ANDREW MARR:
Now Yvette Cooper is the latest Labour MP to throw her hat into the ring, hoping to become the party’s next leader. She says she wants to take on David Cameron at the despatch box, but she also talks about doing politics differently across the country, not saying that politics starts at Westminster because it doesn’t. Welcome Yvette Cooper.

YVETTE COOPER:
Good morning, Andrew.

ANDREW MARR:
Now can we start by looking at your own position because when I talk to people about you as a candidate, they say she’s very confident, she’s very good, but they say two things about you: they say that you are quite cautious when it comes to policy and you kind of huddle with the consensus of the Labour Party; and, secondly, that you find it quite difficult to give a really crisp, crunchy answer to a direct question. Are those fair criticisms?

YVETTE COOPER:
You’re going to put me under pressure now, aren’t you, to make me come up with
crisp answers to every single question this morning?

ANDREW MARR:
I’m ever hopeful, ever optimistic.

YVETTE COOPER:
Well, look, what I want to do is to make sure that Labour can win again. That means we’ve got to reach out. We’ve been far too narrow and I think I can reach out to every corner of the country where we’ve got to win back votes. There’s got to be no no-go areas for Labour. Secondly, we have, as you said, got to be able to take on David Cameron. That’s quite … That’s some crisp questioning in parliament ...

ANDREW MARR:
Yeah.

YVETTE COOPER:
… and I would look forward to that because I think he’s got the wrong answers for the country and we’ve got to hold him to account. But, thirdly, it does mean having new ideas which are about the future, about 2020 and beyond. I think that will be about some very radical ideas, including talking about complete revolution in childcare and family policy. I don’t think that’s about being cautious or consensual. I think the way that things work at the moment doesn’t work for a lot of working families.

ANDREW MARR:
What about the depth of the hole that you as a party are in? One of your rivals, Liz Kendall, has suggested if you don’t get the answers right now, you could be out of power not for the next parliament or the one after that but forever. Do you think that’s a fair assessment of how …

YVETTE COOPER:
It was a serious defeat for us and we have got to make sure that we get things right because I can’t bear the idea of an 18 year opposition that we had during the Thatcher years. We’ve got to be able to win back in 2020. And I think sometimes people seem
to be writing the 2020 election off and saying oh well that’s just too difficult, we can’t do that. We can’t afford to for all of the people, the Labour people who are depending on us.

ANDREW MARR:

(over) But you have to reach out and catch the attention of people who turned away from you completely this time and possibly the time before that as well. So in specific terms, are you still in favour of the 50p rate of income tax?

YVETTE COOPER:

I think it is the right thing to do right now, yes, because the deficit is still coming down. It’s still too high, it’s got to come down; and as part of bringing it down, we should have a fair system to do so. I think that’s about Labour values – about saying that you know the tax system should be progressive, should be fair – and yes I think it was unfair for those on the highest incomes to have a huge great tax cut at a time when the deficit is still too high and needs to come down.

ANDREW MARR:

Not totally crisp, but very clear. Thank you very much for that. Now we’ve just been talking to Mr Barroso about tax credits – David Cameron’s idea that tax credits should not be available (certainly for quite a few years) for European migrants coming to work in this country. Do you agree with that?

YVETTE COOPER:

Well yes and that’s what we said at the time of the election – that people should be contributing before they claim. That that’s a principle that’s been in the social insurance system for a long time; it is fair that if people are coming to Britain that they should contribute.

ANDREW MARR:

Okay let’s keep moving on. Intervention in the markets was a big theme of the Ed Miliband years – the intervention in the energy market, the intervention in the housing market was quite controversial at the time. Do you think that’s the right kind of thing for a government to do? Do you think governments should intervene in that way in
markets?

**YVETTE COOPER:**
Markets have got to be fair. If the markets are unfair or the markets are rigged or there is concentrations of monopoly power, of course you have to intervene, but you also have to I think work with businesses. I think we need to reset the relationship with business. I think we ended up sounding as though …

**ANDREW MARR:**
You did.

**YVETTE COOPER:**
… we didn’t want more businesses to grow, we didn’t want to support entrepreneurs. And you know I’ve been meeting on Friday with entrepreneurs in Tech City about how we create the high tech jobs for the future. We’ve got to work with businesses and support them to do that.

**ANDREW MARR:**
Let me ask about benefits because we’ve now got the cap coming down to £23,000. So, first of all, would you support that?

**YVETTE COOPER:**
I think the principle of the benefit cap is the right one and it’s always also right to look for savings. The thing I think we need to see first though is what is the government going to do about London because there is a problem for London where you know rents have been so much higher and that has an impact on housing benefit, so let’s wait and see what the details are of that.

**ANDREW MARR:**
So if they said there’s going to be a London opt-out as it were but everywhere else benefit caps are going to come down to £23,000, that is something that you as a Labour leader might support?

**YVETTE COOPER:**
Well let’s look at the detail when it comes through, but we said at the time of the
election that we would have regional caps and that that would be a way and you could make savings in some areas. But I think look the important thing in this, when you’re talking about the benefits budget, the welfare and so on, the most important thing is to get people back to work. A lot of the work I did in government was about the Future Jobs Fund – getting young people into work …

**ANDREW MARR:**

*(over)* The government’s been successful in that.

**YVETTE COOPER:**

… and strong requirements to do so. So you should always try and do that. What I won’t do though is fall into what I think is a Tory trap of using language which stigmatises those who are not working.

