ANDREW MARR:
We are ten days away from voting for the new police and crime commissioners in England and Wales. The idea is to give the public a greater say over how they are policed. Labour was against the change, but now it says it’s making the best of a bad job and fighting the election, so how would the party’s approach to policing and crime differ? I’m joined by the Shadow Home Secretary, Yvette Cooper. Welcome.

YVETTE COOPER:
Good morning.

ANDREW MARR:
Let’s start talking about these elections. An awful lot of people will be barely aware that they’re happening and one survey suggests that maybe only 15 per cent of people may vote.

YVETTE COOPER:
Well I think this is a real problem because the government has chosen to hold these elections in November, and we’ve just had the weather forecast - you’ve seen the terrible weather that we have today - so I think that is making it harder for people to
go out and vote. I also think that you know they’ve made a shambles of this. For something that was supposed to be their flagship policy, loads of people across the country still don’t know about the elections, about what they’re for, so I am really worried about what turnout is going to be as a result of this.

ANDREW MARR:
And yet the principle of saying to every local community direct democracy, you get a say in how you are going to be policed - what is wrong with that? That seems a very straightforward, sensible idea of the kind that the Labour Party would once have backed.

YVETTE COOPER:
Well we opposed this as it was going through parliament …

ANDREW MARR:
Yeah.

YVETTE COOPER:
… because, for example, we thought that the £100 million that the government is spending on these elections could have been spent on about 3,000 police officers instead. We thought that was a better use of the money. We also thought that there should be more checks and balances in the system because to invest one person with a huge amount of policing power, we thought was not the right way to approach policing and the traditions of policing that we have. But obviously the government has decided to go ahead with this, so you know we are doing our best to make it work, but I do think that the government needs to be doing much more.

ANDREW MARR:
Now you set up what is called an independent inquiry (though you set it up with Lord Stevens, former copper heading it) into police pay and morale and all the issues around policing, and, perhaps not surprisingly, he has come back with a report saying that the police are absolutely infuriated, low morale and all the rest of it. But probably if you send a policeman to look at policemen’s morale, he’s going to come back and say the government aren’t doing what they should do?
YVETTE COOPER:
Well the survey that Lord Stevens has produced is I think quite troubling because we already know that there are 15,000 police officers being cut as a result of the government’s decisions. We know that over 7,000 have come off the frontline - the most visible police of all, you know things like the neighbourhood police, the 999 response teams and so on again already going - so you’re asking police to do even more and of course you know we need them to go into the most difficult situations. And what Lord Stevens is saying is that he has never seen survey results like this where 95 per cent of police officers are saying they don’t think they have the support of the coalition government, and I think only 0.1 per cent said they thought they had a great deal of support. Now that is not a good situation for the morale of the police to be in.

ANDREW MARR:
In government, if you were in government, you would be cutting the police budgets too - 12 per cent, I think, rather than 20 per cent, but that’s pretty substantial nonetheless - so when it comes to things like freezing police pay and pensions, cutting down on the number of police, what would you actually be doing?

YVETTE COOPER:
Well we set out … We did some work actually before the 2010 election, Alan Johnson did work while he was in the Home Office, and this was also I think supported by some of the work that the independent inspectorate said as well to look at how you could deliver, they said, around 12 per cent. It works out as about a billion pounds of savings over the course of a parliament. What the government’s done instead is go for two billion pounds. So that’s the difference that you’re talking about.

ANDREW MARR:
You see …

YVETTE COOPER:
But yes, it does mean, of course it does mean constraints on pay, it does mean long-term reforms to public sector pensions not just for policing but across the board,
and it also means looking at different ways of getting savings out of the contracts and the procurement that the police do.

ANDREW MARR:
Because an awful lot of people may say listen, the police are the last big, unreformed public institution. Tony Blair when he was … after he’d become Prime Minister said you know he regretted not dealing with this before. And actually in opposition you’re taking some easy soft options - you’re supporting the police when it’s popular - and here we have a government, whatever you think of it, they are trying to put in major reforms, they are trying to change things. Are you really going to be a reforming party in opposition or in government?

YVETTE COOPER:
Well look at some of the reforms that we did while we were in government, which actually were extremely important on policing. First of all, requiring the police to work in partnership with local councils, with other organisations - health organisations and so on - to prevent crime, not simply to work in isolation. That made a huge difference and that was a big part of bringing crime down by 40 per cent. We also introduced neighbourhood policing. It wasn’t popular with the police at the time - again a really important way of getting the police back on the streets.

