JEREMY VINE:
Now you may have missed it amid the excitement over the Royal baby, but last Monday evening Ed Miliband announced he wants to hold a special conference of the Labour Party next spring to vote on proposed changes to Labour’s relationship with the trade unions. He wants individual union members to make a positive decision to join the party rather than being automatically affiliated, but he’s been warned that a system of opting in could lead to a huge drop-off in the party’s income. The Shadow Justice Secretary, Sadiq Khan, takes the lead for Labour on party funding issues. And he’s with me now, so good morning to you.

SADIQ KHAN:
Nice to see you.

JEREMY VINE:
So how will this special conference work?

SADIQ KHAN:
Well what Ed Miliband’s announced is he wants to change the relationship we have with trade unions in the sense he wants to modernise it and make our party more
open. And what he’s asked Lord Ray Collins to do is look at our rules, look at the relationship with trade unions. He will prepare an interim consultation document this autumn at our party conference and that’ll open up to consultation with all the various parts of the Labour family. And then next spring, we will have a special conference where the Labour Party will decide whether to approve the changes Ed Miliband’s announced or to vote against them.

**JEREMY VINE:**
Because the unions are very much part of the family, aren’t they, to use your phrase?
In fact, they’re going to have 50 per cent of the vote at this special conference.

**SADIQ KHAN:**
Well the Labour Party was formed from trade unions and we’re very proud of our historical links with trade unions. We’ve got access to three million hardworking people: bus drivers - very important to me as a son of a bus driver; nurses; technicians; factory workers. Three million people we’ve got to link with. We want to make that link stronger. We want them to have a bigger say in our party, and the way to do that is give them a choice to opt in to …

**JEREMY VINE:**
Sure, but …

**SADIQ KHAN:**
… the party rather than the opt out route.

**JEREMY VINE:**
… it doesn’t make any sense. You want to reshape your relationship with the unions and they’re going to decide how you do it. They’re voting on it.

**SADIQ KHAN:**
Well the Conservatives say we’re in the pocket of the trade unions. Tony Blair says these are the biggest changes undertaken in a generation. If the trade unions are unhappy about this, then they’ll vote against them and we will lose the opportunity to change our rules. We’re hoping we can persuade them over the coming weeks and
months, this is the right thing for the Labour Party. The country needs a reformed Labour Party fighting and firing on all cylinders. That’s why Ed Miliband’s announced these changes. We hope the trade unions will see the strength in the option of allowing their members to opt in. We want them to have a greater say in policymaking, in selecting candidates, in how they fund the party, in the direction of the party, to make us more electable come May 2015.

**JEREMY VINE:**
It is a sham, isn’t it? It’s a synthetic showdown because you want Ed Miliband to get stuck into the unions to win votes in the South of England.

**SADIQ KHAN:**
Well if that was the case, Len McCluskey this week wouldn’t be criticising Ed Miliband for his …

**JEREMY VINE:**
*(over)* He praised him.

**SADIQ KHAN:**
Well …

**JEREMY VINE:**
He came out and praised him.

**SADIQ KHAN:**
Well if you read the speech, Jeremy, that’s not what he said at all.

**JEREMY VINE:**
He did.

**SADIQ KHAN:**
No, he didn’t praise Ed Miliband. He said that he supported some of the recommendations made by Ed Miliband. He also warned us we’d be losing millions
of pounds of trade union money. And we will.

**JEREMY VINE:**
Well you will.

**SADIQ KHAN:**
We will, we will.

**JEREMY VINE:**
So what are you going to do about that?

**SADIQ KHAN:**
Well we’ve got to find other ways to raise money and to fight elections. We’ve seen in America how Barack Obama’s managed to have a large number of small donations. We’ve seen in France how the French socialists have managed to ask a large number of people to make small contributions. And we’ll need to do the same. It’s not … Look it’s not legitimate for hedge fund managers or for bankers to bankroll the Conservative Party. I think that’s not acceptable in 2013 …

**JEREMY VINE:**
*(over)* Do you want state funding …

**SADIQ KHAN:**
… for the trade union members to opt out. Well really state funding, we don’t want. What we want is to increase the numbers of people contributing to the party. Look if more people paid a small amount, that would be a good way of raising funds. We want a cap. We think there should be a cap of £5,000, so nobody can contribute more than that …

**JEREMY VINE:**
Okay, so …

**SADIQ KHAN:**
… to any political party.

**JEREMY VINE:**
… you get to a point - just to work out where this goes. It’s not just about money, is it? It’s about in some way breaking the link between Labour and the unions, so that they don’t … For example, where does this go in your conference? They don’t have the vote on policies after this or what?

