ANDREW MARR:
Now Labour have been making some big promises on health in the past month - more money, more staff, and now cancer care – but do their promises to re-found the NHS really stack up? Andy Burnham, Labour's health spokesman, is here. Welcome.

ANDY BURNHAM:
Thank you, Andrew.

ANDREW MARR:
Before we get onto whether they stack up or not, let’s just go back to your promise on cancer care.

ANDY BURNHAM:
Yeah.

ANDREW MARR:
This is to radically cut the time between diagnosis and results. And, as Steven Pollard was saying in one of the newspapers today, that’s a very difficult promise to make because cancer is a complicated thing. There can be many, many diagnostic tests and
it’s very difficult to promise somebody that within a week they’ll know yes or no, isn’t it?

**ANDY BURNHAM:**
Well, Andrew, if we want to make progress on cancer in the next decade, early diagnosis has got to be the focus. These plans go back to when I was health secretary. I asked the National Cancer Director you know what could I do to make the biggest difference on cancer, and he came back to me and said, “Early testing and diagnosis.” And we then developed these plans for 1 week tests and we’re coming back to them now because they remain the right thing to do. This is about saying you know as soon as possible people are referred for a test and they get their results back because people will know you know the anxiety that comes with waiting to hear really you know causes great stress to families.

**ANDREW MARR:**
Now Ed Miliband said that one in three of us will get cancer and this is a great source of terror – something I think you know about as well from your background?

**ANDY BURNHAM:**
Yes I do. I’ve seen the devastating effects of breast cancer in my own family and what that has told me is that you know the earlier people know, the better equipped they are in that fight against cancer. I mean that’s absolutely the case. But you know sadly here, we only diagnose around half of cancers in the early stage; and one in four cancers are actually diagnosed in A&E and I think that tells you that we’re not doing well enough in terms of diagnosing cancer. So what we’re saying is with these plans, we think around 40,000 cancers could be diagnosed in their earliest stages and that would obviously dramatically affect people’s chances of survival.

**ANDREW MARR:**
Two further questions on this. The government says that actually early diagnosis is increasing all the time; there’s hundreds of thousands of people being diagnosed more quickly than there used to be this year. And also there’s a question about when you’re actually able to deliver this because you want to make huge changes to the NHS and this is going to take, presumably, years to actually deliver?
ANDY BURNHAM:
Well we would deliver it over the five years of the next parliament. So that’s when we’re saying that people would have access to tests - at the end of the first five years of the next parliament. But you know, to be honest, the government I’m afraid doesn’t have a good story to tell here. Cancer care has gone in reverse under this government. People are waiting longer for tests and treatment. They’ve just missed the national cancer target for the very first time.

ANDREW MARR:
They would dispute that. They say that actually early diagnostic tests are increasing this year on last year and this year on 2010 as well.

ANDY BURNHAM:
Well I don’t … They’re saying that more tests are being done, but the truth, Andrew, is …

ANDREW MARR:
(over) It’s always boring arguing about numbers.

ANDY BURNHAM:
(over) … people are waiting longer for them.

ANDREW MARR:
Let’s go back to what you told the Labour Party conference. You said effectively the NHS was in dire straits and it was going to fall apart under this government. That is hyperbole surely?

ANDY BURNHAM:
No, I think the NHS in the next parliament now is looking at a very serious crisis if things stay as they are. If we stay with the funding position that the government have set out, all the experts say that won’t be enough. But also this big reorganisation they’ve brought forward, I believe has put the NHS on the wrong path; and that’s a path towards increasing privatisation. We had an unnamed cabinet minister this week saying that the NHS reorganisation was their biggest mistake and I’m sure he’s right
to say that.

**ANDREW MARR:**
But it was you and it was New Labour who brought privatisation into the NHS. I think something like 400,000 operations, NHS operations, are now being conducted by private companies. A) will that stop? And b) frankly why should people believe you on privatisation?

**ANDY BURNHAM:**
Well because I changed policy as health secretary, a policy of NHS preferred provider, because – I make no bones about it – I believe in the public NHS and what it represents. In the end what’s precious about the NHS, Andrew, is that it puts people before profits. Now yes we did bring in private sector capacity to bring down waiting lists to the lowest ever level …

**ANDREW MARR:**
*(over)* And PFI and all the rest of it.

**ANDY BURNHAM:**
… but it was different. We were using the private sector in a supporting capacity. This government wants the private sector to be allowed free rein and to come in and replace public NHS services, and that is allowing the market to run riot through the NHS and that is why we are absolutely committed to repealing the government’s Health and Social Care Act.

**ANDREW MARR:**
So those 400,000 operations being done by the private sector now, will Labour stop that happening? Will they all be moved to the public sector immediately?

