

ANDREW MARR SHOW

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JEREMY CORBYN

AM: Let me ask you first of all whether you think this election campaign you're embarking upon is rigged.

JC: Well, it's come unexpectedly, but we're here, we're ready for it, we're out there, I've done nine events already.

AM: So you don't think it's rigged?

JC: Well, the election's on. That is no longer a debate actually, because –

AM: It's just that the woman who introduced you for your opening speech, Dawn Butler, said just the other day, 'this election is Theresa May trying to rig democracy in our country.' Which is a big claim.

JC: Look, she's jumped in to hold an election, Theresa May, that is, very, very quickly. Unexpectedly for just about everybody, I think. And we are now taking our case out there to the country.

AM: So is the right or not?

JC: Well, Theresa May thinks that she's chosen an election at a time that suits her, and she's actually torn up the whole principle surrounding the Fixed Term Parliaments Act. But we are now moving on from that. The issue now is that an election is going to happen on June 8th and I think we should focus on the issues that face the people of this country.

AM: You could have stopped it happening, though, and you didn't. Why?

JC: Because opposition parties want to be in government.

AM: Now, you have always said that you're going to be a different kind of leader. 'I'm not going to play by their rules.' So do you

intend to be similarly a transformational, entirely different kind of Prime Minister?

JC: Yeah. I want to see a very different country. I'm angry and fed up with the way in which, what, six million people, earn less than the living wage, in which a million people don't know what their wage is going to be from one week to the other, in which there are increasing numbers of homeless people. And there are people on apparently relatively secure middle income jobs whose children can't get homes, can't get housing, and whose children can't get on the career ladder because they're so saddled with student debt.

AM: So if you win, it won't be business as usual?

JC: Absolutely not. It will be very, very different.

AM: In that spirit, I want to cover a lot of things. I want to cover domestic policy, I'm going to start off with foreign policy, because one thing we know is that if you win the election and you walk through the doors of Downing Street almost the first thing that happens is that you're tapped on the shoulder by a senior civil servant who takes you off to a room to write four letters to the captains of Britain's nuclear submarines telling them, instructing them what to do if this country's attacked in a nuclear strike. So what will you be telling them?

JC: What I'll be saying is that I want us to achieve a nuclear-free world. What I want us to do is adhere to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and take part in negotiations surrounding that. And crucially –

AM: And this goes...

JC: Wait a minute. No, no. Crucially immediately promote the six-party talks on the Korean Peninsula as a way of de-escalating nuclear tensions around the world.

AM: Because at that point you have to say something to the commanders. You have to say fire or don't fire. And you can't

dodge it. You have to give them in those letters a strict instruction.

JC: A strict instruction, follow orders when given.

AM: So you don't tell them to fire or not to fire. They don't know what to do.

JC: Listen, the issue has to be we want a secure and peaceful world. You achieve that by promoting peace, by also promoting security, and security comes from that process.

AM: But as Prime Minister you have very, very fast decisions to take on all of this. Can I ask you directly; are there any circumstances in which you'd authorise a nuclear strike? Any circumstances?

JC: Look, I've made clear my views of nuclear weapons. I've made clear that there would be no first use of it. I've made clear that any use of nuclear weapons is a disaster for the whole world. I think we should look at the process by which we achieve peace and security, because actually nuclear weapons are not a solution to the world's security issues. They're the disaster of the world's security issues if ever used. And that's why I would focus first on the issues of Korea, because I think that is where the greatest tensions are at the present time. But also I'm very disturbed that the Trump administration's trying to unpick President Obama's deal with Iran, which was a huge step forward to bring Iran in from the cold and start to address issues of security there as well, of course, as human rights issues in Iran.

AM: So after those letters, about the next decision you have to take is which world leaders you call first. Who do you call?

JC: Well, I think you call the European leaders, you call President Trump, you call President Putin, you call the Prime Minister of India, you call the President of China. You call all the members of the Security Council, including those that are short-term members in the sense they're on for one term. So you build a relationship

there. And I would immediately call the General Secretary of the United Nations.

AM: And do you tell him and President Trump that we are no longer a nuclear-armed power?

