

THE ANDREW MARR SHOW (presented by Eddie Mair)
Interview with Boris Johnson
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**INTERVIEW WITH:
BORIS JOHNSON, MAYOR OF LONDON**

EDDIE MAIR: Good Morning, how are you?

BORIS JOHNSON: Very, very good, thank you.

EDDIE MAIR: Before we talk about you, let's talk about immigration which is in the papers today.

BORIS JOHNSON: Sure.

EDDIE MAIR: David Cameron going to make a speech in which he's going to talk about keeping immigrant families off council house waiting lists. There's talk of making immigrants pay to go to see a GP. Is that all good for you?

BORIS JOHNSON: I think certainly, you've got to address the problem of uncontrolled immigration, that was really I think a function of decisions taken by the Labour Party a long time ago, that has certainly led to huge strains on the social security system, on education budgets, on housing and yes, it's absolutely right for the Prime Minister and the government now to try and sort that out....

EDDIE MAIR: (over) Do you think it's a good policy?

BORIS JOHNSON: Well, I mean I'd have to look at the details of what they're proposing but ...

EDDIE MAIR: (over) Well you're not rushing at it with enthusiasm.

BORIS JOHNSON: No, no. No, I am. I mean if it's going to do – make the difference and help us to stop people coming here who want to leach off the system, to put it in, you know, crude terms, without damaging – and this is the key thing – without damaging our openness to talent, then I completely support it... Er, it is important that we strike a balance here. London, the UK economy benefits hugely from attracting talented people from around the world and one of the beefs they have at the moment is a visa system that basically means we have huge numbers of tourists from China, going to Paris

and indeed to Belgium – I mean are more Chinese tourists going to Belgium at the moment than there are to the UK, not that, I mean Belgium’s a very wonderful place, but we could be doing much much better business, much bigger business if we had a more ... sensible visa policy, in my view.

EDDIE MAIR: But this language – you just used the word “leach” – the Bishop of Dudley says politicians’ response to immigration is wholly disproportionate.

BORIS JOHNSON: Well, I think ... again you’ve got to be careful what you’re talking about and...

EDDIE MAIR: (over) What are you talking about?

BORIS JOHNSON: I’m pro, I’m pro, I am pro talented people being able to come here ...

EDDIE MAIR: (over) Well, who isn’t for that? Come on.

BORIS JOHNSON: ... and work hard, and there are many, many such people who come here, who’ve done enormous amount of good for the UK economy. What you can’t have is a situation in which families are arriving as benefit tourists or whatever. Now, I happen to think that those are probably in a minority and (interjection)

EDDIE MAIR: Do you think some politicians have flammed it up a bit?

BORIS JOHNSON: ...and I think there’s a great deal of ... antagonism towards immigrants in the country (interjection)

EDDIE MAIR: By politicians?

BORIS JOHNSON: And, no, I think it’s reflecting a popular view. There was clip, there was a thing on, there was a thing on Question Time the other day ...

EDDIE MAIR: (over) So, hold on a second, so you’re saying if the public are misinformed and the politicians simply reflect that, that’s okay?

BORIS JOHNSON: I’m not saying the public are necessarily misinformed. I think that people have being going through very tough times and what’s been happening basically is that British business has made the case for having, in the last twenty, thirty years, British business has made the case for allowing them to have access to skilled workers from around the world, indeed from the rest of the EU – in a way that has made life very difficult, often for people who grew up in this country, went to this country’s schools and who are competing for those jobs. And there’s a real, there’s a real indignation about the fact that they are often, they feel crowded out of the labour market. Now, my solution is not to be hostile to people coming from round the world ... (interjection)

EDDIE MAIR: Leach.

BORIS JOHNSON: No, that's people who are, you know, benefit tourists ...

EDDIE MAIR: It's the nasty people.

BORIS JOHNSON: Alright. But to do more to help and to educate and to encourage people who grew up in this country and who've been chronically failed by the system. So the way to tackle the problem is to deal with the educational deficit we've got in our country.

EDDIE MAIR: Okay, understood. I want to ask you about the Olympic stadium, which you were talking about this week and you were talking about the future and telling the critics to stop being so negative.

BORIS JOHNSON: Yeah.

EDDIE MAIR: Fair enough. There is a more fundamental problem though, which I didn't really hear you talk about this week and I want to ask you about it. That the problems with the future financing of this stadium in West Ham and all the rest of it, weren't they by definition caused by the fact not enough planning was done before the stadium was built to think about its future? Wasn't that a bit of a problem?

BORIS JOHNSON: Eddie, you're right.

EDDIE MAIR: Great, let's move on.

BORIS JOHNSON: (over) And well, you know, I'm not going to hide it from you that that was a decision that was taken in 2006 by my illustrious Labour predecessor ...

EDDIE MAIR: (over) What can you do, eh?

