ANDREW MARR:
Well ever since last summer, a long time ago, and the row over the selection of a candidate in Falkirk, Ed Miliband has been promising a radical reshaping of his party’s relationship with the trade unions who are, awkwardly, also among his main paymasters. Now, at last, we have the suggested package of changes, heralded by Mr Miliband as one of the biggest and boldest things he’s done so far. Harriet Harman, his Deputy, joins us now. Harriet Harman, it’s all about the numbers up to a point. You have something like, I think, 200,000 ordinary Labour Party members, is that right?

HARRIET HARMAN:
Yeah.

ANDREW MARR:
And there are 2.7 million trade unionists. So if only 10 per cent of the trade unionists who are meant to be members of the Labour Party actually sign up as members of the Labour Party, they will overwhelm, outnumber current members of the Labour Party. That’s right, isn’t it?

HARRIET HARMAN:
Well you know in fact it’s not all about the numbers. What it’s about is opening up the Labour Party to people at workplaces up and down the country, broadening the base of the Labour Party, but doing it in a legitimate way, doing it in a realistic way. And I think the idea to juxtapose people who are working in call centres or in factories or warehouses or in public services, to juxtapose them people - who support the Labour Party and have decided to pay their money to the Labour Party and have actually registered to be on the books of the Labour Party - to juxtapose them against the membership of the Labour Party and say they shouldn’t have a vote in the leadership, I think that’s wrong. So I think these proposals are right because they allow, they broaden the base of the party but in a legitimate way.

ANDREW MARR:
I just want to be clear that up and down the country under these proposals, it’s quite likely that Labour parties will be dominated by new trade union members.

HARRIET HARMAN:
Well you know I just query your word ‘domination’ because actually if you include people …

ANDREW MARR:
Alright, there’ll be more trade union members than previous members.

HARRIET HARMAN:
Yeah, but actually they’ll be people at work - ordinary people at work - and this will reinvigorate the party at local level.

ANDREW MARR:
Okay, so if you don’t like dominated, how about they’ll be heavily influenced by new trade union members. That’s fair, is it?

HARRIET HARMAN:
Well I think it’ll breathe fresh light into the Labour Party. A lot of people feel that politics is out of touch and people in parties don’t understand their lives, and actually to have a strong local connection between people who are working and living locally,
together with the Labour Party, that’s actually what politics in our democracy needs I this country. And I think it’s being slightly sort of phobic about trade unions. You know why shouldn’t a care worker or somebody who works in a warehouse have a say about the leader of the party they support and the party they’re paying towards?

**ANDREW MARR:**
Absolutely right, but trade union activists naturally have their agenda. They have a trade union agenda - and quite right too, that’s their right. All I’m saying is that if you give them a kind of cut price £3 entry into the Labour Party, why not do it for members of the National Trust or for members of, I don’t know, people who work for the Nationwide Building Society? Why just trade unionists?

**HARRIET HARMAN:**
Well there’s nothing wrong with being an activist in the trade unions. But actually this is not just about activists, this is about everybody, and we do have a different range of members. So, for example, if you’re a student, you get to join the party for £1. If you’re a serving member of the armed forces, you get to join the party for £1. Here we’re saying if you’re a member of a trade union that itself is affiliated to the Labour Party and you sign up to support the Labour Party and you pay £3, you can vote in the leadership election. And all the people who support the Labour Party want to see us in government. It’s good to be able to broaden out the number of people who can vote for the leader.

**ANDREW MARR:**
If you bring in lots and lots more trade union members - and it will be the activists who are more likely to come in, inevitably - then that is going to tilt the Labour Party more in a trade union direction. It’s obvious. It’s kind of night follows day, isn’t it?

**HARRIET HARMAN:**
Well I don’t know what you mean about “a trade union direction”. If you mean people who care about more people being able to get jobs, being able to have the living wage, caring about decent terms and conditions, caring about equality and social justice - well, yes, I mean that’s a good thing; that’s what the Labour Party believes in. And, remember, they’ll only be in the Labour Party election for the leadership if
they’ve actually signed up to the Labour Party and we then ballot them because they’ve paid to the Labour Party and they say they support the Labour Party. So they have to not only be a member of a trade union, but they have to distinctively turn to us and say, “We want to be part of the party.”

**ANDREW MARR:**
How can you be sure that they are Labour Party supporters when they join?

**HARRIET HARMAN:**
Well you know how can you be clear anybody’s a supporter of anything? It’s basically …

**ANDREW MARR:**
(over) It’s just a lot of people have said to me this is …

**HARRIET HARMAN:**
No. No, no, what will happen is they will have to sign that they support the Labour Party and no other party and they’ll have to give their money. So actually that’s the way parties work.

**ANDREW MARR:**
It’s a very, very easy way for members of the Socialist Workers Party or other parties to sign up large numbers of people, get into the Labour Party and have a big influence in the Labour Party.

**HARRIET HARMAN:**
Well I think you know that question sort of - you know and I know people are asking that question …

**ANDREW MARR:**
They are, yeah.

**HARRIET HARMAN:**
but I think that it kind of combines being slightly phobic about trade unions and also patronising. This is about ordinary people at work who will make up their own minds about who they want to have as a leader and who it will be good for us for them to be engaged in the party at local level. We’re talking about people who work in offices, in shops. We’re talking about people who are at work and who are also members of the trade unions.

ANDREW MARR:
So why is it that so many of your key colleagues are very worried about this then?

