

ANDREW MARR SHOW, JEREMY CORBYN, 24TH SEPTEMBER, 2017

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JEREMY CORBYN

LEADER, LABOUR PARTY

AM: And now to the reason why we're all here in sunny Brighton, the Labour Leader, Jeremy Corbyn who this morning is promising this will be a real conference whose decisions matter. So what exactly does he mean by that? He's with me now.

Welcome, Mr Corbyn. Now there's a great sunny mood here, you had a huge rally yesterday and many more members are coming here than before. There is a great mood of optimism and you have suggested that you could be in power as Prime Minister, for ten years. Are you getting a little over optimistic perhaps?

JC: What I said was we need at least two terms of a Labour government to start to address issues of poverty, injustice and inequality in Britain and to build the houses that we need in this country.

AM: But you didn't win the election. What happened in the election was you got lots and lots of younger, university educated, more metropolitan voters and you got a lot of anti Brexit or Remain supporting voters. And the Tories held on in big numbers to older voters, pro Brexit voters, more rural voters. You need to get that new group into your party, somehow. How can you do that?

JC: Well, our vote went up actually in all sections of a community by differing amounts, but our vote did go up to nearly 13 million. We put on three million votes in the General Election, and yes, there were some disappointments in some parts of the country but the –

AM: But you need another 60 seats. That's quite a lot.

JC: Yes, indeed we do, and I've been round 50 of them already. And the party is in good heart and good mood and the people of this country are utterly fed up with injustice and inequality, pay caps and lack of investment in public services. That's fundamentally the message we were putting forward. And the resonance we got was huge and I have to say every commentator wrote us off in April and in June they were eating their words.

AM: They certainly were. Me included, I'm sure.

JC: Oh no, no, Andrew I exclude you from such considerations.

AM: Thank you very much. At any rate, you look at this morning's papers and you see more arguments inside the Cabinet over Brexit. It is in your interests clearly to have an election as early as possible. You suggest you can have an election by Christmas. Is that still your view?

JC: Well, I'm not in control of what the Cabinet falls out over of itself, but clearly it is really unsustainable that a government elected in June when two crucial issues come up in parliament the last – ten days ago, come up on student fees and NHS pay cap the Tories don't even vote. Surely that says something about a government that's run out of steam.

AM: But they can hang on for years and years and years and hope the steam goes out of Jeremy Corbyn and his movement. That is the sensible thing for them to do.

JC: No, no, no, no. The steam is rising, not falling and the movement is stronger than ever. Look at the numbers of people that came to Brighton last night, look at all those that are supporting the party and look at the local election results we've gained since June. Listen, Labour is a party of the people, it's a party of activists, it's a party of the community and what is so exciting now is as we start putting more details into our policies, social policies, housing, transport, health and so on, it's the

numbers of people that want to be involved and have something very positive and very constructive to say. That's – that's something that is pretty new in British politics, policy making in the open air.

AM: And you've promised in terms this morning that this policy – this conference will be allowed to make policy. Labour Party members, unlike members of some other parties will actually be able to decide policy?

JC: What I put forward to the National Executive earlier this week and was endorsed on – again on Friday with more detail to it is that we're having a democracy commission in the party, we're expanding the size of the National Executive and we're looking at how we can open the party up much more and make Conference the final decider of policy. So that there has to be some structural issues addressed in the party but that's fine and I have to say it went through the National Executive with no opposition.

AM: So party members will be able to decide what happens. Now 66% of -

JC: - after all they're the ones who've got to go and deliver it on the doorstep.

AM: Absolutely. 66% of your party members want to stay inside the single market. Will you listen to them?

JC: Of course, I will listen to them. What I would say is that the important priority is to ensure that we have a tariff free trade access to the European market. Half of all our trade is with Europe. I would also say that we need to look very carefully at the terms of any trade relationship 'cause at the moment we're part of the single market, obviously. That has within it restrictions in state aid and state spending. That has pressures on it through the European Union to privatise rail for example and other services.

AM: Can I just stop you a minute.

JC: I think we have to be quite careful about the powers we need as national governments.

AM: I want to ask you more about the single market, but you mention state aid. Can you give me an example of the kind of thing you would like to do that membership of the EU stops you doing?

