ANDREW MARR SHOW
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AM: Can I follow on from what was happening at Davos and ask whether you fundamentally agree with Oxfam that our capitalist system only benefits the people at the top?

JC: Well, the Oxfam report made it clear that 180 of the 200 global corporations partly site themselves in tax havens. That the very richest people’s wealth has grown by 700 billion in one year, whilst the majority of the rest of the world’s population are either on stagnant wages, or in many industrial countries and the very poorest countries in the world, falling. So I think Oxfam have pointed out some very uncomfortable truths to a very self-satisfied elite in Davos. And John McDonnell was essentially conveying probably an uncomfortable message to them.

AM: Because the World Bank –

JC: That’s why he went.

AM: The World Bank, for instance, says that one point something billion people have been taken out of poverty, by the definition of having less than two dollars a day, by the capitalist system, by the market system.

JC: Well, 1.2 billion have been taken to a slightly higher level than they were before. Taken out of poverty is perhaps a little bit generous. Does that mean that the free market economy is working? No, it means that those people have been taken out of the worst poverty they could be in. The point to make –

AM: It may be the driver of that development isn’t it, the market economy?
JC: Well, the driver of that development is many things. It is a combination of trade, it’s a combination of public investment in health and housing and education. The countries that have the fastest growing change in the wealth of its - personal wealth of its - individual people are those that invest in health, housing and education.

AM: But they include China, which was a socialist economy, brought in market reforms and since then 800 million Chinese have been lifted out of poverty.

JC: I’m not sure what you define the Chinese economy as. It is very state-driven. It is very state-organised. Yes, there is –

AM: Are you going to give us the Chinese economy?

JC: No, I’m not going to give you the Chinese economy. No, absolutely not, but I’m just making the point that China has grown massively since 1949 and then after the death of Mao and the Great Leap Forward and so on. But it has taken a lot of people out of poverty. There are however in China massive issues of environmental destruction and degradation as well as a massive issue of human rights.

AM: Is there anything that capitalism gets right?

JC: Well, capitalism is a system that has evolved, it’s a system that is there, it’s a system that can, providing regulatory control –

AM: It’s there but has it got anything right?

JC: Has it got anything right? Well, it does invest, mainly for its own benefit. But it does of course get challenged. Isn’t that what
social movements are about, isn’t that what trade unions are about? Isn’t that what our democracy is about?

AM: As a good socialist, would you like effectively the capitalist and the free market system to disappear in this country after a few terms of a Labour government?

JC: Well, what we want to do as a Labour government is deal with the issues as of now, of people. You asked David Livingston about homelessness. Disgusting and disgraceful and wholly unnecessary.

AM: Glad you raised it, because I’m going to ask you what would you do about it in the short term? I mean, there’s lots of house building and other kind of long-term projects which will get it down eventually, but right now, for those people who are homeless on the streets of Camden and elsewhere tonight, what would a Labour government do?

JC: Immediately purchase eight thousand properties across the country to give immediate housing to those people that are currently homeless. At the same time require local authorities to build far more, because the problem is homeless people, rough sleeping, beg in order to get money for a night shelter, stay in the night shelter or a short stay hostel. I spent Friday evening – can I finish? Friday evening in a hostel, by the way, discussing this issue. The problem then is move-on accommodation, and the problem then is not having an address in order which you can claim benefits or get a job.

AM: Absolutely. I just –

JC: We’ve got use society –
AM: You say build more. But at the same time all across London, and many other parts of the UK, there are great big glossy glass towers being put up to sell flats to wealthy foreigners, and they’re not selling. Those flats are empty at the moment. Would a labour government perhaps put the empty flats which are all around and the homeless people together and oblige the people who own these flats they can’t sell to let homeless people in them?

JC: We would give local authorities the power to take over deliberately kept vacant properties. When you have, in the middle of an area where there is a lot of housing stress, many people rough sleeping, you get some luxury, glossy, glistening, block built, sold off-plan to long distant overseas investors who –

AM: They never come at all. They never come.

JC: - may buy and sell it before it’s even built, well, hang on, let’s look at the social priorities here. Many people are homeless, many people are living in overcrowded accommodation, many middle class families’ children cannot leave home because they cannot raise the deposit for a private rented flat, have no chance of buying and no chance of a council property.

AM: So there is a classic case of the market getting something completely wrong with ludicrous results. What would a Labour government do about it?