**ANDY BURNHAM:**
I am saying that we need a policy of protecting the public NHS; that that must be the core of the system and we cannot have a situation where there’s compulsory tendering of services that we’ve got at the moment. You know the BBC revealed figures last week saying that half of contracts are now going outside of the NHS. The NHS is
changing before our eyes. And the thing I come back to is no person in this country has given this prime minister permission to put the NHS up for sale. Because he said there would be no reorganisation. He then brought forward the biggest ever.

**ANDREW MARR:**
Okay.

**ANDY BURNHAM:**
So there does need to be a big debate about the NHS at this coming election.

**ANDREW MARR:**
Without talking about the reorganisation, can I come back to those 400,000 operations? Are they going to be taken out of the private sector by a Labour government?

**ANDY BURNHAM:**
No we would keep waiting lists down, but …

**ANDREW MARR:**
(over) So they would stay in the private sector? So actually there would be privatisation under Labour?

**ANDY BURNHAM:**
(over) No, not necessarily. No, not necessarily. We’re saying that the NHS, the public NHS needs to be preeminent, so I would have a policy of NHS preferred provider. It has always been the case that the NHS has used extra capacity to bring waiting lists down and we would keep waiting lists down, but I’m not making you know commitments today about how many would be done in this sector and how many would be done in that. But I am saying to you that I would have the public NHS prioritised in that system and I would remove the market. I am very clear, Andrew, that the market is not the answer to 21st century health and care.

**ANDREW MARR:**
Let’s talk about the money. You’ve promised, I think, 2.5 billion a year for the NHS
in real terms. That is less than the extra it got last year under the Cameron Conservatives, so actually things are not going to be much better under Labour. They’re not going to be transformed in terms of money, are they?

**ANDY BURNHAM:**
No it is more money, Andrew. We’re saying that this 2.5 billion will be additional to the plans set out by this government, so this will be new money coming into the NHS. And the NHS itself is saying it needed around £2 billion a year, so we think this is the right thing to do and this actually gets us to the big choice at the coming election. The current prime minister has prioritised tax cuts for some earners. We are saying our priority is different. Labour’s priority will be the NHS. And that I think is the choice that’s coming before the country: tax cuts for some or a strong NHS for all. And that is Labour’s choice and that’s how we will fight this coming election.

**ANDREW MARR:**
So 2.5 billion sounds a lot of money year on year on year, but NHS England say that by the end of the next parliament, there’ll be a £30 billion gap in funding. There’s lots and lots of NHS trusts on the edge of bankruptcy at the moment. In the context of that, you’re not putting in enough money, are you?

**ANDY BURNHAM:**
Well I wouldn’t want to sit here today and say oh this solves everything. I mean you know clearly the pressures that are coming towards the NHS and social care in the next parliament are huge. I wouldn’t disagree with that. *(Marr tries to interject) But along… - it’s really important for me to say this - alongside this money, we will then substantially reform the NHS. And that is to bring social care into the NHS for the first time because that will allow us to build a more preventative system – spending a few pounds keeping people in their homes rather than treating too many people in hospital as we’re doing today.

**ANDREW MARR:**
A lot of people can see the case for that. I’d just like to stay on the money for a little bit longer, however …
ANDY BURNHAM:
Yeah.

ANDREW MARR:
… because what you’ve done is you’ve taken money from three sources – the mansion tax, which you think will get you £1.5 billion a year, although nobody seems to be clear. That money won’t come in the first year of course, will it, so the first year there’s no money from the mansion tax. Then there’s a tax on the tobacco companies, which doesn’t bring in in global terms very much at all. And then there’s a tax on hedge funds, which nobody seems to understand at all. Do you understand that and do you know how much it’s going to bring in, and can you explain it to us?

ANDY BURNHAM:
Well you’re absolutely right, you’ve identified the three sources. We’re saying 1.2 actually from the mansion tax. We’ve erred on the side of caution there. We’re saying around 150 million from the tobacco companies and that will pay for the cancer pledge that I’ve been talking about, and we’re also talking about closing the loopholes used by hedge funds to offshore some of their tax responsibilities.

ANDREW MARR:
Are you sure you can do that?

ANDY BURNHAM:
We’re absolutely sure. And you know we would not give cheques that we couldn’t cash to the NHS because they’re of no use to the NHS right now. This is an absolutely clear commitment that the NHS can plan for. And Ed Balls said at our conference that we will do whatever it takes to protect the National Health Service. It is our priority and Labour has set out not just a plan to help build it into the 21st century we want it to be, but also the money to get it there. And that’s the big difference between …

ANDREW MARR:
(over) And you’ll spend that money whether or not the money is coming in from the mansion tax or not?
ANDY BURNHAM:
No these are very clear and costed plans. We’ve got the money from the mansion tax, the hedge funds and the tobacco levy, so this …

ANDREW MARR:
(over) You haven’t got the mansion tax money with respect …

ANDY BURNHAM:
(over) But we would legislate for it.

