

ANDREW MARR SHOW, JEREMY CORBYN, 23RD JULY, 2017

ANDREW MARR SHOW, 23RD JULY, 2017

JEREMY CORBYN,
LEADER, LABOUR PARTY

AM: You've got a reputation as a straight talker and clear answers. There's one issue on which you won't give a clear answer. When you're asked would you like to see us leave the single market, you can't tell us.

JC: The single market is dependent on membership of the EU. What we've said all along is that we want a tariff free trade access to the European market and a partnership with Europe in the future.

AM: But to be absolutely crystal clear, we leave the single European market because we leave the EU?

JC: The two things are inextricably linked.

AM: So we have to leave the single market?

JC: Yes.

AM: Okay, that's clear.

JC: And so the question is then the kind of trade relationship in the future, and we've made it very clear we want tariff free trade access with the European market.

AM: Some of your colleagues have also made it clear that to get that you'd have to accept some version of free movement of people once we've left the EU. A different free movement of people, but some kind of free movement of people.

JC: I think we made that clear during the election, that quite clearly there are a lot of British people working in Europe, a lot of European people working in this country. We would do two things. One is guarantee the rights of EU nationals to remain here, including a right of family reunion and we would expect the same to be done across Europe and obviously skills are needed on both sides of the Channel. I mean look at any major company in Britain, they require European skills as they do British skills on theirs. BMW for example and many others.

AM: Absolutely. So we're outside the EU but to get full access to the single market we accept that there's free movement of people coming from the EU to us and vice versa?

JC: Well, it would be a managed thing on the basis of the work required.

AM: But you wouldn't be stopping people at the border, asking for their visas?

JC: There would be European workers working in Britain and British workers working in Europe as there are the moment. What there wouldn't be is the wholesale importation of underpaid workers from central Europe in order to destroy conditions, particularly in the construction industry.

AM: So how do you stop that? Under your plan how do you stop that happening?

JC: You prevent agencies recruiting whole scale work forces that like. You advertise for jobs in the locality first.

AM: But to be absolutely clear you don't stop people coming from Latvia or Poland who want to come and work here, you don't stop them at the airport of the border and say let's see your papers?

JC: Listen, they would come here on the basis of the jobs available and their skill sets to go with it. What we wouldn't allow is this practice by agencies, who are quite disgraceful the way they do it, recruit workforce, low paid and bring them here in order to dismiss and existing workforce in the construction industry, then pay them low wages. It's appalling. And the only people who benefit are the companies.

AM: Just going back to my original question, would you allow everybody who wanted to come here to come here, or would you stop them at the ports and airports?

JC: As I said, and we said during the election, it would be on the basis of the economic needs and skills required. And so for example –

AM: So we don't need any more plumbers, you go home again?

JC: No. The need for nurses for example is huge and we now have a problem of nurse shortage because the number of Polish nurses who've either gone home or not coming. And so that we have to be sensible about this.

AM: Right, but I'm still slightly unclear. If there was, for instance, some Polish plumbers and we decided we have enough plumbers in this country, would they be stopped and told they had to go home again, or would they be allowed in anyway?

JC: We will look at the situation on a basis of the job and skill needs.

AM: Can I ask you about the customs union, because that's another big area. Is your current thinking that we could stay

inside the customs union or will we have to leave the customs union entirely?

JC: I'm looking to do an agreement with the European Union on tariff free trade access and of course on trade relations with the rest of the world. Now what's interesting is the EU have said quite clearly, and I think quite rightly, that they would only do trade agreements, new trade agreements with countries that sign up to the Paris Climate Change Accord. The US has said, or President Trump has said they wish to leave it, therefore that calls into question the whole of this government's strategy on a one off trade deal with the United States which sounds awfully like the Trans-Atlantic Trade and Investment Partnership to me.

AM: Coming back to the Rebecca Long-Bailey remark about having your cake and eating it, I mean there is a choice to be made about the customs union. Inside the customs union we'll have more access to European markets than outside it, but if we don't leave it then we can't make these free trade deals. So basically on which side of the fence do you jump?

JC: We have to make a judgement on that. We haven't jumped on either side of that fence, but again the customs union is part of the European Union. We could have a bespoke trade arrangement with the European Union which says that we would have broadly similar trade arrangements with other parts of the world. Personally I would want to strengthen the human rights element, which is there in the European Union trade agreements. I would want to see that stronger. There is also an environmental element such as methods of production. I would want to strengthen that. So there are areas where I would want to go further than the European Union on trade conditions.

AM: See a lot of people watching this are trying to work out whether Jeremy Corbyn is going to save them from Brexit and it

sounds very much that that is not your view. Can I ask about your deep view of the EU? You were brought up, as it were, under the influence of Tony Benn who always saw the EU as a kind of banker's conspiracy, anti-democratic. He was fundamentally, as a British parliamentarian, against it. Are you?