JC: I would have wanted us to intervene immediately on SSI Redcar when the steel industry was in a crisis at that time. The government claimed there were issues of state aid. We disputed that at the time. But I would also want to say that we would want to be able to invest in industries. Another example the Labour government –

AM: So in effect denationalise parts of the steel industry?

JC: If necessary, in order to make sure we have a strong steel industry as the basis of a manufacturing economy, but it's also about a mixed economy, it's about investment in new industries. And so for example I want to see a much bigger renewable sector. Look out here, you've got a fantastic windfarm in the sea out here. I want to see us as a country investing in those industries to make sure they thrive, and become a source of exports as well.

AM: We're not stopped doing that by the EU are we?

JC: Well, there are issues of state aid rules which are endlessly disputed. Some countries seem to have no problems flouting state aid rules, other get sat upon very heavily as for example Greece has been sat on very heavily by the European Central Bank. I accept of course we're not members of the Euro.

AM: Now you've said in the past we can't be members of the single market because that's part of the EU and we are leaving the EU. But from what you say you want to be absolutely close to the single market. There's a big choice in front of the country. Do we

stay inside the force field, the magnetic field of the EU, do we stay close to the single market and maximise our trade with that and accept what that means, or do we turn outside to America? And that is a big choice about everything in politics.

JC: Indeed, indeed. I like the point you're making about the force field. I don't want us to become some kind of offshore tax haven on the shores of Europe. I don't want us to do some sweetheart deal with Donald Trump which means that you lower environment and consumer working conditions in the USA, then you lower them in Britain in order to meet the USA and they go down further and further. Race to the bottom, very bad. What I want is us to have an economy that develops and grows, an investment led economy, high wage, high activity economy. You do that by an effective trading relationship with Europe. Look every one of our manufacturing industries, cars, ships, everything else, has a massive supply chain, the food industry, food processing industry, all across Europe. You can't cut that off and break it.

AM: Can't disrupt that, but to preserve that and ensure that it carries on reasonably friction free that means making sure that our regulations and our rules are very, very close indeed to those of the EU for a long period to come. It probably means virtually free access to EU citizens coming into this country and ours to there and it may even mean paying a little bit in and accepting some of the rulings of the European Court of Justice. Do you accept that?

JC: We made it very clear throughout the referendum campaign and through the General Election campaign that we wanted to protect consumer workers' environmental conditions. We want after Brexit to be part of a number of European agencies because it's important to have that. There has to be some judicial process of settlement of any dispute and indeed Theresa May finally has come round to that position in her Florence speech.

AM: So you would stay very, very close to the EU in all of those areas, as it were?

JC: Listen, a referendum took place. There was a result given. I think we have to recognise the economic importance to Europe of us and us to Europe. It's a big choice. I think we have to go down an economic road that continues that good relationship with Europe, because I'm very concerned about the idea that Theresa May and others have been flying around the world this summer, sort of offering all kinds of sweetheart trade deals which could be damaging to our working conditions in this country.

AM: Okay. A large majority of your own members want free movement to continue. Do you agree with them?

JC: I understand what they're saying. I understand the point –

AM: But do you agree with them?

JC: Well, I understand the points they're making and I understand the importance of workers moving from one place to the other. What I also understand is that there is an abuse of free movement by some employers who have grotesquely exploited some very low paid workers. That has to stop. But, we have to recognise that in the future we're going to need people to work in Europe and people from Europe are going to need work here. There's going to be a lot of movement.

AM: You say that the Prime Minister's not clear, you seem even less clear yourself as to whether most people after we leave the EU will have free access to this country or not. I understand the point about workers, but what about everybody else?

JC: What, from outside of Europe?

AM: No, inside Europe.

JC: Well inside of Europe a lot of people are going to come and work here and a lot of people in Britain are going to work there. There has to be an agreement on it and how it's achieved. Listen, go to any Airbus office, go to any Rolls Royce place, go to any of those places, there are engineers coming from Europe on a daily basis and going back. All of that happens all the time. You can't stop that and you shouldn't stop that.

AM: Okay. When it comes to the overall relationship with Europe we're going to be pretty close. In terms of the transitional deal the Conservatives have picked up the idea of staying inside the customs union and staying inside the single market for two years. After that period do you want us to stay inside the customs union?

