BARRY GARDINER, MP
Shadow International Trade Secretary

EM: I'm joined now by Labour Shadow International Trade Secretary, Barry Gardiner, who once dreamed of being a priest I learned. So would the royal wedding have been your dream gig Barry?

BG: Oh, wasn't Bishop Michael amazing? I mean to come there and say when love is the way, poverty is history. When he talked about justice, he quoted Martin Luther King, he brought every one of the canonical prophets in.

EM: You sound like you may have liked the gig.
BG: Oh, I thought it was amazing. Absolutely amazing.
EM: Let's go off love. Let's get to divorce, because that's what politics is obsessing with. Should people vote for Labour if they want to stay in the single market?

BG: You know - what I think people should vote for the Labour Party for - is because they want a fairer and a better society and a society that after Brexit is going to be focused on our economic benefit.

EB: Sorry - there's a very clear question. If you want to stay in the single market is Labour the party for you?

BG: Well look, we're not staying in the single market. We leave the single market when we leave the European Union. What then happens is we have to negotiate a new agreement.

EB: Yes, people are familiar with that, but the reason I'm asking is there is a by-election in south London next month and the
candidate that the Labour Party has put forward, Janet Daby, is asking people to vote for her and she supports staying in the single market. Do you endorse her position?

BG: Look, the Labour Party has always said right throughout this process, we’ve said that we recognise the benefits both of the customs union and of the single market and we want to maintain those in a future agreement.

EB: But hang on a minute, her first job is going to get to the House of Commons and vote against the frontbench - if she was to be elected.

BG: Absolutely not. It’s not about voting against the frontbench. The frontbench position is that we want to retain the benefits both of the customs union and of the single market. That’s why we’ve put forward our view that there should be a new customs union with the EU and that in the future agreement that we negotiate, the trade agreements that we negotiate with the EU we capture the benefits of the single market.

EB: But I’m specifically asking you, do you endorse her position?

BG: Well the question is - she is a Labour candidate, she supports the Labour Party position.

EB: No, she doesn’t. She supports staying in the single market. You have said, and it’s very clear, Labour’s position – unless it’s changed and you’d like to make the announcement this morning – Labour supports leaving the single market. She supports staying in it.

BG: What I said to you is that when we leave the European Union we leave the single market. What we then do is a matter for an agreement, a new agreement. That’s just the facts.
EB: It seems a rather confusing proposition to the electorate.
BG: Not at all. Sorry, let me just clarify it then. If you’re confused about it, Emma, let’s clarify it.
EB: Yes, that you have a candidate saying she wants to stay in the single market.
BG: The reality is this. That when you leave the European Union you leave the single market. We then have to make a decision and negotiate the new agreement that we have.
EB: Yes and I think people are aware of that but I want to get clarity whether you endorsed her position.
BG: And that will, as far as we’re concerned, as far we’re concerned we want to ensure that that captures all the benefits of the single market.
EB: I have to move on. Are you grateful –
BG: I think our candidate and all of the Labour frontbench are agreed on that.

EB: Barry Gardiner, are you grateful to Jeremy Corbyn?
BG: I’m – when you say grateful to Jeremy Corbyn, grateful for what?

EB: I ask you because most people if they rubbish their boss’s policies wouldn’t still be in a job and you are still in the Shadow Cabinet.
BG: Well, look, I don’t rubbish Labour Party policies.
EB: Really?
BG: Yeah, really.

EB: Okay, can I tell you what I’m talking about, add a bit more clarity?
BG: Yes, of course.
EB: You spoke to a think tank at a meeting in Brussels in March earlier this year, a recording of that then emerged and you were
talking about the six tests that Labour has set Theresa May on whether it’s okay to proceed with that Brexit deal. And in that recording you were heard very clearly saying that with the tests showing that we need to get the same deal, the deal must deliver the exact same trade benefits we currently have as an EU member, was rubbish. I can’t even say the word that you used. And you did say that, didn’t you?

BG: Let me be absolutely clear on what I did say because what you’re doing is you’re paraphrasing it, so let me say what I –

EB: Oh no, I can actually play – shall – I’ll you what, shall we just listen to the recorder?

BG: That’s fine.

EB: Because we’ve got it.

Recording:

BG: “Let’s just take one test. The exact same benefits. *expletive* Always has been *expletive* and it remains it. We know very well that we cannot have the exact same benefits and actually, you know, it would have made sense because it was the Tories that said that it was the – they were going to secure the exact same benefits and our position should have been precisely to say they have said that they will secure the exact same benefits and we’re going to hold them to that standard.”

EB: ‘Our position should have been’ – You’re talking about your own policies very clearly there.

BG: Well let me be clear. Our policy is that we will hold the government to account for the promise that they made. They said that they could secure the exact same benefits outside of the European Union as they could inside it. That is what they said. Our test is to hold them to account for that, but not -

EB: But you said that’s just absolute – and I can’t say the word.
BG: No, what I said was beyond credibility was that you could achieve the exact same benefits outside of the EU as you can inside.