JC: I was against the principles of a lot of the free market points of the European Union. Hence my disagreement with the Maastricht Treaty and what Margaret Thatcher was doing which was essentially to promote a deregulated free market across Europe. On the social Europe and the social conditions of Europe and the workers' rights across Europe, strongly supported them. Listen, I've probably been in the European Parliament in Brussels numerous, numerous times over many years discussing those very issues. I campaigned for a Remain vote in the referendum on the basis that we wanted to protect those rights and conditions, but the European Union could not and should not continue with its policy of trying to oppose state subsidy of industry and I just wanted to see a regulated market. That was my point. However, the referendum is what it is. We have that call now. I want to see a positive partnership relationship with Europe in the future.

AM: A lot of people in this country are burdened by high levels of debt because of the student loans they've had to take out. And you said shortly before the election, quotes: "I will deal with it." What did you mean by "I will deal with it?"

JC: It was the context of an interview with the *New Musical Express* and an interview I also did with the *Independent*, in which I pointed out there was a massive overhanging debt that many people dealt with. I recognised it was a huge burden. I did not make a commitment we will write it off because I couldn't at that stage. I pointed out we'd written the Manifesto in a short space of time because it was a surprise election. But that we would look at ways of reducing that debt burden, recognising quite a lot of it is

never going to be collected anyway, and try and reduce that burden. But the point we absolutely made was that we would abolish the student debt from the time we were elected and had we – were we now in government we'd be taking measures to ensure that the 2017-18 students did not pay fees or we would reimburse them if we couldn't get the legislation through in time.

AM: That bit I completely understand.

JC: Oh we were completely clear about that.

AM: But if you're a young voter and you heard those words, "I will deal with it" you might have thought Jeremy Corbyn is going to relieve me of my debt, but you won't?

JC: What I said was we would deal with it by trying to reduce the burden of it. We never said we would completely abolish it because we were unaware of the size at that time. John McDonnell has established a working party to look at this policy and we will be making a statement on it in the near future which will set out what our plans are for the future.

AM: I must move on to BBC pay, the other big story of the day.

JC: I thought you were going to, yes.

AM: Yes. I mean you'd have seen the letter from all my female colleagues to the BBC's Director General. What is your message to the BBC about that?

JC: I would sign the letter with them. I think the BBC needs to look very hard at itself. The point you made in the press discussion earlier about the treatment of older women in the BBC is I think a very important one, but also this gender pay gap is appalling. We would insist on a strong gender pay audit of every

organisation and we'd also look at a 20-1 ratio between the Chief Executive and the lowest paid staff in every public sector organisation. And the BBC is very much public sector.

AM: The pay ratio might have a big effect on famous actors like Benedict Cumberbatch and people who at the moment BBC licence payers want to see in top level dramas and films made by the BBC. Would the 20-1 pay ratio affect people like that?

JC: If he's employed directly by the BBC yes. If he's employed by somebody else that's a contractual matter between the BBC and somebody else. But I do think the BBC, which is a wonderful organisation and I actually support it, I support the renewal of the Charter, I think it needs to look at itself, 'cause the levels of pay are quite astronomical. The pay gap rather is astronomical.

AM: And do you think that there needs to be more legislation on the pay gap across the piece?

JC: Absolutely. We need to have a gender pay audit done in every company. We need strong imposition of equal pay legislation across the piece. There's about a 20% gender pay gap in Britain, but there's also the question of promotion of women and it's not just at the top level. That gets all the news. The BBC gets all the news, big companies get the news. What about those working in the National Health Service? Those working in local government? Those working in small companies where the women know they're paid less than a man doing more or less equally the same job? That's the area of discrimination that is so serious within our society and often the loss of women's career progression opportunities when they take time out for having children in their late 20s or 30s come back and suddenly find the man they'd been working alongside a year before has shot up the scale somewhere else and they're left behind.

AM: Okay, can I turn to another issue? Hilary Armstrong, former Labour Chief Whip has said on BBC's *Westminster Hour* that people from your constituency went to Tony Blair in the old days and said, that Jeremy Corbyn he's always rebelling against the Labour leadership, we want to deselect him. And Tony Blair said, no, no, we're a broad church, I want to keep Jeremy Corbyn inside there. In the same spirit will you call off the dogs on reselection now?

JC: What Hilary Armstrong seems to forget is that the selection process is done by party members. Yes, I was challenged once or twice during that period for reselection as the Labour candidate for Islington North and obviously I was reselected on all those occasions by the members of the party. There was a trigger ballot. There was a vote. I was reselected.

AM: So there's no great thank you to Tony Blair on that one?

JC: Well I've no idea this conversation actually took place and also I don't quite see why people should go to the party leader and say we want to influence what's going on in the constituency. The whole point of democracy is that the people decide.

AM: One final question. Can you really become Prime Minister within six months and how would that possibly happen?

JC: We'll challenge this government at every turn. We've already forced a lot of u-turns on them. They're u-turning every day because we changed the agenda. We've changed the debate on the economy, on social justice, on education, on so many other things. We're forcing them all the way. I do not believe it's sustainable for this government to give a bung of a billion pounds towards the DUP in order to stay in office. I think it's unsustainable. I'm looking forward to another election. And I'm ready for it.

ANDREW MARR SHOW, JEREMY CORBYN, 23RD JULY, 2017

AM: I'm not sure the rest of us are but –

JC: No, but I am.

AM: - Jeremy Corbyn, thanks you very much indeed.

Ends