AM: Angela Eagle, welcome to you. There’s a sense at the moment, you’re a very strong pro-European in the Labour Party side, there’s a certain sort of sense the Labour Party hasn’t quite got it’s heart and soul into this campaign and that may be something to do with the fact that its leader is a Eurosceptic.

AE: No. Actually we are not split down the middle like the Conservative Party on this. I think there are only 5 members of parliament who are going to campaign for Out. We’re absolutely determined and united in our determination to make certain that we get this right and we stay within the European Union and by the time that the 24th of June comes along we’ll have made the right decision for the best interests of the country.

AM: It’s more about kind of passion and umph I’m talking about. I mean Jeremy Corbyn and John McDonnell have voted against virtually every EU related big issue all the way through, right back to the 1970s, and there’s a sense that although they want to - they don’t want the party to split and people like you warned them right at the beginning you must do the right thing on Europe as you see it, they don’t really really care about it, it’s not in their blood, they don’t feel passionate about it, Jeremy Corbyn’s out campaigning about Trident yesterday, not about the EU on the edge of this huge vote.

AE: Well actually he did launch our campaign in Yorkshire at the Yorkshire conference yesterday to remain in the EU. I think he recognises, as well as the rest of the party, that it’s Labour votes that will keep us in Europe and it’s really, really important for our
future as a country that we don’t turn our back on the largest single market in the world where half of our exports go, that we actually understand that workers’ rights are on the ballot paper in this referendum, a lot of workers’ rights are underpinned by EU regulations. Equal pay for work of equal value, paid holidays, rights for part time workers, all things that the Tory Eurosceptics want to be free of.

AM: Turning – we’ll continue with the subject of workers’ rights however, an awful lot of your own voters, working class traditional Labour supporting voters are horrified about the levels of immigration that we see in this country, particularly under New Labour when I remember Peter Mandelson saying we virtually went out there and invited people to come in in the old days. There’s a huge, huge increase in EU workers coming into this country and that has depressed the wages of a lot of people who would normally vote Labour and they are very, very angry about it and they’re listening to Nigel Farage in many cases more than they listen to the Labour Party.

AE: Look, I think it’s important that we put the Labour case for staying in and underpinning rights at work, having a higher, more productive economy, greater skills in our economy so people can earn higher wages and more productive economy is a really important of actually staying in Europe.

AM: Not much good if you’ve been undercut by a group of migrants from Eastern Europe and you haven’t got a job in the first place, or you’re being forced to take work at a much much lower rate than you were ten years ago.

AE: Of course, but this is about globalisation and the way to deal with that is actually to have better skills provision, to ensure that we have higher valued jobs and part of that is about our integration with the European economy and one of the largest
markets in the world. And I think if you look at both places like
Norway and Switzerland who are outside the European Union have
greater levels of EU immigration as a percentage of their
population than we do. So the EU isn’t actually the problem for
immigration. We have to make our way in a much more
interconnected world and we can only do that by having a race to
the top rather than a race to the bottom which I fear that our
Conservative government prefers.

AM: So what about the number of people coming into this
country? Did the Labour Party – certainly in the old days – not get
on the wrong side of the immigration argument so far as a lot of
your own supporters were concerned? I remember Barbara Roche,
for instance, saying that it was wrong to send back asylum
seekers who’d failed because it was too emotional.

AE: Well look, I think Barbara Roche was trying to make a positive
case for the benefits of immigration and I think we have to
remember that people who’ve come into this country to work
make our economy bigger and make us more productive. We’ve
got to make certain that we skill our own people to take jobs and
opportunities when they’re available and we’ve got to work to
have a higher, more productive economy so wages can be higher.
That is not the record of this government. Productivity still hasn’t
recovered from the great recession. Investment, we’ve had a
sudden dip because of the uncertainty caused by this internal
meltdown that we’re seeing in the Conservative Party at the
moment.

