ANDREW MARR SHOW
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AM: Before we come onto Brexit, another European-related story, which is all these terrible, terrible tailbacks, some people sitting for 15 hours in boiling weather in their cars with children, desperate for police or anyone else to thrust them water. This has been an absolute Horlicks of a mess. Why has it happened?
PM: Well, I think we can understand why the French want to increase security after what happened in Nice last week.
AM: Of course.
PM: And I think that is understandable, that their risk rose. What is unacceptable is just the way in which people have been left in the lurch.
AM: At one point there was apparently just one person checking passports on the French side.
PM: Well, one person checking the coaches, as I understand it. That is just purely unacceptable, and I know there have been discussions between our government and the French government to make sure that we try and ease the situation as much as we possibly can. But I think one does have to acknowledge that the horrendous incident in Nice would have put the French authorities on much higher alert.

AM: And you think it’s all about that, there’s no suggestion that they’re going to give us a little bit of a punishment for Brexit?
PM: No, I don’t think so. I don’t think so at all. You know, to the French and to us tourism is a very important industry and nobody wants to see people starting their holidays getting frustrated in the way that they are and held up.

AM: The same part of the country, but not something for which we can blame the French is the terrible disaster with Southern Rail. Again, all this summer people have been unable to see their
children at night when they’re coming home, unable to get into work on time, huge numbers of trains have been cancelled. It again has been a terrible mess and it goes down to the contract that you signed with them which means that they do not have any hard financial penalties for not being able to deliver the service.

PM: Well, look, the simple fact is we are seeing record investment in our railways, we’re seeing record investment – no, no, this is quite important, because this is actually about an industrial dispute. This is about whether the RMT will accept driver-only operated trains. And the simple fact is lots of trains already in Southern run on driver-operated-only trains. We’re buying in new trains, new services, we’re seeing record investment. And we’re seeing an industrial dispute.

AM: And you’re saying it’s nothing to do with the company at all?

PM: Well, the company has some responsibility. Of course the company has some responsibility, but the main reason why we’ve got the problems we’ve got is because of the industrial dispute. Look, there will always be times on the railways where sometimes the problem is with the rail infrastructure.

AM: This seems to be absolute management incompetence, frankly. I mean, I Claire Perry resigned partly because of that. Don’t you hold some responsibility for this different kind of contract you signed, where they get all the money up front and therefore aren’t under real financial pressure to deliver?

PM: No, no, they do lose money. But the simple fact is this is a fact, this is an industrial dispute, the RMT have been on strike but they’ve also had positions where sickness levels have risen immeasurably as far as people not reporting in for work. And one can only draw the conclusions that part of that is part of the dispute that’s taking place. I want to see that service running properly, as will Chris Grayling.
AM: So no change. What kind of comfort can you offer those people living in Brighton, on the south coast, or in London, moving in the other direction, whose lives have been completely ruined by this, who have lost jobs, relationships have been damaged, family relationships have been damaged, and it goes on and on and on?

PM: Well, obviously Chris Grayling will be looking at what measures he can take now as the Transport Secretary. But, you know, I want to see that investment, I want to see those new trains. You know, London Bridge, which is causing some of the problems, going under a £700 million refurbishment at the moment. That will lead to a better service.

AM: Okay, let’s turn then to Brexit, as I suggested at the beginning of the interview. On the one hand you have a lot of companies desperate to in some way keep in the single market. Boris Johnson has suggested there’s going to be some kind of compromise could be done. There’s a very interesting story in the Observer today suggesting that, as he thought would happen, the French at least are saying, ‘do you know what? We can do a deal. We can give you less immigration and you can stay in the single market.’ For a lot of your supporters that would be a betrayal of the Brexit vote.

PM: Well, let us see. We’re only in the – we’re four weeks on from when the referendum took place. I’m quite clear that the referendum result is binding on parliament – technically it isn’t, but I’m clear that it is binding on parliament. The Prime Minister has made it very clear that Brexit means Brexit.

AM: But what does Brexit mean?
PM: Well, Brexit means that we’re coming out of the European Union. We want to see our own borders under our control. And we obviously want to see the best we can for British investment. And we have seen some large inward investment taking place after the Brexit vote.
AM: A lot of the 17 million people who voted for Brexit assumed it would mean an end to mass migration from Europe. Will it?
PM: Well, I think you can’t say that the 17 million people who voted – I think there were several reasons why people voted to leave the European Union, so I don’t think you can say it’s one particular area. But it does mean that we have to have control of our borders, yes.

AM: So you are going to bring immigration from the EU down considerably, absolutely definitely and in short order?
PM: Yes. Well, you say short order, we’ve got to wait and see exactly when we leave the European Union, once Article 50 is served, then there is a two-year – a maximum two-year process. It may be sooner than that. Then that will be part of the negotiations which the Prime Minister is leading.

AM: Will Article 50 definitely be triggered before the general election?
PM: Oh yes.
AM: So that means there is not under any circumstances going to be an early general election to catch the Labour Party with their trousers down and destroy them?
PM: It’s very difficult to have an early general election with a fixed-term parliament. I mean, there are elections every year, we are – the county council elections, those are what I’m turning my attention to at the moment. Those are the next elections on the domestic scene. But with a Fixed-term Parliament Act in place it’s very difficult to call an early general election.

AM: At the core of your job really is relations between the voluntary party, the party in the country, and the MPs. And there’s been a sense for quite a long time now that the party in the country has been slightly looked down on, slightly disregarded by the people at the top of the party. There’s been shamocracy, so-
called, and the Old Etonians at the top of the party. And issues like gay marriage, which David Cameron keeps saying is his great legacy, offended a lot of your ordinary party members. Is that era now over? Do we see a different relationship now between the leadership of the party and the ordinary members?

PM: Governments always have to govern in the national interest, and we’re going to see Theresa May govern in the national interest. And sometimes that will upset some members of a political party. But first and foremost you’ve got to put the national interest first, that’s what the Prime Minister will want to do. As far as – I came up through the Conservative Party, I owe my place around the Cabinet table to me joining the Young Conservatives, becoming a national vice-chairman, a district councillor, a county councillor. We’ve got thousands of people right across the country that put tremendous efforts into the Conservative Party. I want to thank them for the work they do and I want to encourage more people to join the party.

AM: Right, you say more people, because there’s 150,000 more or less, which compared to the new Labour Party is tiny. You have to reach out much more. Do you want to get a younger, more working class kind of member than you’ve had before?

PM: I want the party to be open to everybody. One of the things we’ve got to do is to say what will make people – what will encourage people to join political parties. It has been something that people have felt personally disbarred from and I want to change that.

AM: If you join the Labour Party, you pay your £25, or whatever, you can have a say, not just in who is the party leader but on party policy of all kinds. If you join the Conservative Party you don’t get that kind of say. So why would people want to join the Conservative Party?
PM: Well, I'm not sure you don't get that say. I think we need to look at what used to be called the CPC in my younger days, which spread through policy. And I don't think –
AM: Would you like it to be more democratic?
PM: Well, when you say democratic, I think the party is incredibly democratic.
AM: Well, they don't get a vote on policy.
PM: They will have got a vote on – well, I don't think –
AM: They wouldn't have got a vote on the leadership, you didn't let them. It was stitched up at Westminster.
PM: Governments govern – well, it wasn't stitched up, it was decided in Westminster. And when I look at what's happening the Labour Party I'm not sure they're – I mean, the idea that you can have a leader of a parliamentary party that's got no support on his back benches is a new thing that we're getting used to in British politics.

AM: Okay, Patrick McLoughlin, than you very much indeed for talking to us.
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