ANDREW MARR:
(over) You hope to get it. You don’t know how much you’ll get because there’ll be all sorts of challenges and people will divide up their houses and the Labour Party’s already talking about exemptions for certain groups of people. It seems to me that this is a policy still being developed over time. It’s very hard to say and therefore we will have £1.5 billion or £1.2 billion from that by year two.

ANDY BURNHAM:
Well we are very clear, Andrew, that the NHS is our priority. It needs more money. And I think if things stay as they are, if we stick on the plans that the government have set out, the NHS will tip into a full-blown crisis in the next parliament and I think it will be subsumed by a toxic mix of cuts and privatisation. Labour is saying we will put additional money into the NHS …

ANDREW MARR:
Come what may?

ANDY BURNHAM:
Come what may. We will put more money into the NHS because we need to help it rebuild into a 21st century service.

ANDREW MARR:
Wouldn’t the cleaner, more honest thing be to actually raise taxes specifically for the NHS? I mean some people have suggested the so-called death tax – taxing estates at a
slightly higher rate to fund the NHS. In fact I think you suggested it (*Burnham laughs*) and you were turned down by the Labour leadership. Why were you turned down?

**ANDY BURNHAM:**
Well I wasn’t necessarily turned down. I put forward …

**ANDREW MARR:**
*(over)* You were – you were turned down.

**ANDY BURNHAM:**
*(over)* … I put forward an ambitious plan …

**ANDREW MARR:**
Yeah.

**ANDY BURNHAM:**
... to build an NHS for the whole person, to bring social care in. And my argument that I’ve been making, which has been backed by Ed Balls and Ed Miliband, is that if we bring social care in, we can actually make the finances stack up because social care is prevention. If you look after people properly in their own homes, if you get rid of these useless 15 minute visits, if you look after the staff properly who care for people, then you can avoid huge expenditure on hospital admissions. And the NHS can’t do that today because it’s still set up as a treatment service, so we need to make this big shift and that was the big argument that I’ve made. You could go further and pay for social care on NHS terms.

**ANDREW MARR:**
Would that be a good thing?

**ANDY BURNHAM:**
I personally believe in the long run, if the country agrees, it would be right to provide all care for people on the same basis. Everybody  …
ANDREW MARR:
(over) And that would require a new taxation deal.

ANDY BURNHAM:
It would require I think a big debate in the country. But you know the Barker Commission recently endorsed this idea that you know we should pay for care of older people in the same way; that everybody contributes and then everybody is covered for all of their care needs. You know I think we need to see if the country’s got an appetite to do that, but I think that makes more sense.

ANDREW MARR:
(over) So to really refound the NHS, you need a bigger idea than you’ve got at the moment as a public policy?

ANDY BURNHAM:
The plan that we’re putting forward to bring social care in, to have a single service for the whole person, to give people one person to call rather than ringing the council for this and the NHS for that, this is the beginnings of the biggest change to the NHS since it was first founded.

ANDREW MARR
Now I don’t know if you read the newspapers …

ANDY BURNHAM:
Sometimes.

ANDREW MARR:
… but I’m sure you saw the coverage of your own speech at the Labour Party conference. Highly successful, barnstorming speech people said, and here is somebody who is not on manoeuvres but has very strong hopes of leading the Labour Party in due course. True or not?

ANDY BURNHAM:
No, I’m Labour loyalist to my core. I am loyal to the leader and the leader of our
party, Ed Miliband, has said the NHS will be his big priority going towards this election. I am 100 per cent …

ANDREW MARR:
(over) No one comes into that chair, Mr Burnham, and says I’m not loyal to the leader of the Labour Party, I’m not a loyalist.

ANDY BURNHAM:
I am … I am 100 per cent focused, Andrew, on developing a plan for the NHS that can speak to the country and that can win the next election for Labour and make Ed Miliband the prime minister.

ANDREW MARR:
Are you focused in the job on hand rather like Boris Johnson is focused on the job in hand?

ANDY BURNHAM:
(laughs) I am com… I mean our discussion has revealed that these challenges are massive, aren’t they – there’s no bigger challenge in politics probably – so that’s my responsibility. I take it very, very seriously and I care passionately about the NHS …

ANDREW MARR:
(over) Alright, a very, very …

ANDY BURNHAM:
… and it’s my mission to restore it.

ANDREW MARR:
A very, very quick yes or no. Do you rule out standing for the Labour Party leadership in due course?

ANDY BURNHAM:
I rule it out.
ANDREW MARR:
You rule it out. Alan, thank you very much indeed for that.

INTERVIEW ENDS