend it or oppose it, depending on what's in it, but I mean I can't give it a – I can't give it a blank cheque.

AM: The same sort of question about staying in a customs union for goods during the lifetime of this parliament entrenched in law. So a future Tory leader would find it very, very hard to unpick it. One of your worries.

JC: Well that is not what's on offer. What's on offer is the backstop arrangement once the transition period is over. The backstop is of course a one way exit from it and our view was there should be legislation which would give us, after negotiation of course, a customs union with the EU which a future parliament could change if it wanted to.

AM: Exactly.

JC: But if you simply go into the next parliament with the transition arrangements or the backstop, well that isn't actually legislative protection of any sort.

AM: All right. The next thing that we're told is likely to happen is a series of so called indicative votes in the House of Commons to try to chart a new way forward. Do you think that's a way that could break the impasse?

JC: We've had indicative votes before when we had the Grieve, as it was called, Grieve Proposals in which there were non-binding indicative votes which actually nothing was agreed at the end of

it. I think it's unlikely that it will actually take us much further forward. I think the government has to come up with legislation through negotiation with the EU. At the moment the extension goes until the end of October, but the idea that they can produce a Bill at the beginning of June and get it through all its stages by the end of July is –

AM: Very difficult.

JC: - very, very unlikely.

AM: You used the word, 'binding' there. The Prime Minister has said that she would be bound by these indicative votes, but up to now you have not said the same thing.

JC: Well, indicative votes that were proposed before under the Grieve Amendment were non-binding. There's never been a proposal like non-binding. I await to hear that proposal.

AM: You could simply say, I, Jeremy Corbyn will be bound by these votes and end the problem.

JC: No, it's not the end of the problem because we need to know what the votes are and they haven't even told us that yet.

AM: Of course. So for instance, if there's a vote on a motion to revoke Article 50, and again I'm interested in how Jeremy Corbyn would vote on a revoke article.

JC: We have not supported revocation of Article 50. Article 50 was voted on –

AM: Would you ever?

JC: - by parliament in order to give effect to the referendum. We are not yet at the end of the stage when we decide what the relation with Europe is going to be in the future. That obviously comes in the long term future.

AM: What about a motion to put all of this back to the people in another referendum? Do you support that or not?

JC: I think if there's any future public vote it has to be on the basis of some credible option that's put forward there. At the moment we do not have a credible option 'cause parliament has actually not agreed on anything.

AM: All right. Let's turn to this campaign itself. You've been campaigning here in Liverpool and elsewhere saying Vote Labour as the way of stopping Nigel Farage and the Brexit Party. This is a little bit odd to people, because when it comes to that crucial question of free movement, you and Nigel Farage absolutely agree.

JC: No, we don't.

AM: You're both against free movement.

JC: Nigel Farage has spent his whole campaign attacking minorities who come to make their homes in this country, trying to divide our society and attacking European Union nations who've made such an incredible contribution to our society. I was talking to the NFU the other day, National Farmers Union about –

AM: He would disagree with that but in this European election there are so far as I can count, there are four parties which are against free movement and five parties which are in favour of free movement. And the parties against free movement are UKIP, the Brexit Party, the Conservative Party and the Labour Party. You're

all against free movement. So if I'm a liberal minded pro-European why would I possibly vote for you? Why would I not vote Lib Dem?

JC: Because we're a party that opposes racism in any form, 'cause we're a party that recognises – and we were the first ones to do it in parliament – the value of European workers to our society and our economy and guarantee them permanent residence in Britain and that in our negotiation of Europe in the future there will obviously be a great deal of movement of workers in agriculture, in industry, in education and all those other areas.

AM: So why are you so staunchly against free movement?

JC: I'm not staunchly against free movement. I'm saying –

AM: But that's what your 2017 manifesto said. You're against free movement.

JC: Our manifesto said that the European system would obviously not apply if you're not in the European Union, but I quite clearly recognise there has to be a lot of movement of workers. Ask any –

AM: This is really important.

JC: Okay I'm going to finish. Ask any company in manufacturing or any other sector how much they need and rely on workers from Europe and indeed the other way round.

AM: But you can be outside the EU and have free movement. There are at least three countries, Iceland, Norway and Switzerland which are outside the EU but have chosen to retain free movement. You could do the same.

JC: That would be – that would be part of our negotiations with the EU.

AM: To keep free movement?

JC: Look, part of –

AM: To keep free movement?

JC: Hang on. It would be part of our negotiations the extent to which workers would transfer from one county to the other and what the needs for it would be.

AM: So this is really interesting. Would you keep free movement as a non-member of the EU or not?

JC: It would be open for negotiation the level of movement of people between Europe and this country if we're a non-member of the EU. At the moment we're still in the EU and therefore there is free movement.

AM: Well free movement is free so it's not about the level. I'm asking would you keep free movement?

JC: Well what I was saying is we would ensure that there would be an ability to move from country to country and because particularly where there's a need of a workforce to achieve that.

AM: Diane Abbott, way back in 2016, I concede said: "ending free movement has become a synonym for anti-immigrant racism." Do you agree with that?

JC: In some people's minds they have that put that forward. I don't think all those that say so are actually that at all, because

the issue has to be the way in which British employers, some, have used free movement to undercut existing working arrangements, particularly in the building industry and I don't know if you can remember far enough back to the referendum in 2016 I said a great deal about what was then called the Posting of Workers Directive which was about guaranteeing a similarity of working conditions wherever you happen to work.

AM: Are you determined that the Labour Party must vote down or vote against the government's Withdrawal Bill under all circumstances?

JC: We haven't seen whatever the new Bill is going to be yet, but nothing I've heard leads me to believe that it's fundamentally any different to the previous Bill that's been put forward, so as of now we're not supporting it.

AM: All right. Can I just ask a more general question which is we've seen Jeremy Corbyn campaigning and it's pretty formidable. You know when you're at full throttle you have verve and you convince huge numbers of people. You charge around the country and you generate real energy. And the area where you haven't really done that is Brexit. Had you gone out in full campaigning throttle mode as Jeremy Corbyn to try to persuade the country to stay inside the EU, or to persuade the country to leave the EU you might have changed the destiny of this country. But instead you have stood on the side-lines almost tongue tied.

JC: Absolutely nonsense, Andrew. Total nonsense, if I may say so. You were there in the referendum campaign in 2016. I travelled the length and breadth of the country campaigning to remain and reform. I stood on beaches in Cornwall, I spoke to fishermen in Aberdeen. I talked at public meetings all over the country. The referendum – hang on

AM: You didn't sound like yourself, at full throttle.

JC: Well I know that you're an expert on how I sound all the time, that's absolutely fine, but if I just may say so, some people need to start to understand why people voted leave as well. And those that lived in towns that had seen no investment, that had only got fly by night employers and short term contracts in replacement of strong industrial, strong industries of the past, they were very angry and they remain angry. This country has to come together and it can come together by a Labour government investing in all parts of Britain. Not just London and the south east.

AM: Jeremy Corbyn, thanks very much indeed for talking to us.

Ends