HARRIET HARMAN:
Well I hope that they’ll listen to the arguments and be very much in favour of it. I mean what is important, I think, is that members of parliament will decide on the shortlist, so basically they will nominate and then the ballot goes out to people all around the country - many more numbers, we hope, than currently vote - but who’ve said they’ll support the Labour Party.

ANDREW MARR:
How many new trade union members do you think the Labour Party will achieve in say a year’s time?

HARRIET HARMAN:
Well the first thing is how many people will register to pay and to support the Labour Party, and we hope that many of those will then become full members and can stand for local council and stand for MPs.

ANDREW MARR:
So one in ten wouldn’t be a bad outcome for you?

HARRIET HARMAN:
Well, as you say, it would be 270,000 more people in the workplace actually involved in the life of the Labour Party at local level, and that would be a good thing for politics and a good thing for the Labour Party.
ANDREW MARR:

(over) And with majority say in the Labour Party therefore?

HARRIET HARMAN:

Well they would obviously alongside … MPs would nominate and, alongside Labour Party members, they would be able to vote in the leadership election. But you know at the end of the day, Andrew, why shouldn’t they? If you support the party, you pay your money …

ANDREW MARR:

Okay.

HARRIET HARMAN:

… why shouldn’t you have a say in the vote for the leadership? I think it’s a good thing.

ANDREW MARR:

Okay, well let’s move on. This is all going to be discussed at a special conference later in the year, yes …

HARRIET HARMAN:

March.

ANDREW MARR:

… and we’d all thought that this was going to be a kind of open conference where there’ll be debate. There’s now rumours that it’s going to go on for two hours. That’s not true, is it?

HARRIET HARMAN:

Well there’s discussions in the Parliamentary Labour Party next week, in the National Executive, and then there will be a conference. And we will actually decide and people will vote. So you don’t need to worry about it. There is loads of debate going on.
ANDREW MARR:
And will the proposals from the party leadership be subject to amendment at that conference?

HARRIET HARMAN:
I don’t think so. I think it’s basically …

ANDREW MARR:
So it’s a yes or no two hour rubber stamp?

HARRIET HARMAN:
Well no, it’s not a rubber stamp because people can say no?

ANDREW MARR:
(over) Slow rubber stamp?

HARRIET HARMAN:
No, people can say no. And for all our changes … And the rules of the Labour Party have evolved over time and the leader has an important responsibility to say this is how I see it and then the party can either back that or not. And I hope the party will back this.

ANDREW MARR:
On the money, is it true that the price for this deal is the unions will carry on supporting the Labour Party financially at roughly the same level until the General Election? Is that the deal?

HARRIET HARMAN:
Well we’re phasing this in over five years. And you know there’s been a lot of kind of … sort of slightly hot-headed talk about union financing of the Labour Party and let me just remind everybody for the avoidance of doubt: the biggest donors to the Labour Party are our individual members.

ANDREW MARR:
Many of whom will be a bit hacked off to find that they could have joined for £3 rather than £43, but let’s put that to one side.

HARRIET HARMAN:
No, I don’t think so because they also know that students can join for £1 as full members, armed forces members can join for £1. There’s a reduced rate for people who are unemployed. The point is for full members of the Labour Party is they can stand for the council, they can stand as MPs, they can vote in parliamentary selections. So it is slightly different than people who are registered supporters from the Trade Union Movement who’ll be able to vote for the leadership.

ANDREW MARR:
Some of the papers are saying today that this will cost the Labour Party £4 million a year. Is that the kind of figure you recognise?

HARRIET HARMAN:
Well it’s being phased in over five years because obviously it does have financial implications. But what Ed Miliband is saying is that what is important about this is it broadens the base of the party in a legitimate way. And you can’t stand talking about money and work your way back to the right decision; you have to make the right decision and then try and raise the money as well.

ANDREW MARR:
I … Sorry I thought that Lord Collins - who set all this up, who’s been the fixer as it were - was told right at the beginning the main thing is to make sure the money keeps coming in?

HARRIET HARMAN:
No, that’s not at all what he said and he’s not a fixer. You know there’s too much kind of sort of cloak and dagger-ism about that. This is all very much in the open - these proposals - and actually these proposals will come to the NEC and go to the party conference and I hope people will support them. You know a lot of people will say oh why aren’t you spending your time, all your time talking about the economy and the health service? These are important issues. Why fiddle with the party rules at this time?
ANDREW MARR:
I can understand that.

HARRIET HARMAN:
But actually it is important that our party’s roots are deeper and that when people vote for the leadership, it’s because they’ve chosen to support the Labour Party and are paying money.

ANDREW MARR:
Would Ed Miliband have been elected as Labour Party Leader had this been in place before the election, do you think?

HARRIET HARMAN:
Well I think that’s impossible to say. The point is that Ed Miliband was elected fair and square under the old rules, but he thinks that the rules …

ANDREW MARR:
That those old rules aren’t very good?

HARRIET HARMAN:
Well he thinks it’s time for a change in those rules and I think he’s absolutely right on that.

ANDREW MARR:
What about the fact that the actual conference voting is not going to change on policy matters? Surely that is the crucial question when it comes to policies - the unions still have their old 50% say?

HARRIET HARMAN:
Well this is … What he’s proposing for the March 1st conference is a huge change in the financing, in the election of the leader, in what goes on in local level. And actually in due course, it might well have implications for the NEC elections and conference
... 

**ANDREW MARR:**
A lot more to come.

**HARRIET HARMAN:**
… but this is already quite a big issue to take forward.

**ANDREW MARR:**
Alright. Harriet Harman, thank you very much indeed for joining us. We’ll talk later on.

**INTERVIEW ENDS**