JC: What I say is I want to meet you, I want to talk to you, I want us to work together for a secure and peaceful world. And then offer to meet them as soon as possible. All of them.

AM: Because in terms of actual making of policy we are in a new situation now because of this election. The Trident gateway vote happened, but this is a chance to reopen the whole question.

Would a Labour government cancel the Trident programme?

JC: We will have a strategic defence review immediately, which would include all aspects of defence, as most incoming governments do actually. In fact, I think all of them. And we would then look at the situation at that time. But we would also make sure that our armed forces are properly funded and our armed forces are able to play their part in peacekeeping around the world.

AM: This is still an entirely unresolved question, as to what you're going to do. Nia Griffith, your defence spokesman, has said very clearly that keeping Trident will be in the Labour manifesto. Will it?

JC: Mm. We haven't completed work on the manifesto yet, as we'd expect. We're less than a hundred hours into this election campaign, so let's see.

AN: She could be in for a shock?

JC: No, no. We're having that discussion within the Labour Party and we will produce our manifesto in the usual way.

AM: The Conservative Chairman's been disobliging about you in the papers, as you would expect, this morning. But Mr Rasmussen, the former Secretary General of NATO, perhaps more

significantly has said that you would be a threat to the future of NATO because you don't really believe in NATO and western security would be harmed by Jeremy Corbyn becoming Prime Minister.

JC: I think forward to talking to Mr Rasmussen, because there are principles around NATO which actually come from the 1942 Atlantic Treaty between Britain and the United States. That's where NATO came from. NATO is obviously a very big force in Europe, and indeed it's given to itself powers around the world. I would want to work with NATO leaders in building up an effective, sensible relationship with non-NATO countries such as Russia. But also trying to de-escalate tensions around the world. President Trump seems to be going very much in the opposite direction.

AM: Your enthusiasm for getting around the table with people and talking to people is well known. What I suppose I'm trying to get at is, as Prime Minister, you have concrete, tough, immediate decisions to take, including, for instance, we've got 800 troops have just been sent to Estonia because of worries about the Russians on the border. You were against that deployment. As Prime Minister, would you bring them back?

JC: Listen, we'd keep those troops there for the moment, but we would use the opportunity of a newly-elected government to say, look, we want to reduce tensions on the borders of Europe, we want to build a relationship with the US administration as well as the Russian administration, and with the other big powers around the world, because we have to have that relationship. And so my calls would be to the UN and all the members of the Security Council, the Presidents of those countries.

AM: And when you speak to President Trump will you be telling him that we will no longer be taking part in air strikes in Syria and Iraq?

JC: I will tell him that I want to see a process that brings about the end to the conflicts in both those countries, and at the end of the day –

AM: Sorry, do you suspend those strikes or not?

JC: Let me just finish. At the end of the day the only solution in Syria is going to be a political one. There's no other way of getting it. There has to be a reconvening quickly of the Geneva process. I would say to President Trump, 'listen, it's in nobody's interest for this war to continue. Let's get the Geneva process going quickly, and in the meantime no more strikes, have the UN investigation into the war crime of the use of chemical weapons in Syria and take it on from there.' And let's involve the UN in this. You seem to be proposing everything on a sort of fairly unilateral basis.

AM: I'm just asking you, because the power would be in your hands as Prime Minister to suspend those air strikes when you walk into Number Ten or not to. Let them keep going, and the question is very clear, which do you do? And you suggest you suspend them?

JC: I want us to say, 'listen, let's get people around the table quickly. And the way of achieving that, suspend the strikes possibly, that's one way.

AM: So you'd suspend the strikes.

JC: The point has to be bring about a political solution. All wars end with a political solution. Let's go to that place as quickly as we can.

AM: You're sitting in Number Ten, the spooks walk in and they say, Prime Minister –

JC: You wouldn't call them spooks really.

AM: Well, the gentlemen in suits walk in, they said, 'Prime Minister Corbyn, we've got good news for you. Al-Baghdadi, the leader of ISIS, we know where he is, we can take him out with a

drone strike, can we have your permission?' What do you tell them?

