ANDREW MARR:
Now, following Labour’s election defeat, Harriet Harman has stepped into the breach to lead the opposition and oversee the contest to find a replacement for Ed Miliband. Never say that acting leaders can’t really act. This morning she has dramatically changed Labour’s position on the EU referendum. Harriet Harman, good morning to you.

HARRIET HARMAN:
Good morning.

ANDREW MARR:
So Labour was against the Referendum Bill, but now you’re going to vote in favour of it. Is that right?

HARRIET HARMAN:
Yes we are. I mean whether we’re in the European Union or not is a huge, important constitutional political economic decision. The Conservatives are going to bring forward a bill now for a referendum and the question is whether or not we try and oppose it, which we wouldn’t succeed in doing and also there just does not seem to be
the public appetite for us to man the barricades against a referendum which appears to be inevitably going to happen. So we’re saying right we’re going to vote for the Referendum Bill and then get into the big questions of for and against Europe.

**ANDREW MARR:**
Because you also want reform in Europe. You say you want structural changes, you’ve said this morning, and also reform to benefit systems and so forth. Does that mean that therefore for once the country will be speaking with an almost single voice, that you will back David Cameron in these negotiations he’s going into now?

**HARRIET HARMAN:**
Well I think that we want the same … we’ve got the same concerns about the fact that you should contribute into the benefits system before you take out. We’ve got additional concerns about making sure that there’s not underpayment of the minimum wage and that there’s a living wage, so that people don’t feel undercut in their workplace in terms of pay. But yes, there is an agenda there for reform and we want to see that reform go ahead. But we also feel – and there’s a real centre of gravity in the Labour Party – that our economic future will be much better if we stay in Europe, but actually the benefits of Europe are not equally shared and they need to be equally shared. Plus also not just for our own sake, but …

**ANDREW MARR:**
Sorry, can you explain that? What do you mean by that?

**HARRIET HARMAN:**
Well I think that we do feel that being involved in the European Union has helped this country, and indeed migration has helped this country, but the benefits of that are not equally shared and therefore we must see …

**ANDREW MARR:**
So we’re talking about the undercutting of wages …

**HARRIET HARMAN:**
Yes, yes.
ANDREW MARR:
… for relatively low paid workers with migration?

HARRIET HARMAN:
Yes, so that people feel secure and can look openly to Europe as part of future prosperity rather than feeling defensive. So we want to see reforms in Europe …

ANDREW MARR:
(over) What about …

HARRIET HARMAN:
… but we also want to see us staying in Europe.

ANDREW MARR:
What about removing tax credits from recent people coming in for work from the EU because that’s a big issue and it’s a lot of money involved for a lot of people?

HARRIET HARMAN:
Yeah and there’s two issues there. One is tax credits top up low pay, and if you have less low pay because you have a higher minimum wage and you have a living wage being paid then there’s less need for tax credits. But also there is the issue about people contributing before they take out and there is a generalised feeling that if people come here and before they’ve contributed they’re able to take out by tax credits, there’s a sense of unfairness about that. So we do want to see changes on both those fronts. But actually really above and beyond that, there is a very huge question: is our future as 60 million people outside of Europe on our own or are we …

ANDREW MARR:
(over) Well in world markets, not necessarily on our own.

HARRIET HARMAN:
(over) … going to be one of those big building blocks? Well we would be on our own. If we were outside of Europe, we would be a small country outside of those big continental building blocks around the globe.
ANDREW MARR:
This is a slightly strange position, if I may say so. It sounds like you want a referendum and you want changes in Europe - the same kind of changes in many ways that the Prime Minister wants – but if you don’t get those, you’re still in favour of being in the EU, which is not a strong negotiating position really, is it?

HARRIET HARMAN:
Well it’s not inconsistent to say that we recognise that our future is better in Europe than outside of Europe, but we need … we want to see Europe change not only for this country but because actually all around Europe they’ve got to address the question of people feeling that Europe is too centralised, insufficiently accountable and insufficiently in touch. So it’s perfectly possible to want to remain in a situation, but to want it to change.