JC: Well, I think you have to stay in a transitional period as long as necessary.

AM: Could that be ten years?

JC: No, I don't think so. I mean I think it's impossible for anyone to put an absolute figure on that. I'm not quite sure where this two year figure came from. Yes, there has to be transition, we made that clear. Keir Starmer made that clear in the articles and statements that he wrote in August.

AM: When it comes to the politics of all of this you want to bring down this Conservative government as soon as possible. Can you bring them down in the House of Commons over the Brexit issue?

JC: Well, we will challenge them all the way on all of these issues. Their relationship with the DUP is a strange one, to put it mildly. A billion pounds given to pet projects for the DUP in Northern Ireland and then the DUP presumably supposed to be their close allies in parliament. It doesn't look like it. We will challenge them because the pay cap, because of under investment, cause of the cuts in public service, inequality in Britain. That's what people out there are thirsting for. Something a bit different.

AM: Let's come to the pay cap then. Do you agree with all those trades union leaders and all those public sector workers who say that because of where inflation is now and their historic position a pay rise means a pay rise of more than 5%?

JC: What it means is a pay rise that deals with the current level of inflation which is –

AM: 3%.

JC: - running at just under 3% at last month. It also means a recognition of the sacrifice they've made on the altar of austerity in the past seven years.

AM: So about 5%? It's not unfair, is it?

JC: A reasonable pay rise is something they must negotiate or the Pay Review bodies must reflect. But the idea that government should restrict that rise means NHS staff leave, means that many people –

AM: No, I understand that – I still want to stick to this question of is it 5% plus? Because that's what people in this conference want.

JC: That is what they're going to negotiate. See what they negotiate. It's not about government imposing things, it's about them negotiating.

AM: What we both know perfectly well is that this Conservative government is not going to give all public sector workers, Mark Serwotka has said it has to be everybody in the public sector a five percent pay increase. They're just not going to do it. There is going to be a lot of argument and a lot of dispute this winter over that issue. What we also know of course is the government have changed the law so that you have to have a 50% threshold to have a strike on these matters. Do you agree with Len McCluskey that in this circumstance trade unions should defy that law and go on strike anyway?

JC: Trade unions represent their members. Trade unions are there to negotiate on behalf of their members and they will be making protest actions and many other things over the winter. So instead of turning the blame on unions that represent their members, why can't we instead look at the way in which this government has exploited public sector workers over the past 7 years and –

AM: I'm not putting the blame on anybody. I'm just asking you whether you agree with Len –

JC: Well you seem to be putting the whole emphasis on the unions who are representing their members rather than the government which is the cause of this problem.

AM: No, but the unions are in a very difficult place because of this new law. I mean Len McCluskey has made this very, very clear. Let me read you what he said:

JC: Well this new law is something that is really unfair on the 50% rule. No MP or very few MPs get more than 50% of their electorate voting for them. Indeed I think I'm one of very few who does. Has had that.

AM: And would you defy it? Len McCluskey says: 'I don't know if I'm going to jail. The reality is that the law is wrong and it has to be resisted. I daresay if you'd been interviewing Nelson Mandela or Mahatma Gandhi or the suffragettes you'd be telling them they were breaking the law. The truth is when a law is wrong not only is it important to stand up and say so, it is our duty to resist.' Do you agree with him?

JC: The point Len is making is that when governments try to control what unions can do they get into a mess. The Heath government got into a mess, the Thatcher government got into a mess.

AM: No, sorry, I must press you on this. Do you agree with him that it is the duty of Socialists and the duty of trade unionists to defy this law?

JC: Andrew, your rights and my rights came because of protests historically in this country. You and I fully understand that.

AM: I agree with that. I'm asking –

JC: I suggest the way to deal with this now is for the government to recognise their problems they have created by making public sector workers pay the price of the chaos created by the bankers.

AM: What has happened to Jeremy Corbyn that you can't answer my questions?

JC: What's happened to Jeremy Corbyn is he's the Leader of the party and determined to lead this party and this country in the direction of social justice and equality and repeal – and repeal

AM: But you're the straight talker. This is an absolutely crucial issue for trade unions up and down the country.