**SADIQ KHAN:**
No, it’s not about breaking the link at all. We’re very proud of our links with the trade unions. We want to strengthen them. Rather than the bus driver or the factory worker simply when they join the trade union having the option to opt out, we want them to have a relationship throughout the process of their trade union membership to be affiliated…. I want them to come to Labour Party meetings, I want them to come to events that I hold in my constituency and come to various other Labour Party events.

**JEREMY VINE:**
Will the unions, will the unions still have a third of the votes in leadership contests, for example?

**SADIQ KHAN:**
And that’s an important question. So one of the things that Ray Collins is looking at is the knock-on consequence of these changes that Ed Miliband’s announced. For example, it may lead to a change in the way we elect our leader. Ed Miliband’s already announced that you can be a registered supporter to take part in a leadership contest. This may lead to other changes and may also lead to changes in relation to how we make policy. One of the things that Ray Collins is doing is looking at the consequences of the changes in Ed Miliband’s announcement and what that’ll mean.

**JEREMY VINE:**
If Unite have behaved so appallingly, will you give back the £8 million that you’ve accepted from them since the last election?

**SADIQ KHAN:**
Well, look, nobody’s saying Unite’s acting appallingly.

**JEREMY VINE:**
You called the police in at Falkirk.

**SADIQ KHAN:**
What’s happened is there have been allegations made about membership recruitment. We’ve had an internal inquiry. Because the allegations were serious, we asked the police to investigate. The police have investigated and found no allegations of criminality. We will …

**JEREMY VINE:**
(over) So then what’s the problem, what’s the problem?

**SADIQ KHAN:**
… we’re continuing with the disciplinary hearings. The problem is this, Jeremy. In 2013, it’s not acceptable for us to have a system where individual trade union members aren’t aware that some of their fees are paid toward the Labour Party. Some of them are Conservative voters, some of them may even be Liberal Democrat voters. We think in a modern, vibrant relationship between trade unions and the Labour Party, you should have a choice to opt in whether your dues are paid toward the party. We think you as a hardworking bus driver, factory worker, electrician …

**JEREMY VINE:**
Okay.

**SADIQ KHAN:**
… should contribute more to Labour Party policy.

**JEREMY VINE:**
I want to just ask you about a different matter before you go, which is this ad campaign on the side of the bus which is in … I think going round six boroughs. Says ‘Go home or face arrest’. It’s aimed at illegal immigrants.

**SADIQ KHAN:**
Well it’s not Jeremy, it’s not aimed at illegal immigrants.

**JEREMY VINE:**
Well I was going to say the Shadow Home Secretary, Yvette Cooper, has been apparently silent on it. Why is that?

**SADIQ KHAN:**
Well the immigration … the shadow immigration spokesperson has spoken on this. I’m not sure why Yvette’s not spoken, but she’s got …

**JEREMY VINE:**
*(over)* Well why hasn’t she spoken?

**SADIQ KHAN:**
Because, look, you have a member of a team, you’ve got a shadow immigration minister. Not unreasonably he’s given a statement during the course of the week and another one today. You either believe in politics as a team sport or you believe it’s you know just one person running the show …

**JEREMY VINE:**
*(over)* Do you believe it’s racist, this?

**SADIQ KHAN:**
I’m not sure whether it’s racist. I think it’s short-sighted and foolish. I think this is David Cameron’s attempt to try and win over UKIP voters. I want to see what evidence is there that people have voluntarily left the country as a consequence of these advertising hoards. I think anybody that buys anything from the back of lorry is foolish and that includes this sort of silly posters.

**JEREMY VINE:**
So you don’t think they should be going round doing it?

**SADIQ KHAN:**
I’ve seen no evidence that it will work. You know ‘get out or be arrested’ isn’t the
way to lead to people to leave the country. What the Government should be doing is have borders that work, so we know who’s coming in, who’s coming out. What they should be doing is ensuring they enforce the immigration policies. Rather than doing that, it’s a silly gimmick.

**JEREMY VINE:**
Thank you very much indeed, Shadow Justice Secretary Sadiq Khan.

**INTERVIEW ENDS**