

Transcript of BBC Radio 4, Today, 2nd April 2015, Interview with Nigel Farage, 8.10am

MISHAL HUSAIN: When the lights go up on the leaders debate this evening, Nigel Farage will be standing almost centre stage between Nick Clegg and Ed Miliband. UKIP's inclusion and that of other smaller parties reflects how much has changed in our political landscape since 2010. But after a jubilant period when by-elections brought two UKIP MPs to the House of Commons, the party hasn't had a brilliant start to the year. Its position in the opinion polls is down from where it was five months ago. Well, Nigel Farage, the UKIP leader is here in the studio, good morning.

NIGEL FARAGE: Good morning.

MH: You unveiled your pledge to Britain this week, and we'll talk about some of the policies and what's in it in a moment, but first, what did you mean when you talked this week about children not playing in the streets because . . .

NF: I did, well . . .

MH: . . . society is not at ease with itself because of immigration.

NF: Again, this is very typical of the way this general election is being conducted, I said nothing of the kind. What I said was, I want us to live, and in fact, if you watch tonight's party political broadcast I say this line very clearly, 'I want us to live in a society that is integrated'.

MH: Right, that is perhaps what you want to say today, but what you said . . .

NF: Yes . . .

MH: . . . the other day was that you want to live in a community where our kids play football in the streets of an evening and live in a society which is at ease with yourself, because if you have immigration at these sorts of levels integration doesn't happen.

NF: Well, that's right. We've had uncontrolled mass immigration for 15 years, something quite unprecedented . . .

MH: (*speaking over*) Well, what did you mean by saying that, by linking children playing in the streets to immigration? That's the question I'm asking.

NF: (*speaking over*) Because they live in different parts of towns now, we have segregated communities within, not just our cities, but many of our market towns as well, and that is not . . . the model . . .

MH: (*interrupting*) Well, which of the market towns where we wouldn't see children playing in the streets because of immigration?

NF: Just travel up the eastern spine of England . . .

MH: (*interrupting*) Okay, but where exactly?

NF: . . . and, and just . . . well, go to Peterborough, you know, go to Boston, go and see the fact that we don't have integration. And what's happened, unsurprisingly, in some ways what's

happened with very large numbers of people coming, is you get quarters and districts of towns and cities that get taken over by one particular group.

MH: Where children therefore, don't play the streets.

NF: Where children don't mix particularly. No, and that's a bad thing.

MH: (*speaking over*) And, and therefore, the opposite of what you're saying, then, is if you go to areas of low integration, we'll see children happily playing in the streets and society at ease with itself?

NF: You know, I've spent time in places like Belfast, and I've seen what divided communities are like, you know, I went earlier on, in the last decade, I went to Oldham and I saw, you know, communities living completely separately . . .

MH: (*interrupting*) Yes, that's different . . .

NF: . . . yet, within . . .

MH: . . . I'm asking you about the point you made about children in the streets . . .

NF: Yeah.

MH: Isn't it the fact that the reason you don't see children playing in the streets much anywhere in the country is because times have changed, people worry about safety and stranger danger, that is why it is the case?

NF: (*speaking over*) Well, that's a slightly separate question. What I'm arguing for is a responsible immigration policy that allows communities to integrate, and, you know, we did this very well, didn't we, you know, from the Second World War up until about 1998 when the doors were opened, actually, we had the best levels of integration of any country in Europe. And what I'm saying is let's return to that.

MH: And . . . in the question of what are the numbers then, you've talked about normality . . .

NF: Hm-hmm.

MH: . . . being what you want to return to, last time you were on this programme you said that there were no caps and yet this week you started talking about numbers again . . .

NF: (*attempts to interject*)

MH: No, hang . . . let me finish, you started talking about numbers again and you talked about wanting to see a net level of 30,000 people a year. Is that a cap?

NF: It's a target. Caps are ludicrous, you can't have a cap . . . you cannot . . .

MH: (*speaking over*) What is the difference between a target and a cap?

NF: You cannot have a cap for net migration, because you cannot as a government stop people leaving the country, alright? And that's where the figures are impossible for anybody to set (*words unclear due to speaking over*)

MH: *(speaking over)* Why bother using numbers then?

NF: Well, it's the government that have done this, it's David Cameron that set this precedence . . . five years . . .

MH: *(speaking over)* Yes, but you're choosing to talk numbers again now . . .

NF: Well, what I'm saying is this: that if you go right back to 1950, I mean, let's take the 1990s, let's look at 1990-1997 until Labour got in, through that period of time net migration to Britain ran between 30,000 and 50,000 people a year, that was normality. It was normality in the 1990s, it was normality for the decades that went before, that is where we want to get back to. And it's not actually . . . you know, that hard to do. What we're saying, very clearly, is we do not need any more unskilled migrant Labour coming to Britain, we have enough already.

MH: Right, but what is a skilled worker then, define a skilled worker.