ANDREW MARR:
What about more powers to restore parliamentary sovereignty? Are you in favour of that?

HARRIET HARMAN:
Well I think that we always decisions to be taken at a national level if that’s rightly where they belong, but there are some issues which are best dealt with across Europe and the open market is important for us, climate change is important done internationally.

ANDREW MARR:
This is, if I may say so, a huge, huge rethink. Is it caused by the conversations you had on the doorstep during the election campaign? Is it caused by the threat of UKIP against you in so many seats now, coming second all over the North and the Midlands of the country? What’s provoked it?

HARRIET HARMAN:
Well the rethink is about the question about the referendum: are we going to have a referendum or not? Are we going to oppose it? Well what has happened since I last spoke to you is that actually the Tories have won the election and they’re bringing
forward a bill. So the question for us is: do we try and oppose that bill or do we say no, we’ll support the bill and get on with the arguments about the substance?

**ANDREW MARR:**
Right.

**HARRIET HARMAN:**
And I think if you carry on arguing too long about the process, you end up obscuring the very important discussion about the substance. So we’re saying to David Cameron we will back your Referendum Bill.

**ANDREW MARR:**
*(over)* Very interesting.

**HARRIET HARMAN:**
But we actually … There’s one quite important thing about the timing – is whether or not it’s 2016 or 2017, irrespective of which year it is, it’s really important that it’s not held at the time of Scottish elections or other elections. It’s a big constitutional issue on its own …

**ANDREW MARR:**
It has to be self-standing.

**HARRIET HARMAN:**
…and needs that separate consideration for such a big constitutional issue.

**ANDREW MARR:**
Now your party is going into a new leadership election. Whoever is chosen now, by 2020 the world will have changed. We’ll have had the EU Referendum; who knows what will be going on with Scotland; everything will look different. The leader you choose now may not be the right leader in 2020. Do you, therefore, support some kind of break clause or some pullback so that whoever’s elected now has to go back and face another election or another choice later in the parliament?
HARRIET HARMAN:
Well we are doing our election and the discussion around the leadership election completely differently than we’ve done it before, and I think it anticipates the point that you’ve made, the question that you’ve asked.

ANDREW MARR:
In what way? Does it …

HARRIET HARMAN:
Well it’s done very differently because when Gordon Brown took over from Tony Blair, we had a change of leadership; we did not have a big fundamental rethink, not just about whether we’re changing the captain of the ship but the direction in which the ship is going. And the same when Ed Miliband took over from Gordon Brown: we had a leadership election which considered who’s best to lead us but not are we going in the right direction? And at this point, we really – after the scale of our defeat – we really have to be thinking not only who is the right leader but what is the direction …

ANDREW MARR:
Absolutely.

HARRIET HARMAN:
… that we need to be going in? And why, bearing in mind there is not widespread and universal love for the Conservative Party and David Cameron, why nonetheless we were defeated so badly. So we do have to have a big discussion and hopefully that will put us in good stead to have a leader that takes us through to 2020.

ANDREW MARR:
Now there is another great Labour tradition which is that a woman is allowed to lead the Labour Party in between an election for another man. We’ve got Liz Kendall, we’ve got other female candidates coming in at the moment. Wouldn’t it be an outrage if at the end of this process, after all you have done, the Labour Party ended up with a male deputy leader and a male leader?
HARRIET HARMAN:
Well I’ve always said I don’t think there’s a place for all male leadership teams. I think that, you know, we’re a party of equality, we believe in women having an equal say and being at the table and a balanced leadership team is better. So we’re electing our leader and deputy at the same time, so …

ANDREW MARR:
So one has to be a woman. One must be a woman.

HARRIET HARMAN:
Well except that with the electoral system, we’ll have to see whether it works out like that …

ANDREW MARR:
Sure.

HARRIET HARMAN:
… but I profoundly hope that we must have either the leader or the deputy being a woman, we have a balanced leadership team.