BORIS JOHNSON: ...I won't embarrass him by mentioning him by name, but there you go, he, they decided they weren't going to build a stadium that was compatible with football. They were going to save money temporarily by going for an athletics only stadium, with all the wrong sight-lines. Now, I think that the future of that Olympic stadium, which really entered in to the hearts of the country, is to be open to all sorts of possibilities, including football...

EDDIE MAIR: (over) But do you accept you've had to make the best of a bad job? I mean, looking at the figures, West Ham come out of this pretty well...

BORIS JOHNSON: (over) Woah!

EDDIE MAIR: ...and the taxpayer doesn't come out of it terribly well.

BORIS JOHNSON: Look. I think if you look at that deal, and it took a long time to agree and, you know, I think we're getting not only fifty million pound upfront contribution, we're getting a rent, we're getting a share of the beverages and hospitality and all the rest of it. About ten million pounds a year will come to the taxpayer from that stadium. Now there's no Olympic

stadium around the world, post-Olympic stadium that's had that kind of legacy. And don't forget, West Ham are only the anchor tenant. Right. So they're just going to be one of the many attractions and teams that will play there...

EDDIE MAIR: (over) I know you can talk about this all day but I want to talk about you.

BORIS JOHNSON: Well that's exactly what I'm trying to avoid.

EDDIE MAIR: This documentary.

BORIS JOHNSON: Thanks for nothing.

EDDIE MAIR: You haven't seen this documentary, have you?

BORIS JOHNSON: I have not, no.

EDDIE MAIR: I have.

BORIS JOHNSON: Right, well Eddie, I mean...

EDDIE MAIR: (over) Why did you agree to it?

BORIS JOHNSON: ...I think that's over and above the call of duty, if I may say so.

EDDIE MAIR: Why did you agree to do it?

BORIS JOHNSON: I'll tell you. It's very simple. It's like, it's like, when the News of the World ring up and they say, or whatever, you know, and they say listen, you're going to be in this story. You can either co-operate or not co-operate. And Michael Cockerill the producer and presenter, the guy who did it...

EDDIE MAIR: Michael Cockerill blackmailed you, is that what you're saying?

BORIS JOHNSON: I, no. Well, effectively, yeah (laughs). What he said was, look, the BBC have commissioned this. It is going to appear, and so we faced a choice, either to try to help or rather prissily to just stand on one side and let them do whatever they wanted and I thought on the whole, it was probably wiser, given that it was going to happen anyway, to try to say something, rather than leave the field clear to you know...people who might want to put the boot in.

EDDIE MAIR: Let me ask you about some of the things that came up in the documentary.

BORIS JOHNSON: Right. I haven't seen it, so you know ...

EDDIE MAIR: But this happened in your life, so you know about this. The Times let you go after you made up a quote. Why did you make up a quote?

BORIS JOHNSON: Well. This...again, you know, these are, these are big terms for what happened. Well, I can tell you the whole thing, I think... you know... Are you sure our viewers wouldn't want to hear more about housing in London...

EDDIE MAIR: (over) Well, alright. If you don't want to talk about, if you don't want to talk about the made up quote, let me talk about something...

BORIS JOHNSON: (over) But I will tell you. It was a long and lamentable story...

EDDIE MAIR: Okay. But you made a quote up.

BORIS JOHNSON: Well, what happened was that... I ascribed events that were supposed to have taken place before the death of Piers Gaviston to events that actually took place after the death of Piers Gaviston...

EDDIE MAIR: (over) Yes. You made something up. Let me ask about another little, er...

BORIS JOHNSON: (over) Well, I mean, I mildly sandpapered something somebody said, and yes it's very embarrassing and I'm very sorry about it.

EDDIE MAIR: Let me ask you about a bare-faced lie. When you were in Michael Howard's team, you denied to him you were having an affair. It turned out you were and he sacked you for that. Why did you lie to your Party leader?

BORIS JOHNSON: Well, I mean again, I'm... with great respect... On that, I never had any conversation with Michael Howard about that matter and, you know, I don't propose...

EDDIE MAIR: (over) You did lie to him.

BORIS JOHNSON: Well, you know, I don't propose to go in to all that again.

EDDIE MAIR: I don't blame you.

BORIS JOHNSON: No, well why should I? I've been through, you know, that question a lot with the, well, watch the documentary. Why don't we talk about something else?

EDDIE MAIR: Well the programme also includes – well this is about your integrity.

BORIS JOHNSON: Okay

EDDIE MAIR: The programme includes your reaction as you listen to a phone

call in which your friend Darius Guppy, asks you to supply the address of a journalist...

BORIS JOHNSON: Yes.

EDDIE MAIR: ...so that he can have him physically assaulted. The words “beaten up” and “broken ribs” are said to you...

BORIS JOHNSON: Yes.

EDDIE MAIR: ...and you, having heard that, you tell your friend, Darius Guppy, you will supply the address. What does that say about you Boris Johnson?

BORIS JOHNSON: (over) Well I ...