JC: What I'd tell them is give me the information you've got, tell me how accurate that is and tell me what you think can be achieved by this. But the point –

AM: They know where he is, I'm asking about decisions you would take –

JC: No, can I come back to the whole point? What is the objective here? Is the objective to start more strikes that may kill many innocent people, as has happened, or is the objective to get a political solution in Syria? My whole point –

AM: It might be to kill the leader of Isis.

JC: My point, the whole point would be does this help to get a political solution in Syria? We'd approach it from that position.

AM: Alright. Do you think killing the leader of Isis can be helpful for a political solution?

JC: I think the leader of Isis not being around would be helpful. I'm no supporter or defender in any way whatsoever of Isis, I'm sure you would concede. But I would also argue that the bombing campaign has killed a large number of civilians who, many of whom, were virtually prisoners of Isis. So you've got to think about these things.

AM: Alright, let's move on to domestic policy. One of your announcements this morning is that we're going to get four more bank holidays if you get your way. St George's Day, St Patrick's Day, St Andrew's Day, St David's Day. That would mean seven bank holidays during the spring months. It's quite a lot. Have you got any assessment of the economic cost of that?

JC: Well, the Bank of England has looked at this and said there is a benefit that can be measured either way. A benefit, yes obviously, because there is less production on bank holidays when people are not working, but there's also more spending on those days. And they've said there's assessments you can make in both

ways, and they reckon that generally speaking it's roughly neutral. We have less public holidays than any other country in Europe, less than most industrial nations all around the world, and far less than Japan, which has 16 a year.

AM: You yourself have said that we have a productivity problem in this country and it may be that these are situations through which we have to work harder, not less hard.

JC: Well, also people being more relaxed or spending time with their families is actually quite a good thing. But it would also have the effect of recognising the historical diversity of the UK, because there's going to be public holidays, St George's Day, St Patrick's Day, St Andrew's Day, and St David's Day.

AM: I mean the employers organisations, you may say not surprisingly, all say that it would cost between one and two billion pounds of lost productivity in the British economy.

JC: Yes, and the Bank of England says it was between one and two billion pounds in increased spending on Bank Holidays, so.

AM: Either way.

JC: So it goes either way. But surely – having – people having the chance of spending more time with their families. And actually the response I've had so far – and bear in mind this policy was only announced last night – has been generally very positive. People say well actually what people do need is more time with their families, 'cause there's so much insecurity in work and so much insecurity in people's lives, a public holiday, celebrating the diversity of our nation is probably quite a good thing. Don't you think so?

AM: I'm not against it.

JC: You're looking for it, aren't you?

AM: I'm always in favour of a holiday. Let's turn to transformational politics. You said you were going to be a different kind of Prime Minister and you have also said that you don't want private provision inside the NHS. So of all the companies who should be worried about a Labour victory, do we add the shareholders of BUPA, Nuffield, Health UK and those other private companies currently accounting for 80% of NHS spending?

JC: Well the problem is that the NHS spends a great deal of money on private provision within the NHS. Those contracts are a let out. Cost a lot of money. Great many profits are made out of that. Many of those that work on NHS contracts for the private sector in the NHS are actually paid less than the NHS workers themselves, and it actually increases management and consultancy costs within the NHS. My point is that an NHS publicly run and publicly accountable is actually more efficient.

AM: And you were very clear in the past you wanted to end private work inside the NHS, absolutely clearly and for good. Do you still?

JC: Listen. It's the NHS. It's there for all of us. It's there for a purpose. The purpose is that we all get health care free at the point of use and it's something I think is the most civilised thing about this country and something that I am desperately worried about. Ever since the Health and Social Care Act was passed there's been an increase in privatisation through the NHS.

AM: Is the answer that you end the work done by Nuffield and BUPA and the other companies in the NHS? Is that yes or no?

JC: Yes. We would want to phase out those contracts and bring in directly employed staff, so as the contracts come up for renewal then we use them as in-house work...

AM: And you'd go from 80% now to zero eventually?