NF: Well, the whole point about having an Australian-style points system, and that's what we want to have, okay, at the moment, we have an open door, and I'm hoping tonight in the debate we might get some honesty on this, though I perhaps somewhat doubt it, you know, and you've got people coming with trade skills who as a result of which are going to be earning more than the minimum wage.

MH: Right what is a skilled worker *(words unclear due to speaking over)*

NF: *(speaking over)* What we currently have . . .

MH: What is skilled, what is unskilled?

NF: What, what, what we currently have is a flood of labour coming into Britain taking minimum wage jobs, and what has happened as a result of this is the minimum wage which was designed to be a floor for workers in this country has in fact become a ceiling for 1.5 million people, and that . . .

MH: Is a carpenter a skilled worker?

NF: Yes he is.

MH: Is a plasterer a skilled worker?

NF: Yes.

MH: An electrician?

NF: Er . . . yes.

MH: Right. Well, lots of those jobs are done by migrants from Eastern Europe . . .

NF: Yeah . . . Yeah.

MH: . . . for example, so they would still, they'd be able to stay there, their skills would be needed then.

NF: *(speaking over)* Under . . . well, in many cases undercutting British workers, not always up to the same levels of quality. I mean, the battle here, the battle here is between the big corporates,

and the big corporates want the EU's open market because it gives them cheap labour, now you've seen, you know, throughout the course of this week a battle over the corporates, Labour began their campaign arguing in favour of the corporates, a hundred or so corporates came out yesterday and backed David Cameron, but the argument is this: the argument is that actually, what this has done it's driven down the wages and it's damaged the lifestyles of millions of British families . . .

MH: (*speaking over*) Right, but you talk about this . . .

NF: . . . and I don't think this whole debate . . .

MH: . . . Australian . . . you talk about this Australian system as the ideal, of course, that is one that includes a points-based system and the, now the way the Australian system works is that you get assigned a certain number of points depending on what your skill is, and, and, a lot of those, there are points assigned to skills, such as carpenter, joiner, plasterer, electricians, so if we adopted the system is it not the case that a lot of the Eastern European migrants who are doing those jobs in this country would stay?

NF: Yes, but the point is . . . nobody has suggested that anybody who came legally would not be allowed to stay legally . . .

MH: (*interrupting*) No, that's not what I'm asking, I'm asking, I'm asking you, they would stay wouldn't they, because they would be skilled and their skills would be needed?

NF: The point about an Australian-style points system is you choose both on quantity and on skill base, and on whether they have a criminal record, and all of (*words unclear due to speaking over*)

MH: (*speaking over*) And you have a cap, every year, the Australian immigration Minister decides what the required number is . . .

NF: (*speaking over*) Yes, yes, I mean I'll give you an example . . .

MH: (*interrupting*) So what is your cap then?

NF: Well, let me give you an example: last year, 27,000 people, skilled people, came to Britain from outside the European Union to take jobs in this country which were high-value jobs where they would not be a drain on our public services. That gives you an idea of, you know, roughly what the numbers are. What we're talking about, and I think, you know, maybe we're putting the cart before the horse here, in talking details of the Australian style points system, what I'm saying is this: six, six . . .

MH: (*interrupting*) It's not, it's not the detail, the broad principle . . .

NF: (*speaking over*) Six . . .

MH: . . . is: points-based system and cap . . .

NF: (*speaking over*) Well if . . .

MH: . . . so, do you accept the idea that a cap . . .

NF: (*speaking over*) Ah, ah, right . . .

MH: . . . if you want the Australian system, you need a cap as well?

NF: You can, you can cap the number of people coming, but what you can't do is put a cap on net migration, because that is mathematically impossible . . .

MH: *(interrupting)* What is your cap on people coming then . . .

NF: . . . because no government . . .

MH: Do that part, because you've accepted that's possible, what is your cap on people coming in?

NF: Well, it is below 50,000 a year, alright? It is below 50,000 a year, simple as that. But this whole debate, we've been tied up with caps for five years, it has devalued the debate, what we're not actually addressing is the fact that 624,000 people settled in Britain last year and that we have no control over the numbers that settle this year or next year, and we're not having, I mean, let's be honest, we cannot have any debate about immigration about numbers, all the while we're members of the European Union and that, I hope, is what's going to get discussed tonight.

MH: And that is why you've put 'No to the EU' right up there on the pledge card.

NF: Yes.

MH: Let's just explore then, what the UK would look like in your ideal vision. So you would have this cap on 50,000 people coming to the country . . . are you prepared . . .

NF: *(interrupting)* Coming, not net migration, but coming.

MH: Yes, I said that. Coming to this country, that would be your cap. Are you prepared for the country to take an economic hit for that? We had John Cridland of the CBI . . .

NF: I know.

MH: . . . on the programme a bit . . .

NF: I listened.

MH: You did listen, right, and you, you heard him say then that businesses couldn't operate effectively without immigration. Are you prepared to take an economic hit?