JC: There’s a massive case for intervention into the market in a number of ways. One, building council properties. Lifetime tenancies at secure rent. Secondly, regulation of the private rented sector to give much longer tenancies and give that power to the local authority to do it appropriately to their own areas. And thirdly, some kind of government-backed mortgage scheme to help first time buyers to buy something. My own constituency has gone – the level of home ownership has gone down from probably 50 or 60 per cent to less than 30 per cent now.
AM: But no suggestion of actually obliging people who’ve built these towers to hand them over?

JC: Well, I’ve said earlier we would give local authorities the power to take over deliberately kept empty properties, because there’s something grossly insulting about the idea you build some luxury block – you look at the pictures all around us here of London – deliberately keep it empty knowing that with the property price inflation the investor is going to make ten, twelve per cent a year.

AM: Maybe less these days, maybe in the old days.

JC: Well, maybe a bit less. But you know, they’re going to make a fair amount out of it. Surely we have to have a social objective and social priority in our society.

AM: So you’re not worried about talking about social priorities and government action. Once upon a time if you joined the Labour Party you got a nice little card and it said that

JC: Secure for the workers by hand or by brain.

AM: The fruits of their labour, da-di, da-di, da-di. Public ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange. The famous Clause 4, part 4. Why don’t you bring that back? Wouldn’t that be a great thing for your supporters in the Labour Party to have it back?

JC: Look, we’ve got a statement on the back of the card which is about common endeavour, it is about –

AM: Tony Blair’s statement.
JC: Indeed it is, and indeed it was written during his time. I tell you what, we’re putting forward, as we did in the election, as we continue to, a very clear set of policy proposals to the people of this country that under Labour we will deal with homelessness, we will deal with poverty by bringing in £10 an hour living wage. We will challenge the gig economy, we will challenge insecure work. And above all we will invest in a growing economy, which will mean –

AM: We are the Labour Party, we are a socialist party, we are not a party to manage capitalism, as Tony Benn used to fear the Labour Party would become.

JC: It’s what we do that’s most important, and that is what we’re doing.

AM: Alright, well let’s move on to other things that you are doing, and inevitably the European issue, Brexit and so forth. It’s been a while since we sat down and talked about this. Last time I didn’t get very far with you on your view of where we should going on Brexit. Since then –

JC: I thought you got a long way actually.

AM: I didn’t. I didn’t at all. But Keir Starmer was a little bit clearer, and I just want to check with you that agree with what he said.

JC: Keir and I get along fine. We talk about getting things through.

AM: Fine, but do you agree with him? So what he said is that you want absolute maximum possible access to European markets once we have left the EU. He’s always saying that we will leave the EU, but he suggests that we will carry on basically mimicking
Jeremy Corbyn:

their regulations and ways of doing things in order to secure that close trading relationship. Do you agree with that?

JC: The point we’ve discussed frequently, Keir and I and many others, is this: that the referendum gave us the result it did. We wanted to remain and reform, but that ship has sailed. And so what we wanted to do was say we’ve got to protect jobs, supply chains on both sides of the channel. There has to be the closest possible trading relationship with Europe. There has to be a tariff-free access to European markets, and tariff-free access for Europeans to trade with Britain.

AM: Is that the objective?

JC: That’s where we’re going to with the objective, yes.

AM: To get that objective we have to do certain things in this country. We have to agree that our regulations are going to carry on being very, very close to the EU’s regulations, otherwise they don’t want that kind of relationship.

JC: We’ve said that all along. Because if you have a regulatory environment, which some Conservatives want in this country, which is undermining of consumer protection rights, for example, which would mean we would be importing food products that are made to unsafe standards, that sort of thing, clearly that is undermining of Europe, so we would have a regulatory environment that is commensurate with European levels of regulation. Obviously, because half our trade is with Europe.

AM: Okay, so we agree on that. Keir Starmer also said that in this relationship we may have to pay them a bit of money for access to that market, as Norway does. Do you agree with that?

JC: That is some way down the line. But there has to be –
AM: Is that something you would agree to in principle?

JC: That’s some way down the line, whether we need to do that or not. The point has to be about the regulatory environment. But above all able to influence those regulations that come. So that means a trading relationship with Europe that gives us the opportunity to negotiate with Europe. But our objectives are that we – there’s an awful lot of jobs in this country dependent on trade with Europe.

AM: Absolutely. And therefore the final thing that Keir Starmer said to me was that there has to be an easy movement of people – not free movement, because that’s part of the EU, but an easy movement of people after we’ve left the EU between the continent and the UK.

JC: The problem with undermining of workers’ rights and conditions has been a serious one. So what we’re saying is there would be enforcement of the agency agenda that the EU has put forward and preventing wholesale groups of workers brought in to undercut and undermine. There has to be a regulated work environment.

AM: If you get all of that?