JC: Eventually. The whole point is the NHS was envisaged as a service for all of us and imagine what it's like working in the NHS alongside somebody working for a different employer with possibly different objectives. It's actually cheaper for all of us. Local authorities that –

AM: I'm sorry, on the same subject –

JC: Let me finish saying, local authorities that have brought services back in-house find it's more efficient and cheaper.

AM: On the same subject, you've also suggested this morning that the bosses of companies who have any kind of public contracts, so that's defence companies, shipbuilding companies, health companies and all the rest of it, they must be paid no more than £350,000 a year?

JC: At the moment in the public sector there is an aspiration and in most cases been achieved of a pay ratio of 20-1. Average earnings are £27,000 across the whole of the country.

AM: So it's the 20-1 ratio that's the most important do you think?

JC: Indeed. But it can't be achieved straight away, it would be a much longer term objective to achieve it in the private sector. But I do think there is a massive issue of inequality in Britain. What we've had is a pay ratio between workers and chief executives, if you take the FTSE companies it's times 186 of the average pay of their worker, compared to chief executives.

AM: Do you want to go beyond public procurement companies?

JC: Those things are really just not acceptable.

AM: Do you want to go deep into the private sector with the same effect?

JC: Well, let's start with the power of public procurement which is 200 billion a year of public procurement by local authorities and central government. Let's start with that. So my whole point is that the election of a Labour government will mean that we will use the power of the government to improve wage levels and living standards and housing and health across the country. But we'll also use it as a way of leveraging in good quality employment and training. Because one of the problems of this country is we haven't trained enough workers.

AM: You come to education. You used to say that you wanted all grammar schools to become comprehensives. Is that still your position?

JC: What I want is proper funding of all of our schools first of all.

AM: You've softened.

JC: No, no no. You're jumping in too quick Andrew.

AM: All right, I'll wait for your killer line then.

JC: Thank you. Listen, first of all there's a funding crisis in all of our schools. This government is cutting several billion off the school budget while at the same time putting four hundred million or thereabouts into a vanity project to grammar schools and new free schools. I think we should be funding all schools properly.

Secondly, I want to see universal access to all schools. I do not like selective education.

AM: You said, and I've got the quote – "I want all grammar schools to become comprehensives." Is that Jeremy Corbyn still here?

JC: I would like them all to be but it has to be made by local decision at the end.

AM: Let's turn to Brexit, because there's a lot of people who simply don't understand what the Labour Party's vision for Brexit is. Can I put it to you that you agree with Theresa May about wanting maximum access to the single market and lots of other areas, but where you disagree with her is that you might give a little bit more when it comes to the freedom of movement argument.

JC: Well, Theresa May's approached the negotiations of leaving the European Union on the basis of a threat to the European Union. She says, well, this is what we want, if we don't get it we're gonna set up a tax haven on the shores of Europe. We're gonna go for some different style of economic model for Britain. I don't think that's a very sensible way of approaching the decision.

AM: Now you're Prime Minister, so it's your choice.

JC: Hold on a minute. Our first point is tariff free trade access to Europe. If we are forced to trade under World Trade Organisation rules immediately a tariff will be placed on all manufactured goods and services leaving Britain which would mean that integrated production, such as the motor industry and aircraft industry and others simply would disappear. So we start from the principle of gaining that tariff free access. And I spend a lot of time reaching

out to colleagues across Europe to ask them to help us with those negotiations.

AM: Part of the problem of getting full access to the single market is that if you're going to take back complete control over migration from the EU you can't be in the single market. Now in the past you have said you're not wedded to free movement and you're not against it either. Two years to go. There's no longer two years to go, there's a few weeks to go, so which side is it?

JC: The first point is to make sure we get an economy that works for all. That means, I think, getting tariff free access to the European market as a very high priority and you then work out an immigration policy that follows on from that.

AM: So you wouldn't start from the point of view, I'm going to stop immigration?

JC: I would start from the point of view I want to defend and maintain jobs in Britain. I want us to be an expanding manufacturing economy. I want our own public national investment bank to invest in new industries and infrastructure, so that we do have this trading relationship with Europe which is absolutely crucial. After all half our trade is with Europe at the moment.

AM: A very straight forward yes or no question. In these negotiations if you're there leading them as Prime Minister do you insist on ending free movement? Yes or no?

