ANDREW MARR SHOW, 24TH JULY 2016

PADDY ASHDOWN

AM: Now as we were saying in the paper review, you have launched a new political movement. It’s not a party, it’s something different. But first of all it’s called –

PA: More United.uk.
AM: More United.
PA: dot uk..

AM: Why is it called More United.uk?
PA: Well it springs out of the speech that Jo Cox made, but look, let me explain what it is. There’s a group of us – 17. They come from right across society, of all political views and of none, who believe, as I do, that there are hundreds of thousands, potentially millions, of people out there who hate seeing our country dragged away to the extremes, who believe in what I would call the values of a civilised country, might come onto that in a minute. And who want to have a means not necessarily through a political party, to express their views. We give them that today and what’s more we give them the opportunity to change British politics away from a politics funded by big money which drags the political parties to the extremes, to being funded by lots of small money which holds it in the centre.

AM: All right. So it is pro European, I would imagine.
PA: Well let me list the principles that we list and say if you agree with these go to More United.uk and sign up to them. If we get more than 25 thousand or there abouts we’ll create a political movement, then ask people to contribute money, any money, no bottom limit, no top. We invest that in candidates who will support the principles and the principles are: 1) a market based economy
where the market is our servant not our masters. 2) environmentally responsible policies. 3) a reformed democracy with giving power to the voter, no more governments elected on less than 25% of the vote. 4) an internationalist country that values diversity, wants to be as close to the European Union as possible and if we get the opportunity to vote to go back into the European Union would support it.

AM: It sounds remarkably like the Liberal Democrats.

PA: Well look, there are people who are here from all ranks of life. I mean there’s Simon Schama, there’s Dan Snow.

AM: But you’ve got a party that believes in all of these things, why set up something new?

PA: Because there are millions who don’t want to do it necessarily through a political party. Who are fed up with – look, I’m a Liberal Democrat, I love the Liberal Democrats, I hope people will ascribe to them, but there are- I recognised, Andrew, that there are millions of people who want to make a difference without belonging to a political party. Here’s the point. If we raise money from individuals, lots of small money, not big money, and we invest those in candidates of any political party – Tory, Lib Dem, Labour, Green –

AM: So it’s a kind of herbivores Momentum?

PA: No, it’s absolutely not. It’s giving ordinary people the chance to influence the activities of political parties and giving them the chance all the year round and giving them the chance to use their resources, financial and manpower, to support any candidate from any party who supports these principles.
AM: So because we live in a parliamentary democracy, in the end it’s all about getting people elected to parliament, most people would say and you would support a candidate who believes broadly speaking in what you – and so you put money into to help them in a constituency?

PA: Exactly so.

AM: You put money in to back. So what happens when you

PA: Money and manpower.

AM: Okay. I can easily imagine a constituency when you have a sort of middle of the road Labour MP, a Liberal Democrat –

PA: I hope so.

AM; A Green and maybe even a Tory who all support your values. So do you support all of them or what do you do, do you pick one?

PA: What you do is the people in the movement in that constituency get together, interview the candidates and decide which one they’ve got to support.

AM: So this could mean –

PA: Very simple

AM: This could mean that your new movement could actually be campaigning against Liberal Democrat candidates in some circumstances, you could.

PA: It could easily mean that. But look, what we’re trying to do is to – this is not about politicians. It’s about ordinary people who want to make a difference and don’t necessarily want to do it through a political party. Having the influence to be able to support a certain set of principles. Any candidate from any party who accepts and adheres to the principles and will put them into practice will be assisted by the movement with the money it generates and the manpower it generates as well. It’s as simple as that, and by the way –
AM: Have you spoken to people from other parties?
PA: Of course I have.
AM: Tories and Labour party who have been involved now?
PA: Of course I have. I mean there are people who are amongst our – look, there’s Dan Snow there, there’s Simon Schama there, there’s Martha Lane Fox there –
AM: Yeah, they’re historians rather than politicians.
PA: Well Martha Lane Fox is a social entrepreneur. There’s a young Josh Babarinde, a young youth worker and social entrepreneur. There is a whole raft of people of all political party and none. They believe, as I do, that there are millions out there who we have to reach. Who don’t want to change politics. They don’t want to bring Britain, - who want to bring Britain back to moderate values, who believe in let’s say talking about the benefits of immigration, who believe in a diverse culture and society. And we want to give them influence in our politics.

AM: So in a sense it’s the people who are on the 16 million side of the Brexit vote as it were who lost coming together, there was that big march in London –

PA: No, no, we say quite simply if Brexit is the answer, and it is, that’s the answer given by the British people, then we want to be as close to Europe as possible in the case of Brexit, but if we get the opportunity to deal with that question again we would be arguing in favour of Britain rejoining.

AM: Okay, final question. Is this all about, partly, or partly about Jeremy Corbyn winning the Labour leadership again? If that happens in September then there will be presumably quite a lot of upset people in the Labour Party. You’re not trying to create another SDP?

PA: Andrew, look, this is not about political parties. I don’t mind what political parties. I hope the Liberal Democrats who are
growing very fast, continue to prosper. I don't know what's going to happen in Labour, I hope the moderates win. I think that our politics will be safer and more secure if they do. This is about giving people a voice who want to make sure that Britain remains a moderate, decent country and who don't want necessarily to do that through the political parties. So what Labour will do is what Labour will do. But this movement gives voice to the voiceless who want to hold this country in the centre and gives them the financial and manpower ability leverage to make sure that they get their way with candidates elected from any party.

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