ANDREW MARR:
Do you agree with Liz Kendall that if you get this wrong – this big thinking about where you’re going, what kind of party you are – you could be out of power forever?

HARRIET HARMAN:
Well I think that it would be quite wrong to minimise the scale of our defeat because of the fact there is no particular love for the Tory Party and yet people still, despite that, couldn’t feel confident in giving their trust. So yes I do think that it was a very big defeat, but I think that sometimes you can use the spur of a huge defeat to really think back to basics and …

ANDREW MARR:
Don’t waste a defeat?
HARRIET HARMAN:
Absolutely.

ANDREW MARR:
Now some people may say of course the reason you lost is that they feel that you are too dominated by the unions, too dominated by Len McCluskey ordering people around as if he controls the Labour Party. Now I know you’ve got a new system – one member, one vote – but Unite union for instance at the moment are recruiting members at the rate of 1,000 a week or more by phone. Are you really convinced that you have got control over this election and that the unions are not going to in the end call the shots as they called last time?

HARRIET HARMAN:
Yes I am and there is absolutely not going to be a stitch-up by the unions in this election. I mean incidentally I would question …

ANDREW MARR:
(over) How can you be so sure?

HARRIET HARMAN:
Well because I’ll just explain to you the process in a second. But, incidentally, it is a question whether or not part of the reason why we were not trusted on the economy …

ANDREW MARR:
(over) I wasn’t stating it, but …

HARRIET HARMAN:
(over) … but I’m not sure whether that is the case. But actually we’ve got a completely different election system than we’ve had previously, so basically you have to sign up to be an affiliated supporter and the ballots will not be sent out (as they’ve been in the past) by the unions themselves to their members together with a recommendation to vote for one candidate. It will be sent out independently to people who signed as supporters of the Labour Party.
ANDREW MARR:
But the unions still make the call to the individual saying would you like to be a member of the Labour Party? They have that conversation. Those conversations are then recorded, but you have no real control over what’s said in those conversations or why people are joining.

HARRIET HARMAN:
Well what we do have control over is that the ballots are going to be sent out individually and there will be a secret ballot, and the balloting process will be completely fair and neutral as between the candidates. And actually that is a change that Ed Miliband brought forward and we should have made that change ages ago.

ANDREW MARR:
Okay.

HARRIET HARMAN:
And it’ll be also one person, one vote …

ANDREW MARR:
(over) One of the …

HARRIET HARMAN:
... instead of some people having multiple votes.

ANDREW MARR
(over) Sorry. Jumping ahead, one of the other issues is whether there will be enough people after the MPs’ nomination process in this contest to have a wide range of views and a proper argument, a proper debate. Do you support the idea that some people should as it were lend their support to other candidates so that you get as much diversity as possible in the first round of this election?

HARRIET HARMAN:
Well nominations don’t even close … well they don’t even open until next month, so we’re way ahead of that. But yes, I do want there to be a wide range of candidates
because I think all the people who can vote - and now people will be able to vote in the leadership election even if they’re not members of the Labour Party, if they’re supporters of the Labour Party and they pay £3 they’ll be able to vote in this leadership election - I think they want a range of candidates and I’m hoping that that’s what we will see.

ANDREW MARR:
Because there was worry that two candidates – Yvette Cooper and Andy Burnham – were racking up so many MPs’ nominations, they would effectively crowd out everybody else.

HARRIET HARMAN:
Well I’m not sure that’s necessarily the case and we are way ahead of the nominations closing date, but I do think we want to see a wide range of candidates and a very open contest.

ANDREW MARR:
And is there any part of you at all that says hold on a second, I’m rather enjoying this job, I should have gone for it myself?

HARRIET HARMAN:
No because the job I wanted is to be sitting here in this chair as Deputy Prime Minister.

ANDREW MARR:
Ah!

HARRIET HARMAN:
So you know we’ve got a very important job, which is being in opposition to this government, and that is very important but it’s not the job we wanted.

ANDREW MARR:
For now, Harriet Harman, thank you very much indeed.
INTERVIEW ENDS