EDDIE MAIR: (over) Aren't you in fact, making up quotes, lying to your party leader, wanting to be part of someone being physically assaulted? You're a nasty piece of work, aren't you?

BORIS JOHNSON: Well, Eddie, I think of all three things I would dispute ...

EDDIE MAIR: You don't factually dispute them.

BORIS JOHNSON: Well I do. And I can, you know, if we had a long time, which we don't, I could explain that I think all three interpretations you're putting on those things aren't wholly fair. And certainly, the final thing which you raise, which is the case of my old friend Darius, yes, it was certainly true that he was in a bit of state and I did humour him in a long phone conversation, from which absolutely nothing eventuated and... you know, there you go. But I think if any of us had our phone conversations bugged, they might, you know, people say all sorts of fantastical things whist they're talking to their friends.

EDDIE MAIR: But even Conrad Black, your friend. Convicted fraudster, even he says he doesn't trust you completely.

BORIS JOHNSON: I hadn't seen that Conrad had said that, but obviously, you know, nonetheless I have got a great admiration for Conrad who in my view is a pretty good journalist and a pretty good proprietor.

EDDIE MAIR: (over) Now, if you dispute some of these things, you can be absolutely direct and honest and straightforward with me. Whenever you're asked about Prime Minister and goodness knows, Michael Cockerill had a go, you obfuscate, well, I want to be a pop star, I want to be painter, I want to do all of those things. But you never actually say ... (interjection) I want it clearly, plain as a pike staff, of course like many politicians you want to be Prime Minister. Why don't you do just say the words? What's the problem?

BORIS JOHNSON: Well, if I may, permission to obfuscate.

EDDIE MAIR: Oh, please don't.

BORIS JOHNSON: Can I just go back to what I said before, which is...

EDDIE MAIR: (over) No, don't repeat yourself. The documentary is full of people, your sister for example gives a blistering performance, who talk about your ambitions. Your father even suggests they could change the rules so you could party leader and Prime Minister, but you, the words will not cross your lips. Why not?

BORIS JOHNSON: Because it's not going to happen ...

EDDIE MAIR: No, no. But it's about your desire, not whether it's going to happen.

BORIS JOHNSON: Well I'll tell you what I want...

EDDIE MAIR: (over) You're not going to land on the moon either. But do you want to be Prime Minister. Say it.

BORIS JOHNSON: Well, all I want is for David Cameron to win this election, which he deserves to do.

EDDIE MAIR: Do you want to be Prime Minister?

BORIS JOHNSON: I want to do everything I possibly can to help, and in those circumstances it is completely nonsensical for me to indulge you know this increasingly... hysterical...

EDDIE MAIR: (over) You could end it all just by saying what you know to be true.

BORIS JOHNSON: What, that I don't want to?

EDDIE MAIR: That you want to be Prime Minister.

BORIS JOHNSON: Oh, come on. Look, what I want is to spend the next – my time remaining as Mayor to do as well as I can as Mayor of London. I've got three and a bit years to go...

EDDIE MAIR: (over) What should the viewers make of your inability to give a straight answer to a straight question?

BORIS JOHNSON: I think people would rightly conclude that I don't want to talk about this subject because I want to talk about what I think should happen, which is the government deserves to win the next election and indeed I think it's a measure of the triviality of politics, that I thought I was coming on to talk about the budget and housing in London, and, you know, you've – I mean, I don't mind all these questions about this other stuff, but I think it is more important that we look at the things that are happening now in the economy and we look at what the government is doing to help. And by the way

the reason I want David Cameron to win and the reason I don't want Ed Milliband to win is because I'm genuinely alarmed by some of the things the Labour Party is saying, and I strongly agree with what Peter Mandelson and Tony Blair have said about Labour, which is that I don't think they're offering anything approaching the right prospectus for the country. And so – look at the budget. Look at what... (interjection)

EDDIE MAIR: We don't have any time I'm afraid ...

BORIS JOHNSON: What people want to know is – they don't care about phone conversations with my friends twenty years ago, they don't care some ludicrous, so-called made up quote, and what's the third accusation? I can't remember.

EDDIE MAIR: Lying to Michael Howard.

BORIS JOHNSON: Michael Howard! What they care about...

EDDIE MAIR: Where is he now, eh?

BORIS JOHNSON: Yeah, exactly. What they care about Eddie, is what is happening in the UK economy and who of the two parties has the best prospectus for recovery. I mean if you look at what George Osborne put forward this week – last week rather, in the budget, I think that is the way forward. I think it's unbelievable that Labour, who've got absolutely nothing to say ...

EDDIE MAIR: (over) I hate to cut you off.

BORIS JOHNSON: No, no, you're not cutting me off. Labour have got nothing to say about how to help people on middle incomes who need their homes...

EDDIE MAIR: (over) Are you going to watch it tomorrow?

BORIS JOHNSON: No ,I'm certainly not, not after what you've told me. I'm not going to watch it.

EDDIE MAIR: Boris Johnson, thank you.

END OF INTERVIEW