AM: Labour people who are watching this interview will have
heard nothing from you at all so far if they’re worried about the
levels of immigration to this country.

AE: Look, we have to have a controlled immigration policy as best
we can in a very globalised world, and we’ve got to make certain
that our immigration policies are fair. But I would say that the European Union doesn’t have the key to that because other countries who are outside the European Union have similar issues with people on the move. And we’ve got the problems of asylum seekers who are – that’s a very different issue with the collapse of various regimes in the Middle East causing these biblical kinds of scenes on our borders on the European borders.

AM: What do you think about the deal that David Cameron negotiated particularly on benefits? Do you think it’s right that people coming into this country should have to work for a certain number of years before they get full access to British benefits?

E: I think when you talk to people in this country the general view, and it’s one I agree with, is that people should put into a system before they...

AM: (over) before they take out.

AE: ...They take out of the system. That’s always been the way that our social security system works in this country and that seems fair enough to me.

AM; So you by and large back what David Cameron – you may not think it’s enough of whatever – you agree that his deal was worth getting?

AE: I don’t think the EU deal was anything other actually than a side show so he could manoeuvre his own party into the place he always wanted it to be and I think the backlash from the Eurosceptics which has shredded the party down the middle, as we’ve seen in the papers today, is the result of that kind of cynical manipulation. But actually, the argument for staying in the European Union is still very, very strong as Alan Johnson as said, regardless of what the Prime Minister has been negotiating. It’s
the largest single market in the world, we do half our trade with it, and it’s also I think this debate is a proxy about a debate about our position in the world and I believe we should be confident about our values and we know that we can project our values in the world if we work through international organisations and the EU is one such organisation.

AM: If we vote for Brexit and then the Scots decide to leave the UK what kind of country do we have left?

AE: Well I think that’s one of the issues that people have to weigh. There are dangers with coming out, not least the economic shock and the status that you’d get, while you had to negotiate your way out of 43 years of economic integration. You cannot believe and surely the Eurosceptics don’t believe, that they could suddenly turn the clock back to the 1970s and do all the trade deals that they did with the Commonwealth. But their attention is elsewhere now so we have to really make the best of where we are and be confident that we can get the best out of it and I believe we can.

AM: Talking of turning the clock back to the 1970s, a huge huge CND demonstration in London yesterday, a massive one addressed by Jeremy Corbyn. If this issue comes up in the House of Commons before the Labour Party changes its view on this, will you vote for the government on Trident still?

AE: Well look, we’re in the middle of a review but my position on this has always been clear. I think if you think about it we all agree in the Labour Party that we would like to live in a world without nuclear weapons. We want to live in a nuclear free world. We’ve got a disagreement about how best to get there. Personally I’ve always been a multilateralist and I believe that you negotiate these weapons away. I don’t think this government has done nearly enough to try and get multilateral disarmament talks going
and I think they should do more. But I think that we'll wait and see what the party discussion and the debate that we have says about that.

AM: Last time we were talking on this show I invited you to be warm and generous about your leader Jeremy Corbyn and I think you said words to the effect, we'll he's the leader we've got. So I'm going to give you another chance to be even warmer and more generous. What do you really think of him?

AE: You are so predictable, Andrew.

AM: I do my best.

AE: I mean all I can say is I think that the leadership campaign that's going on in British politics at the moment is going on in the Conservative Party. It certainly isn't going on in the Labour Party. We're getting on trying to do the work that will create new policies so that we can appeal to the British people. The leadership's not an issue in the ..

AM: To carry on being predictable, one last time. A lot of people inside the Labour party say that Angela Eagle, she's a future leader.

AE: Well that's very interesting, but I'm concentrating on my current job as Shadow Busi...

AM: You wouldn't be horrified at that thought?

AE: I'm concentrating on my current job at Shadow Busi.. and if I get another go to have a go at George Osborne at Prime Ministers Questions well I wouldn't mind.

ENDS