JC: It's a crucial issue, I'm supporting those people that are demanding a decent public sector pay rise. I'm supporting those people in making that demand and I'm saying a Labour government will repeat this Trade Union Act and bring in fairness and justice at the workplace.

AM: There are going to be disputes this winter. There are going to be almost certainly strikes, there are going to be picket lines. Will you be standing there or not?

JC: I will be supporting those workers in getting a decent pay rise.

AM: Even if they're going on strike against this law?

JC: I will be supporting those workers in getting a decent pay rise.

AM: Okay. Let's move on to another issue in the current economy. Have you ever taken an Uber?

JC: Don't think this.

AM: You don't think so.

JC: I'm not sure but I don't think so.

AM: One of your colleagues, Rebecca Long Bailey said it was immoral to take Ubers. Do you agree with her?

JC: What I think we need with Uber is decent pay and conditions for its staff. There is a huge level of exploitation as the GMB union has pointed out and what TFL have pointed out is they have serious concerns about safety which is why proposed suspension of their licence and that I understand is going to be subject to appeal. There is an issue about safety. Clearly the public as a whole want access to - rapid access to taxis of all sorts. It should be regulated, the public should be protected.

AM: Half a million people have as it were lined up with Uber on this argument. I understand that Uber have got things to do –

JC: Well what they said they want access to cabs which is fair enough. I'm not sure that the same half million people would support unfair employment practices or would not be concerned about the safety issues which TFL identified in their examination of it.

AM: But if Uber answer these points you would be happy for Uber to carry on in the new click economy ...

JC: It's either going to go to court or they're going to mend their ways and make a new application and TFL will have to reconsider it, but I do think there has to be proper regulation of the taxi service and licensing all over the country.

AM: There is a great sort of fight going on in the world if you like between the biggest global companies, very often the tech companies like Amazon and Google and Uber on the one hand, and as it were democratic politics on the other hand. And it's very

clear that you need as much political power as possible to rein in or regulate some of these big companies and make them pay taxes and it has been the EU, above all with Google, that have led the way on that, and yet you're prepared for us to be outside the EU. What is the case for a democratic socialists being outside the big political group that is taking on the big forces in the world?

JC: Where referendum results which gave us what we've got does that mean we can't work with a lot of other people on challenging global corporations? Challenging global corporations funding their prophets into tax havens? No, of course it doesn't. It means we have to work with governments all over the world on that. You're absolutely right to identify the whole way in which the world has developed is the diminution of power of democratic governments and the increase in largely unaccountable power of very large corporations. If you talk to a government in any country, Africa, Latin America, Pacific, they will tell you that their choices as governments are very, very limited because of the power of global corporations to dominate their economy, and the way in which too many of the world's financial institutions have paved the way for these global corporations to have free rein. So you have to work with other people, including the EU of course.

AM: You mention Latin America. You have spoken again and again and again about the lessons we can learn from Venezuela and we now see what's happening in Venezuela today. After 10 years of Jeremy Corbyn would Britain be doing as well as Venezuela?

JC: After 10 years of a Labour government in Britain you would have good standards of employment, much more equality, real opportunity for all children from all social backgrounds and you'd have a much more contented society, rather than the grotesque inequalities and divisions we have at the moment.

AM: A lot of people will listen to a lot of things that you have been saying here and over the last few months and weeks and they'll say I like a lot of that, I like what he's saying on public sector pay, I like what he's saying about welfare, I like what he's saying about students and all the rest of it, but in the end I'm not sure that I trust Jeremy Corbyn and his style of Labour government to look after a market economy. He doesn't understand the market economy, he doesn't like it.

JC: We live in a mixed economy and we would increase the public participation in that economy in order to ensure proper investment across the country. If you take the post mining areas of Britain, precious little investment in 20 or 30 years. Low quality jobs, low pay, real poverty there. That's because there's been a lack of government involvement. A lack of public involvement. So we will set up a National Investment Bank, we will have regional development agencies, we will invest in all those areas. We would not be cancelling Crossrail for the north. We would not be cancelling Midland mainline electrification. We'd not be cancelling electrification in the south west.