ANDREW MARR:
Okay, let me …

YVETTE COOPER:
You’re right that we need reforms for the future. That’s why we’ve set up the Stevens Commission. But it’s not just Lord Stevens. He’s also working with …

ANDREW MARR:
(over) I know, there are other people on it too. Of course, of course.

YVETTE COOPER:
… criminologists across the country. International experts as well.
ANDREW MARR:
Let’s turn to two other issues quickly. Immigration - a huge issue. Labour got it completely wrong when it came to the numbers of people who were going to come here from Eastern Europe when there was that accession. There are still two more countries - Bulgaria and Romania - who don’t have that free movement. The government have said it would be very good at least to look at the possibility of extending that ban on free movement for those countries for another few years. Do you agree with that?

YVETTE COOPER:
Well that’s right and that’s what we’ve supported previously as well.

ANDREW MARR:
You would agree, you would agree with that. When it comes to the general issue of Europe, a lot of people are very surprised in a sense to see Labour standing shoulder to shoulder with the euro-sceptic Tory rebels. Has the Labour Party become a euro-sceptic party?

YVETTE COOPER:
No, I think that if you believe in Europe and you believe in the value to Britain of being able to export so many goods to Europe, be part of that European market, you also have to make Europe credible and I don’t think it’s credible …

ANDREW MARR:
So this was just parliamentary gains, was it?

YVETTE COOPER:
Well no, I don’t think it’s credible to people in Britain or actually people across the rest of Europe to have an increasing EU budget at a time when everything else is being squeezed. Why do you think …

ANDREW MARR:
(over) Even though in o…
YVETTE COOPER:
… it’s a pro-European argument to say that the EU budget ought to be cut at a time like this, so that you can support, use the funding for different local … different governments to support jobs and growth in their own country.

ANDREW MARR:
Even though, thanks to Labour, it increased enormously, I mean by nearly 50 per cent?

YVETTE COOPER:
Well the discussions that took place in 2005 were in a very different economic climate and I think the discussions do have to reflect the economic climate we’re in. The EU cannot simply ignore the economic climate we’re in, and in order for it to sure that it’s relevant, it has to be responsive.

ANDREW MARR:
So if David Cameron after that difficult vote in the House of Commons goes and has his equally difficult negotiation in Europe and comes back with a freeze, a real terms freeze on the European budget, Labour will support him in the House of Commons and say well done?

YVETTE COOPER:
Well what we’ve said that we should have is a real terms cut. That’s what we voted for and that’s what we want David Cameron to go into the negotiations to argue for. But actually he should have done the arguing beforehand.

ANDREW MARR:
(over) And, sorry, and if getting … and if trying to get that …

YVETTE COOPER:
We need the leadership.

ANDREW MARR:
Okay. If trying to get that cut - and you call for leadership - if trying to get that cut
involves threatening a veto, you would back the Prime Minister on that then, presumably?

**YVETTE COOPER:**
Well I think the problem with the approach that David Cameron’s taken is he goes round waving vetoes without actually ever doing the spadework, without actually talking to countries and without building the alliances.

**ANDREW MARR:**
Yeah.

**YVETTE COOPER:**
If you look at the problems that are facing Europe at the moment, it desperately needs eur… desperately needs leadership. We’ve had no leadership from David Cameron. We’re seeing it whether you’re talking about the European arrest warrant that he wants to opt out …

**ANDREW MARR:**
Okay, alright.

**YVETTE COOPER:**
… the European budget negotiations which he’s just turned his back on.

**ANDREW MARR:**
Okay.

**YVETTE COOPER:**
You’ve got to have that proper engagement in the interests of Britain.

**ANDREW MARR:**
Since we’re talking about Labour and Europe, can you explain, do you understand why what Denis MacShane did on his expenses is not a criminal offence?

**YVETTE COOPER:**
Well I think it’s very clear that this was a serious report, a very severe condemnation by the committee, and I think it’s right that the police should be looking again at this.

ANDREW MARR:
You do?

YVETTE COOPER:
I think it’s obviously you know not for me to pre-empt that investigation. I think we need to wait for that.

ANDREW MARR:
But it is right that the police look again with the possibility of a prosecution for Denis MacShane?

YVETTE COOPER:
They’ve said, they’ve said they are doing that. And of course, look, they have to make their decisions independently, the CPS have to make their decisions independently. You wouldn’t expect me to pre-empt that …

ANDREW MARR:
Yvette Cooper, thank you very much indeed for joining us this morning.

YVETTE COOPER:
Thank you.

INTERVIEW ENDS