JC: What I would insist on is trade access and see what follows from that. That has got to be the key point.

AM: I'm sorry, that is a very straight forward question.

JC: No, that has got to be the key point.

AM: But this is absolutely linked to what you're talking about. The free movement question and trade access are completely linked.

JC: Free movement ends when we leave the European Union because clearly that is an intrinsic part of members of the European Union, but there is also a question of EU nationals living in Britain who I think should all be given the right to remain here immediately as British nationals living in Europe should get the same unilateral decision by their governments and we then work out a system by those that are able to come here for work and so on as well as British people able to go to other parts of Europe to work. Look, listen, most of our –

AM: Apart from rhetoric about what might happen in the end –

JC: - manufacturing industry actually exists on both sides of the Channel.

AM: Apart from rhetoric about what might happen in the end I am struggling to see a real difference between Jeremy Corbyn on Brexit and Theresa May on Brexit. I know you talk about what she might say - what she might threaten but in terms of actual policies –

JC: I'm not threatening Europe with a tax haven on the shores of Europe. I'm saying that the work ...

AM: But you're out on the single market, you're out of the customs union, you accept –

JC: No.

AM: You're not out of the customs union?

JC: No wait a minute, let me finish. The single market is intrinsic to membership of the European Union. If we're not members of

the European Union then there is a need to have that market relationship, so there would have to be a trade agreement with the EU which would ensure that we continue to gain that access and recognising –

AM: This is exactly what she says too.

JC: - and recognising the deep levels of integration on manufacturing and service industries between Britain and Europe. Because at the same time she is going around the world saying actually we want to do sweetheart trade deals with various people around the world. You can't do that while you're still a member of the European Union. Important thing is maintain jobs.

AM: All right. What we do know is that there is likely to be a very heavy bill, the EU, Mr Verhofstadt and others have said that they're not even going to discuss trade deals and migration and so on until they have agreed the as it were divorce fee before we leave. And that could be – they're talking about 50 or 60 billion Euros. As Prime Minister would you accept that?

JC: I don't understand where that figure comes from and I suspect it –

AM: Well it comes from Mr Barnier.

JC: Well it comes from Mr Barnier, I suspect it's an opening gambit in the negotiations. I think that it's in the interests of everyone in the European Union as well as Britain to come to an agreement very quickly on trade arrangements and develop the rest from there. So we have an intelligent discussion but we would not approach the negotiation on the basis of a series of threats.

AM: If I was one of that 48 percent who are really, really upset about Brexit and think it's a disastrous course, if I was that person

I would think I must not vote for the Labour Party. I can only vote for the Liberal Democrats because the Labour Party carry us on down that process.

JC: Not at all. I represent a constituency that voted heavily to remain. The Labour Party's the only party that actually has supporters strongly in both camps. So the basis has to be an intelligent relationship with the European Union, has to be a trade relationship, there has to be maintenance of the rights that we've achieved, environment protections, transport agreements and all those things. So we're going to have a very real day to day life relationship with the European Union in the future and I'm very clear about European nationals' rights to remain in this country.

AM: You are up against it in this campaign, as you know. There's a mountain to climb, you have got a lot of hostility from the mainstream press and all the rest of it and you've seen all the headlines and so forth. If you win this it is your credit. If you fail to win this election and you fail badly, do you take personal responsibility?

JC: I'm out there leading our party and very proud to do so. We're agreeing on a Manifesto which will be produced. We will – And I can offer to the British people of a good relationship with Europe in the future and meaningful day to day relationships. We'll make an offer on education. We'll make an offer on health. An offer on housing. But above all

AM: But if that offer is rejected...

JC: I'm gonna offer opportunities for everybody. Listen to what I'm saying.

AM: If that offer is rejected do you accept that you have failed?

JC: I will make that case to the people of this country. We've had nine election events already and I'll be all round the country

making that case, and do you know what? We've got a huge increase in party membership in the last few days of people who see an opportunity of doing something different in Britain. Of liberating the spirit of Britain.

AM: Are you going to win in June?

JC: Watch this space.

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

ENDS