AM: Wherever we look you're spending more money and yet the tax raises that you've talked about so far are pretty modest. Can I put it to you that if Vince Cable can be talking about a wealth tax, that's where the wealth in this country is congregated, not in incomes but in property and in pensions and in wealth. The Labour Party needs to start talking about a wealth tax.

JC: We put forward proposals which would raise corporate taxation and raise some taxes on the very wealthiest and also try and deal with the issues of tax avoidance and tax evasion and tax havens. And so I think we are certainly understanding of that. But that we also understand the need for investment. If we don't invest – we've got the lowest level of investment in the OECD – let's get on with it, let's do it.

AM: But to do that we need to raise the money to do it. We can't carry on borrowing in world markets for ever.

JC: You raise the money – but investment brings returns. Investment brings advantage to all of us. Not investing means you have an economic downturn, you suck in more and more manufacturing and other imports, you then lower your tax income in the future. We can't stand still. We have to have an investment led economy.

AM: And when it comes to getting that investment in as I say you need to raise the money. I've been researching the 1950s and Churchill's Conservative government had much higher death duties and so forth than we've got at the moment. Why do we not go back to that kind of regime? Why are you so worried about taxing wealth as a source of that new investment?

JC: I don't think I'm worried about taxing the super rich and the super wealthy. What I'm looking at first of all is the levels of unpaid tax and evasion, start with that move on from there. But the objective surely has to be a stronger economic base for everybody in this country and dealing with the waste of poverty and inequality.

AM: Through the extraordinary nature of the gig economy and the modern world I'm able to tell you that a lot of people on twitter are saying they're very surprised you can't answer my question about strikes, because that does seem to be a very fundamental question and as I say there are a lot of trade unions here who want a clear answer from you. So I come back one more time.

JC: The clear answer is this. I support the campaign for a decent pay level in the public sector. I will ensure that a Labour

government will repeal the existing trade union law and bring us in line with international labour organisation conditions.

AM: If Len McCluskey is on the picket line on a strike the government has declared to be illegal are you with him or are you against him? A very straight forward question.

JC: Listen, I'll be with those workers demanding a decent pay rise.

AM: Even if they've gone on strike against the 50% thing?

JC: Look, I will be with them demanding a decent pay rise.

AM: So you will be on those picket lines?

JC: I'll be with them demanding a decent pay rise.

AM: That's as near as we're going to get. Okay.

JC: Thank you yes, go on. You had another question. I think you had another question.

AM: If you're going to give me more detail I'd be very grateful to get it. But let me ask you one more thing about the Labour Manifesto. A lot of people are very proud of that Manifesto, it did very well for you and it did make some quite clear choices. In that Manifesto for instance you spent about £11 billion helping students in this country and you spend £2 billion helping big groups of people on welfare and it seemed to a lot of people that this is why Labour is becoming a younger, more university educated, metropolitan party. You are responding to those people and not to a lot of worse off people on welfare in other parts of the country. Actually when you look at where the money is being spend in Jeremy Corbyn's manifesto it is not going to the poorest

and people who need it most, it's going to relatively large numbers of middle class students.

JC: We'd be giving every young person a chance to go to university without getting into £57,000 worth of debt at the end of it. We would be putting 2 billion immediately into the DWP in order to deal with the awful effects of the £500 cap and also the way in which people with disability have been treated. That would not be the end of the story, that would be the start of it, because we have half of the families with a disabled person as a member of the family live in poverty. There would be a lot more to do because I am appalled at the levels of poverty amongst people, particularly people with disabilities.

AM: I've been coming to these conferences for a very long time. I've been coming so long I can remember when you and the people that you associated with were stuck in kind of pubs on the outskirts of Brighton as it were. Now you're in the main conference hall on the podium and all of those people who were on the podium back in those days, the Blairites and so forth, are looking quite lonely in these pubs and conference halls at the outskirts of Brighton. Is this revolution permanent?

JC: Well Brighton is so full of people I can't think anybody's very lonely at the moment actually. I mean they all seem to me –

AM: There are a few Labour MPs who look so.

JC: Lots of people are having lots of chats and lots of conversations, recognising there's a big movement out there, 13 million people voted for us in the election because they're fed up with the way in which this country is run for the benefit of a pretty small minority of very wealthy people.

AM: Jeremy Corbyn, thanks very much indeed.