JC: That means people can – Well, we have –

AM: Then you could have easy movement, then you could have easy movement.

JC: Well, indeed. And we have a recruitment crisis in the NHS now, particularly of many nurses from Poland and other countries that have often traditionally come to work in this country.

AM: This is wonderful. We’re making real progress here.
JC: No, we’re not making progress, Andrew.

AM: Progress. You’ve agreed to easy movement, we might have to pay some money in and we’ll –

JC: The point I’m making is that we recognise –

AM: You’re beginning to look Norwegian.

JC: No. I love the Norwegians, it’s wonderful, they gave me a Christmas present. And what we want to do is have that serious economic relationship with Europe, but the referendum happened and it happened for a multiplicity of reasons, one of which was the lack of investment by everybody in post industrial areas where there is a gig economy, there’s insecure work and deep levels of poverty.

AM: I absolutely agree with that.

JC: And unless this country faces up to the inequalities between north and south the left behind communities and the poverty they face and the sense of hopelessness of those communities then we’ve got some bad times ahead.

AM: Absolutely. But now we have this big national choice about what kind of relationship we have with the EU and what I’m trying to establish is where Labour would like to end up on that. It sounds to me that you by and large agree with what Keir Starmer said to me.

JC: We end up with a trading relationship with Europe, we recognise the result of the referendum and that we’re able to influence the regulations which we will or will not enforce.
AM: We won’t be able to influence their regulations of course.

JC: No, but if you have a trading relationship you can then discuss with them what you want.

AM: Okay. Can I ask you directly whether it is possible that a future Labour government would keep Britain inside the customs union?

JC: We would want a form of customs union. Obviously whether it would be the customs union, answer no, because it would require being a member of the EU which we’re not.

AM: Well we could agree to be in the customs union without being a member of the EU. We could say we’re going to be inside it.

JC: We would need to be sure that any agreement with the EU gives us the chance to influence the situation we’re in and the trading relationships we want. Now look, I would want to see trade relations with the rest of the world going on and increasing of course, but also I would want to see conditions put on those trade. Conditions of environmental protection, conditions of human rights, conditions of workers’ ability to represent and negotiate themselves. The EU has that –

AM: So it would be a different kind of customs union?

JC: - has that in some form, both in the customs union and within its trading relations, but often not enforced. Surely we want to be an influence for good in the world.

AM: Your members want to be inside the single market and they want to be inside the customs union and they want a second referendum. Now you always say that you listen to your members. Why do you not listen to them about these things?
JC: I listen to members all the time. There are numbers of opinion polls been done. I’m not familiar with all of the questions that have been put to them. Yes, the membership of the Labour Party overwhelmingly voted to Remain, overwhelmingly Labour supporters voted to Remain, but a third of them didn’t. A third of them voted the other way. I want to win the next election, I want to bring people together. We want to be a government that works for the whole country. Hence the position we’ve adopted which is of a trade relationship with Europe, is of social justice in Britain.

AM: Let’s come back to the fundamental question of the single market however. You’ve always said Britain can’t be a member of the single market, that’s part of the EU, in which case what about Norway? That’s a member of the single market.

JC: Norway accepts all the rules of the single market, doesn’t have any ability to influence them whatsoever and is a rather different economy to ours because it’s heavily dependent on mainly oil. We’re not. We have a very diverse –

AM: So you reject the Norway option?

JC: The Norway model is not an exact one. I spent a long time discussing this issue with the Norwegian Labour Party. Yes, they are – that’s their position but they do have an economy that’s dependent very heavily on oil, we’re not.

AM: Couldn’t we simply join EFTA?

JC: We could work with EFTA countries on that relationship.

AM: And join EFTA?
JC: But the principle has to be the trade relationship and that’s what we’re focused on and whatever we need to negotiate we will.

AM: Can I turn to the question of a second referendum. I mean even Nigel Farage has said that might be an appropriate thing. David Davis has said, if you can’t change your mind then what’s a democracy for. Why is the Labour Party not in favour of a second referendum?

JC: What we asked for and demanded in parliament has been a meaningful vote in parliament at the end of it so MPs can –

AM: I’m talking about the people deciding, not parliament.

JC: and what happened with this Bill was it was an undemocratic power grab by the government. We’re not asking for a second referendum.

AM: And you’re not going to, that’s out? Okay. Let’s move to another big area at the moment which is the NHS. John McDonnell wants an emergency budget for the NHS if you win the election. Is it not the case the NHS doesn’t need an emergency budget, the NHS needs a really serious new plan to fund it properly. Not just over one year or another year but over decades and that requires looking again at the way the NHS is funded, earmarked taxes or whatever. And that a radical Labour government would be looking at that?

