ANDREW MARR:
Well, as we heard in the news, police investigating the Jimmy Savile scandal have arrested Gary Glitter. There are no further details, but it’s linked to Operation Yewtree, which is examining claims of sex offences. The BBC Chairman Chris Patten has written, as we’ve heard today, of his determination to get to the bottom of all of this, but what does it say about the attitude to young women at the time and how much has really changed? Harriet Harman, Deputy Leader of the Labour Party, Shadow Culture Secretary, has been a lifelong campaigner for women’s rights, and I think it’s thirty years ago to the day since you first arrived in the House of Commons, Harriet Harman?

HARRIET HARMAN:
Indeed. I’m just getting the hang of it.

ANDREW MARR:
You’re beginning to get the hang of it. Delighted to hear that. First of all, give us your general view of what has happened inside the BBC since this broke.

HARRIET HARMAN:
Well obviously it’s horrific, everybody in the BBC coming to recognise that actually Jimmy Savile used the status and the celebrity that he got through the BBC to exploit and criminally offend against young children - not only girls but boys as well. And then there is the issue of how the BBC handled these revelations and the axing of the Newsnight programme and going ahead and screening a valedictory tribute to somebody who already within the organisation, there was information about them being a serious sex offender.

ANDREW MARR:
Are there enough inquiries set up in the right way, do you think?

HARRIET HARMAN:
Well I think the trouble is that there are a multiplicity of inquiries and what we need is one overarching inquiry. Stoke Mandeville is looking into what happened there; the Department of Health is looking into how he was appointed to run a taskforce for Broadmoor; the Crown Prosecution Service is looking into why, when files were presented by the police, that there was never any charges; the Leeds General Infirmary … I mean I could go on. But I think that the point is we need one overarching inquiry, not just two inquiries at the BBC and many others because we have some …

ANDREW MARR:
(over) And this should be an independent inquiry?

HARRIET HARMAN:
It should be independent because there are big lessons to be learned here - not just for the BBC, although the epicentre of it was at the BBC, but elsewhere. Because there is an assumption that … When something like this comes out, there is an assumption how could we have gone astray from our normal policy that protecting vulnerable children must take priority over the rights of adults. And that is not actually the situation because that is always under challenge. I mean three recent examples … Just this month, the law has been changed so that if there’s an allegation of a sex offence against a teacher, the teacher has anonymity right up until the moment of charge, and that’s based on an assumption that you have to protect the adult from false allegations.
ANDREW MARR:
So you think we’ve gone … we’ve flipped too far to protecting adults, or are in danger of doing so and leaving children more vulnerable?

HARRIET HARMAN:
I think what we do is we push to protect children, but that is always resisted. So, for example, every time there is a criminal justice bill in the House of Commons, MPs get up and move amendments to say that those accused of sex offending should have anonymity right during the court case, and that’s based on an assumption and a belief that you’ve got to disbelieve the victim and it’s probably a false allegation.

ANDREW MARR:
Whereas here we’ve got lots of people, many who never went to the police because they knew that they were going to be disbelieved; their word against a kind of national icon, no chance at all.

HARRIET HARMAN:
Well if there’s an assumption that you won’t be believed, then you’re less likely to come forward. If you do come forward and you meet that culture of disbelief, then it’s going to be swept under the carpet. So I think we do need one overarching inquiry to learn the lessons and to make sure that …

ANDREW MARR:
Sorry, should that replace the others because you then have four I think inquiries going on at the same time, which is a lot?

HARRIET HARMAN:
Well we said before the BBC set up their own inquiries, we said that the government needed to pull this together and learn the lessons and it would be sensible to have one judge led inquiry that could ask the CPS in Surrey you know you had four girls here in this approved school. Why did you not manage to bring it to a charge?
And will you be pressing this in the House of Commons, getting a judge and a proper inquiry?

HARRIET HARMAN:
Yes. And the Government have said they’re still open-minded about it, but I think that they should set up the independent inquiry now, otherwise it’s going to be very fragmented. I mean all of these inquiries are very good in and of themselves - people do have to look at what happened - but we need to learn the overall lessons.

ANDREW MARR:
Let me ask you about another highly controversial, which is press regulation. If Lord Leveson comes through next month and suggests some kind of legal underpinning for a new system, it’s quite clear that he is going to face an absolute barrage of hostility from most of the major newspapers, and they’re already firing the opening salvos at the moment. Is the Labour Party going to stick with what Lord Leveson says, or is the Labour Party going to sit back and think well actually perhaps self-regulation needs to be given another chance?