EB: But why did you say, ‘our position?’ This is what’s extremely clear.
BG: No I said our test.
EB: Sorry, people just heard this at home. ‘Our position should have been to precisely say’ - our position. You are criticising Labour’s party position weren’t you?

BG: Our position is that we will hold them to account to achieve what they promised the British people, which is that they will secure the exact same benefits outside of the EU as they did inside of the EU. ight. Now in fact –

EB: But you kept your job. Owen Smith didn’t keep his job, did he, the Shadow Ireland Secretary so that’s why I asked you, if you were grateful to Jeremy Corbyn. Because he kept you in the role despite you saying that his Brexit test was rubbish.

BG: As you’ve just heard me say our test is quite correct, it is to hold them to account. Let’s actually move to the real issues here, okay, because the real issues are about the sort of Brexit that we’re going to achieve. This government, here we are, this week was supposed to take a decision about whether they would have max fac or whether they would have the EU ‘we will do your revenue collection for you’ that Theresa May faced. They’ve eventually said that they will kick it into the long grass. They’re now saying that they will go with what we have said, right the way through, that the transition for a customs union should go right the way through until technology helps them to do something different.

EB: But I’m asking about your position and the reason I’m actually, there’s actually a very good reason I’m asking because
people want to know about Labour’s position. Because if you don’t think there is any way we can retain - to quote - ‘the exact same benefits after we leave,’ there’s surely no way Labour can support a final Brexit deal. That’s what you’re saying.

BG: We have set out that we will stay in both the single market and the customs union for the transition period.
EB: Yes.
BG: We’ve said that for the long term we want a new customs union with the European Union where we are co-decision makers.
EB: You have said that you don’t think we can retain the same benefits, therefore Labour will never vote for a deal that Theresa May presents.

BG: Theresa May has said in her latest speech that she doesn’t think they will secure the exact same benefits.
EB: Right, so that’s one of your tests, so you can’t vote for the deal.
BG: What we’ve said is that we will want to hold them to account for what they’ve said.
EB: Okay. I need to bring you onto a different issue of Ireland because you are going over the same point if I may say several times about what the government has said versus what you’re saying. Let me bring you on.
BG: In fairness, it’s you’re the one that’s going over the same point.
EB: I’m not getting any further with that point of understanding that test. Can I bring you onto Ireland?
BG: That may be because you’re talking rather than letting me answer, because you didn’t let me finish in saying that actually when you look at - we said the customs union, we will have a new customs union in which we are co-decision makers and we will also have, our position is to have a new agreement in terms of the single market -
EB: You have said that several times. Could I bring this onto the Irish border which is in people’s minds?
BG: -where the regulations and the standards would be protected. And that’s the important thing.

EB: You have said that several times. Simon Coveney, Ireland’s Deputy Prime Minister was on this show last week raising serious concerns about what Brexit would mean for the Irish border. Some in parliament suspect Ireland and the EU are playing up these worries for political reasons. Are you one of those people?

BG: I believe that the Good Friday Agreement is the essential foundation of peace in Northern Ireland and in the island of Ireland and we must do –
EB: I’m not talking about the Good Friday Agreement.
BG: Oh, well actually –
EB: I’m talking about do you think it’s being played up for political reasons?
BG: It absolutely is important to understand where we’re coming from here because the Good Friday Agreement is the bedrock of that. The Good Friday Agreement talks about normalised –

EB: I’m talking about – I’m sorry I have to bring you onto this. In that same meeting you said, “there are real economic reasons why people have played up the issue of the Irish border and of course there are very good political reasons.” Do you stand by that remark?

BG: Well, there are reasons why people would wish to, if you look at the balance of trade and the importance of cross-border trade between the South and the North in Ireland it is extremely difficult to see how the Irish economy would withstand the imposition of increased border control.

EB: Do you stand by those remarks, Barry Gardiner?
BG: What I would say to you is that actually we are looking at a situation where we have to secure a border deal in Ireland –

EB: I don’t know if you stand by those remarks. I’m none the wiser. Do you stand by the remarks that people are playing up the Irish border for political reasons? You said it. Which Barry Gardiner’s the truth? The one that speaks in private or the one that’s on television now?

BG: Look. Sometimes you have conversations in private, okay and the reason they’re held in private is because you can advance thinking and you can actually then try and – if all you ever do is stick by the given line you’re never actually advancing ‘cause you’d never discuss anything with people. But that’s the reason for holding things in private. The important thing is that we in the Labour Party have come forward with the proposal, which the Conservatives have not, which actually meets the problems of solving the Irish border and that is a new customs union which would minimise disruption on the border and which would enable our jobs and our economy to be protected in this country because the supply chain across the border into Europe would not constantly be undermining our just in time supply chain.

EB: Barry Gardiner, thank you very much for joining me.

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