JC: A Labour government would invest immediately in the NHS. We’d put in 40 billion funded by increased corporate taxation over the lifetime of parliament to deal with the immediate crisis. We would stop privatisation, we’d stop outsourcing of NHS services and we would look at every single one of those PFI contracts that
are costing such vast amounts of money to each hospital that’s gone into a PFI.

AM: Let’s move to a bit story for the Labour party today. Do you think that a self identified transgender woman is a woman?

JC: Yes. The position of the party is that where you have self identified as a woman then you’re treated as a woman, yes.

AM: You are as a woman. So what is your message to all – there’s a lot of feminists, including old friends and comrades of yours like Linda Bellos who are really worried that that very elaborate structure created by the Labour party to ensure there are more women MPs and to push women further up through the Labour Party is being in some way compromised by this and want to campaign?

JC: I’m very happy to meet and talk with them and we’ve said that at the National Executive a few days ago. But the point is that where there’s self identification, an as Isabel pointed out in your discussion at the start of the programme, these people have been through a big decision, a big process, a big trauma, let’s look at the human beings in front of us.

AM: So whatever concern feminists have about women only spaces and women only shortlists and so forth, that should be ignored now?

JC: No, not ignored. Let’s talk to them about it and see if we can find some way forward.

AM: But if your mind is made up it’s hard to see how things can change.
JC: My mind is that I look at the person in front of me. I see that they have – that’s their identification, that should be respected.

AM: All right. Can I move onto what’s going to happen inside the party then, because there’s a lot of people raising money as you know and they’ve raised more than £20,000 to campaign on this issue, is your message that they should stop raising that money?

JC: No. People are free to campaign within the party and publicly, of course they are and raise these issues and have that discussion. We will have that discussion and have that debate. The whole point has to be about the identity and the rights of the individual.

AM: Right. We were talking about Linda Bellos a moment ago. She says: 'If Labour is foolish enough to allow trans women to be selected for all women shortlists they will lose thousands of women member who will resign from the party. People who grew up with the privileges of being boys or men are not women.’

JC: Well, I’d like to talk to Linda about this. It’s a view that she has, obviously I respect a view that she has, but the position of the party is that self-identification is what it is.

AM: And that’s that. Okay. Let me move to a big foreign issue. You’ve been very reluctant to condemn the government of Iran. Can I read you what Amnesty International has said about Iran last year?

JC: I think that is actually if I may say so, you’re spending too much time reading the Daily Mail, do you know that?

AM: I promise I’m not. I was reading a poster about an event celebrating the Iranian revolution at which you spoke.
JC: What?

AM: You spoke to a demonstration or you’re on the poster.

JC: I was on a delegation to Iran in the company of a number of other MPs, including Jack Straw. I spent the whole of that time in that delegation discussing two things. The nuclear issue and human rights. I raised human rights at every conceivable opportunity during that. I think that Iran – that the nuclear deal is good and welcome but the issues of human rights abuse in Iran, of executions, of imprisonment –

AM: Floggings, beheadings, torture –

JC: - is totally wrong, therefore there has to be human rights demands made on the Iranian government which I make.

AM: You took money from Iran. You took money from Press TV events.

JC: A very long time ago I did some programmes for – yes I did some programmes for Press TV. I ceased to do any programmes when they treated the Green Movement the way that they did and I also at all of those occasions made my voice very clear about human rights abuses, ’cause I want to lead a government that puts human rights at the centre of its foreign policy no matter how uncomfortable it is with any government around the world and I’ve consistently raised those issues with every world leader I’ve met, including President G.

AM: You’ve been very outspoken about for instance abuses of human rights in Saudi Arabia, will you be as outspoken about what’s going in Iran?

JC: Yes, yes.
AM: I was just thinking, the remember the woman who took her hijab off and she was standing very bravely waving a hijab because she did not want to be told what to wear on the street and she’s now disappeared.

JC: Listen.

AM: So what’s your message to the Iranians about that? Or the Iranian government?

JC: I want you to be part of the international community. I want you to respect human rights. I want you to be part of and respect the Human Rights Council of the United Nations and we as a Labour government will not walk away from the European Convention on Human Rights or the Human Rights Council. Human rights is something that was fought for by ordinary people, defended by very brave human rights defenders around the world. I’m totally committed. Human rights will be the core of our foreign policy.

AM: You thought at one point you were going to be Prime Minister by now. Will you be Prime Minister by this time next year?

JC: Well we’ll have to wait and see, won’t we? But if there’s an election bring it on, we’ll do it.

Ends