

Transcript of BBC Radio 4, The World This Weekend, 3rd May, Interview with Mark Reckless, 1.34pm

MARK MARDELL: The prime minister is on the stump today telling potential UKIP voters that their choice could be the back door for a Labour government. He says that would be the road to ruin, a calamity. It hasn't been an easy week anyway for the UK Independence Party, they've been forced to suspend another would-be MP. Its candidate for West Lancashire, told the South African blog site the European Knights Project that scum were waging a war against Western values. He links Ed Miliband who he called 'evil' with other political figures with the Jewish background, and said there was a common thread, but the audience had to decide what it was. He predicted that some deformed leftist buffoon, as he put it, would attack him for the comments, but in fact, it was the party's leader Nigel Farage, who said this view in no way reflected the views of and nonracist party, and he's been suspended. I asked UKIP candidate for Rochester and Strood, Mark Reckless, if he agreed with that decision.

MARK RECKLESS: Yes, I think so, if only because you know, frankly, when someone says something out of place, I think we have to have a zero tolerance approach to that. We don't operate on a level playing field, we get sort of dozens of Conservative and Labour councillors who have violent affray or child sex offences and we barely hear about them, but if UKIP person says something out of place, then we do. And I think when someone says something that's unacceptable we must take a zero tolerance approach.

MM: Well, I haven't heard candidates from other parties saying that there was a scum waging war on Western values and strongly hinting the people he named were all Jewish?

MR: Well, I think there was a Conservative candidate that said Ed Miliband was unfit to be prime minister because he was Jewish, if I remember, and that was absolutely shocking, and there was very little publicity for that. What we see is, UKIP is challenging a cosy cartel of establishment parties and we are over the target, we're getting a lot of flak, and frankly they're, you know, protecting their jobs and position on the way they do things, and I think Labour and Conservative have as much in common with each other as they do differences and it's UKIP that is challenging that, so . . .

MM: (*interrupting*) Oh really? Is it really that? I mean, isn't it that there are people who are racist who are attracted to your party?

MR: Well, as a Conservative before, I found there were some people that had, you know, unappetising views on race who were attracted to that party is well, and I think, Mark, what you have to do is look at the differences. It is only UKIP that is challenging our membership of the European Union, that wants to actually control immigration, with a fair and non-discriminatory system, and it's our party that actually challenges the consensus that we should spend over £1 billion a month on overseas aid, not just disaster relief, which we support but giving money to corrupt governments and supporting the police in countries with grotesque human rights abuses. It's UKIP that is challenging that, and we're different, and I think actually what you may find is Labour and Conservative after the election look to go into a grand coalition.

MM: Well, that's a very interesting thought, really, you think they will actually join up together?

MR: Well, we've seen David (*surname unclear, Mamat?*) we've seen Sarah Wollaston, two MPs, we've seen Lord Baker float that possibility, and they've let the cat out of the bag, I think many,

many more Conservative MPs are saying that in private, and at the moment they want to sort of wave this terrible threat of the SNP, in reality the SNP . . .

MM: (*interrupting*) Well hang on you're saying Conservative MPs, your old pals, are saying to you that they think they could do a deal with Labour and have a grand coalition?

MR: I think that is what will happen, if there is a Labour minority government, I think the SNP will back it in confidence votes, but beyond that, to get business through Parliament, I think the Labour Party and minority would look if needed to the Conservatives the things were the SNP wouldn't support it. And we saw with Michael Fallon, he was making out that it would be uncertain up until the 10 o'clock vote whether the Conservative MPs would vote to renew Trident, if they ever needed their support, and I think that's ludicrous. I think clearly Conservative MPs would vote for that, and similarly, if the Fixed-Term Parliament Act, as it would, means with SNP support it was not possible to lodge a Labour minority government, I think Conservative MPs would come to sensible arrangements to try and get budgets and supply through. The alternative would be threatening an American-style sort of shutdown, I don't think they're likely to do that. And it would be UKIP who would then be actually the voice of the common sense and good majority not just on overseas aid and an EU referendum, immigration, but also in terms of sensible deficit control, we've seen the Conservatives . . .

MM: (*interrupting*) Well, David Cameron says, 'a vote for UKIP is letting Labour in the back door,' he's got a point, hasn't he, in the sense that there are marginals throughout the country where you're taking votes from either side?

MR: UKIP are also now taking votes, I'd say in almost equal quantities from Labour and the Lib Dems, as well as people who didn't vote at all, and (*word unclear, 'say'?*) Just across The Thames from me in Thurrock and Tim Aker he's leading in that fight, the Conservatives are in third place, and just as in Heywood and Middleton where we lost by about 500 votes to a Labour candidate, Conservatives in third place have to choose, will they vote Conservative or do they want to support UKIP in order to stop Labour winning that seat, and I would encourage them to do so.

MM: But in seats where it does matter, where you're taking votes away from the Conservatives, would you, as a former Conservative MP, be happy for that to happen, to keep David Cameron out of Downing Street?

MR: I would encourage people to vote UKIP.

MM: Are you disappointed with the UKIP campaign, did you peak too early?

MR: On the contrary, I think our campaign has been really good. Our manifesto, I think, was the only ones been independently audited. And I've been listening to forecasts, it's only nine months ago that people were saying UKIP could never win a seat in Parliament, and rather than being squeezed into single figures in the polls, as almost everyone was predicting, the polls are now showing a sort of firming across-the-board on 14%, 15% . . .

MM: Well . . .

MR: . . . one poll today had us on 17% and 19% in England we're going to do well.

MM: Well, Lord Ashcroft's latest polls do suggest in four particularly important seats for you that the vote is dropping.

MR: I think you will see that UKIP will do much better across the country and in some of those key target seats. And I think UKIP has now grown up as a party . . .

MM: (*speaking over*) You haven't mentioned your leader though, are you a bit disappointed with Mr Farage?

MR: No, I think Nigel is doing excellent work, it's amazing, I think the amount of media he does, the amount of rallies in key seats across the country, as well as, I think now over 30 public meetings in Thanet South. In that Ashcroft poll more people in that constituency said they'd met him than the Conservative and Labour candidates put together. His energy is absolutely phenomenal and I think he is going to lead us to a very significant success at this election.

MM: Mark Reckless.