

Transcript

Exclusive interview with Ed Balls

Understanding populism

Alan Shipman:

How much sympathy did you feel for the people who'd voted for populists who said they were just trying to defend traditions against external influences that didn't understand them, even when they were quite brutal traditions like bullfighting?

Ed Balls:

Well I think one of the powerful things about this series and also the Trumpland programmes is that we talk to ordinary voters and the dangerous thing about populism is it can manipulate and take what is a genuine, I think legitimate, sometimes I think emotionally validated sentiment and take it to somewhere more dangerous and dark. And even in some of the areas which are controversial to us as Brits - bullfighting in Spain but even Black Peter in the Netherlands. I mean, the Black Peter footage is really hard when you first watch it, it was pretty hard for us when we went to film it. But this is something which pretty much every Dutch child has grown up with, is part of the family life and tradition of pretty much every Dutch family over the last hundred years and when the opponents, who I think you know I'm kind of on their side that this feels now really discriminatory towards people who've grown up black in the Netherlands. But to say to Dutch people what you've always done is wrong - has been wrong. That your family lived something which was racist. That's a really hard thing to say to people. And people turn around and say, "Well hang on a sec, that's just not how it was, that's not right, that's not fair, leave us alone." I can understand that.

I mean, when you think about the British parallel, I mean I, all of my life, have enjoyed Guy Fawkes night. We have a bonfire, we have fireworks, we have baked potatoes and tomato soup and then we throw on to the fire a Catholic and then burn them. Now, it's actually pretty shocking when you think about it but it's what we do and if you turn to most British people and said, "You have fundamentally been anti-Catholic all of your lives in following that tradition." Then most British people would say, "Well, you know that's not really what it's all about." So yes, you can rationally have one view, politically have one view and kind of emotionally, culturally be sympathetic at the same time.