**ANDREW MARR:**

*(over)* Ah well I’m very interested in that.

**YVETTE COOPER:**

I don’t think that is about Labour values.

**ANDREW MARR:**

Because Andy Burnham, another of your rivals, said there was a perception that Labour was soft on people, trying to take much more out than they put in, that kind of language. He didn’t actually use the phrase benefit scroungers, but that was the kind of tone. Do you find that offensive?

**YVETTE COOPER:**

I think the important thing is to talk about responsibility – responsibility to work, responsibility to contribute – but not to stigmatise those who are unable to work perhaps because they are too sick or too disabled to do so. Let’s have a positive system with fair rules, strong rules and firm rules, but also …

**ANDREW MARR:**

*(over)* Okay I’m going to come back …
YVETTE COOPER:
(over) … one that is responsible in the language that we use as well.

ANDREW MARR:
... I’m going to come back on that one and ask you if you found Andy Burnham’s language wrong or offensive?

... YVETTE COOPER:
Well I didn’t hear the precise wording that he used or the language that he used, so …

ANDREW MARR:
But you must have read it?

YVETTE COOPER:
Well I think the language in some of the headlines that we see is the wrong one.

ANDREW MARR:
(over) It was “soft on people who want something for nothing” was the phrase.

YVETTE COOPER:
I think we should not stigmatise people because I don’t think in the end that’s what …

ANDREW MARR:
(over) So you don’t like it?

YVETTE COOPER:
(over) … Labour values are about. I do think, however, we should have firm rules and make sure that people are doing their bit, and also that there’s a requirement for people to take up jobs that are available and to make sure that those jobs are in place.

ANDREW MARR:
Was that stigmatising language, what I just said to you?
YVETTE COOPER:
Which bit? What did you just say? That you think …

ANDREW MARR:
(over) Soft on …

YVETTE COOPER:
(over) … people are being soft on welfare?

ANDREW MARR:
Yeah soft on … that Labour were soft on people who are taking out more than they’ve put in. Is that stigmatising?

YVETTE COOPER:
I think you have to be responsible about it.

ANDREW MARR:
And want something for nothing I think was the phrase.

YVETTE COOPER:
Well look nobody wants people to want something for nothing because everybody wants people to be contributing, but I think we have to make sure that we have this debate in a way that you say here’s the firm policies, here’s the firm rules, but let’s not stigmatising it. I took the same approach when I was always talking about immigration – let’s have firm controls and firm rules, but let’s not get into an arms race of rhetoric on immigration that actually ends up escalating the debate and making things worse. I think in the end that is a responsible Labour way to do things; that in the end we talk about respect for people but also responsibilities on people as well.

ANDREW MARR:
Do you agree with Harriet Harman that there should not be a kind of break three years into the new Labour leadership to allow a rethink?
YVETTE COOPER:
I think in the end that should be for the party to decide. I don’t think the Labour leadership candidates should be deciding what the rules should be for the leadership. I think that should be for them and I think you know look Harriet set out a response. But in the end, this has got to be about the country and making sure that the Labour leadership candidates are focused on the country …

ANDREW MARR:
Yeah.

YVETTE COOPER:
… and we’re all of us talking about what we need for 2020 and beyond.

ANDREW MARR:
Now there has been a perception, perhaps no more than that, that Andy Burnham and Liz Kendall really made the running at the beginning of this leadership race and you’ve come in slightly late. How much do you really want this?

YVETTE COOPER:
Well I want to make sure that Labour leads and wins again, and I think I’m the right person to do that because I think I can be the strongest in terms of taking on David Cameron. I also think I will set out ideas for the future that don’t just involve swallowing the Tory manifesto and set out Labour vision for the future. So working with business for high tech jobs, changing things …

ANDREW MARR:
(over) Who’s following the Tory manifesto?

YVETTE COOPER:
I think some of our colleagues and some of the discussions have been thinking that well okay because Labour lost the election therefore what we have to do is say that …

ANDREW MARR:
(over) Is go to the right?
YVETTE COOPER:

(over) … maybe the Tories were right on things. I don’t think is actually about left
and right because I think we’ve got to grow in all directions. So we do have to win
back people who voted Tory and win back people who voted UKIP, but I don’t think
that necessarily means just swallowing the Tory manifesto. It means …

ANDREW MARR:

(over) As Liz Kendall is doing. Is that what you think?

YVETTE COOPER:

… setting out our ideas for the future. Well let me give you … I think, for example,
we should be saying where are the high tech jobs coming from for the future. For
example …

ANDREW MARR

(over) No, no, no. Okay let’s try a crunchy answer. Do you think Liz Kendall has
swallowed the Tory manifesto or at least bits of it?

YVETTE COOPER:

I think … I’m not going to get into …

ANDREW MARR:

Oh go on.

YVETTE COOPER:

… sort of attacking individual candidates because I think people will have to just
judge each of us. But I do think that we should be setting out Labour ideas for the
future and not just saying well you know the Tories are suddenly right on a whole
series of things because I don’t think they are. I don’t think they have Labour values
about wanting power and opportunities to be in the hands of the many and not the
few. I don’t think in the end …

ANDREW MARR:
Okay.

**YVETTE COOPER:**
… they have the right answers for a fairer Britain. We’ve got to set out answers that work for every corner of the country – market towns as well as big cities, South as well as North, the whole country.

**ANDREW MARR:**
Interesting, compelling, but – if I may say so – not crunchy. But thank you very much indeed Yvette Cooper.

**INTERVIEW ENDS**