HARRIET HARMAN:
Well I don’t think self-regulation could be, should be given another chance. And obviously Lord Leveson has heard a great many revelations from the McCanns, the Dowlers, the Watsons. It’s clear that business as usual cannot obtain. And I think it’s disappointing of the newspapers to (before even Leveson has come out) to say we want a status quo because the status quo has failed. There is not a proper press complaints system which ensures that where the press get it wrong, the individual can complain and it will be independently looked at.

ANDREW MARR:
The Telegraph, Sunday Telegraph today says you know we don’t want business as usual, but the trouble is once you get statutory regulation of any kind, it’s the beginning, it’s the slippery slope; politicians will over time push for more and more control over the press and it is inevitable that we will have the press shackled by politicians who simply don’t want embarrassing stories to come out.
HARRIET HARMAN:
Well in fact self-regulation is business as usual and that is what has failed, and we
don’t want any inhibition on press freedom. I mean I’ve been in opposition long
enough to have a view that if the government were to control the press, I mean that’s
terrible. I’ve always argued for press freedom. But I think that we need empowering
of … We may need a statute to underpin a truly independent press complaints system,
a bit like the independent system that deals with complaints against solicitors, so that
it’s independent of government but also you don’t have them judging their own cases.
But also I do think that we ought to be clear there should be no prior restraint. This is
about complaints after …

ANDREW MARR:
(simultaneously) After.

HARRIET HARMAN:
… the press have reported something, not somebody nosing around in the editorial
decisions.

ANDREW MARR:
We have seen some prominent politicians come out on the other side of the argument
already - Boris Johnson would be a good example. How important do you think it is
to get cross-party agreement and do you think it’s possible to get cross-party
agreement on this?

HARRIET HARMAN:
Well I think there is every possibility of getting cross-party agreement and that’s what
we should have. This should not be a political football. We don’t want the press doing
divide and rule amongst politicians. We don’t want politicians wanting to settle scores
against the press who’ve been bruising them. I mean we need to have a cool head
here. We need to look at what Leveson proposes and hopefully take it forward if it’s
sensible and proportionate, but the status quo is not acceptable.

ANDREW MARR:
Let’s turn to sort of wider politics, if we may. We’ve had some good news at last on
the economy - a bit of growth - good news on inflation and good news on unemployment. What does that do to Labour’s overall narrative because up to now on the economy, you’ve basically been able to say it’s not working? If over the next six months, a year, eighteen months you can’t say that, you’ve got a bit of a hole in the policy, don’t you?

HARRIET HARMAN:
Well I think we’ve already had what everybody acknowledges is two years of a stagnating economy and many young people unable to get a job month after month, and that is what has affected people over the last two years and we say is precipitated from the cuts which were too far too fast. But you say there’s been good news. There’s been good figures - and obviously if they’re borne out and growth does come forward, that’s good. But going round the country (as I do) and talking to people, if you take for example the unemployment situation, what you’ve got is people thinking things are never going to get any better, I might as well take a zero hours contract; or things are never going to get any better, I’ll have to take a temporary job and then be out of work again in three weeks. People are settling for less and it’s a very difficult situation still.

ANDREW MARR:
And yet if people feel that the economy is fragile and perhaps unbalanced and all the rest of it, they’re not really hearing they feel, yet, a clear message from Labour about how things are going to change - a big picture you know economic strategy beyond saying this lot are no good.

HARRIET HARMAN:
Well I think we do have a clear economic strategy, which is about how public policy can help the economy recover from what has been a global shock.

ANDREW MARR:
Some examples?

HARRIET HARMAN:
So, for example, the 4G spectrum auction. We’re saying put that money, which is
going to be billions of pounds, into building a hundred thousand homes, which helps
the housing problem but also helps unemployed people. We’ve said have a bankers’
bonus tax, which will actually be used for apprenticeships and getting young people
back to work. You see the Government take the view that what should happen is that
the Government should just do nothing, but actually that is allowing the economy …

ANDREW MARR:
(over) Well I don’t think they’re doing nothing, but …

HARRIET HARMAN:
Well they do. They say the public … public action is bad; let the private sector do
everything. But the private sector, including with regional support, needs to have the
backing of the government.

ANDREW MARR:
Above all what they say is you can’t borrow more because this huge overhanging debt
remains our fundamental problem, has to be got rid of.

HARRIET HARMAN:
Well as a result of their policies of course. They are borrowing more because you’ve
got higher unemployment and you’ve got lower growth. If you have low growth, the
money’s not going into the Treasury and as a result you have to borrow more. So the
failure of their economic policies means they’re going to fail on the deficit too.

ANDREW MARR:
And they would dispute that of course. But for now, Harriet Harman, thank you very
much indeed for joining us.

INTERVIEW ENDS