NF: *(speaking over)* Well, you know, the CBI are, they represent the big corporate businesses, they represent the Brussels view of the world, they represent the status quo, and they represent a system where it's very difficult for small and medium-size competitors to come up and challenge them. What I'm saying very clearly is this: we will go on doing business with Europe regardless of whether we're members of the European Union or not, after all, the UK is now the eurozone's biggest export market in the world.

MH: Are you prepared for our country to get poorer with lower numbers of people coming here, with lower immigration?

NF: I don't believe that to be true, but if you said to me, if you said to me that if we carry on with current immigration our population will hit 75 million by 2030, but we'll all be slightly better off, I would say, I would say I'd prefer not to be better off and have a country that didn't go to 75 million, where young people could aspire to buy houses, and where British families could get jobs at a

decent standard of living. Some things matter more than money, and I think the shape of our communities, and the sense of contentment living in the country matters more.

MH: What matters to you in terms of the kinds of people who are members of your party and who are candidates? Because it seems that you continue to be dogged by difficulty with people getting into the news for the wrong reasons. Just a couple of very recent examples: you had the MEP who compared Humza Yousaf of the SNP to Abu Hamza, er, you had the candidate who's no longer a candidate, comparing President Obama to Adolf Eichmann, you had the expenses issue just the other day where you had to expel Janice Atkinson, who was a candidate from the party, what is going on?

NF: Well, well, I mean, clearly the Janice Atkinson thing was a problem, but isn't it interesting that when a UKIP candidate says something inappropriate, it's a major new story, so major that you interview me about it on the Today programme. I wonder when Nick Clegg's in, whether you will be discussing the candidate from the Lib Dems that withdrew last week, with very serious child abuse allegations.

MH: You have a lot of these people . . .

NF: *(attempts to interject)*

MH: . . . there are other examples . .

NF: No, no, no, no . . .

MH: *(fragments, unclear)*

NF: But isn't it interesting, I mean . . .

MH: *(interrupting)* Do, do you wonder, do you ever look in the mirror and wonder, 'Why does this keep happening to my party?' Do you ever wonder if it could be about you? It's your face, after all, that's all over the literature?

NF: *(speaking over)* I wonder whether, I, I . . . seriously wonder whether we actually have a fair system where any indiscretion from the UKIP person is a major story, and when councillors from the other parties actually get imprisoned, you don't . . .

MH: *(interrupting)* Are you really suggesting . . .

NF: . . . you don't . . .

MH: I mean, it's just not the case that people from other parties are getting into as much trouble again and again and again.

NF: . . . *(speaking over)* Oh, oh worse. No, no, no, no, no. Councillors from other parties over the last year, 13 of them have gone to prison. Can you imagine if one of my councillors went to prison, the scale of media row we'd see around that?

MH: But we're talking about your candidates. Here are some other examples: the one who was a UKIP candidate in Wales who was vice president of the Traditional Britain Group, its Facebook page once called for black people to be requested to return to their natural homelands . . .

NF: Hang on . . .

MH: . . . whatever those are. You had another one . . .

NF: (*speaking over*) No, no, no, no . . .

MH: . . . who was forced to leave the party after very derogatory comments were reported in the Daily Mail about gay people, it goes on and on.

NF: Yeah, I mean, we have had a problem with some Conservative defectors, nearly every one of these cases is when people have come from the Conservative party (*word or words unclear*) it's interesting, last year, last year (*words unclear due to speaking over*)

MH: (*speaking over*) Is that why it's happening because it's a problem with people coming from the Conservative Party?

NF: (*speaking over*) Last year, last year I was here, there was a UKIP town councillor who said derogatory things about gay marriage, it was a national new story, it led on some of the BBC bulletins, he had been a Conservative councillor for 22 years saying the same things. I am not for one moment saying that everybody in UKIP's been perfect, far from it, and we weed out those that do say or do inappropriate things, but you're not . . .

MH: (*speaking over*) Only once, only once it's come out . . .

NF: (*speaking over*) But you're not . . .

MH: . . . Do you, do you ever wonder why these sorts of people, the kind of person who compares President Obama to Adolf Eichmann, or Humza Yousaf of the SNP to Abu Hamza, why they are attracted to UKIP.

NF: Well, as I say, I'm perfectly happy for you to ask me all this provided you ask the other party leaders the same things, which I know you won't do.

MH: (*laughter in voice*) Well, perhaps it's because they just do not have as many *candidates*, Parliamentary candidates and MEPs . . . prominent people in the party running into these kinds of problems?

NF: They have serving councillors, serving terms in prison. They've been convicted of in the last year, and that doesn't make a new story.

MH: Finally, is this all proving a bit harder than it seemed six months ago, all that you anticipated? I mean, here you are, you've dipped in the polls . . .

NF: Well . . .

MH: . . . and . . . and . . . it is not looking as rosy as it was, for instance, at the end of last year?

NF: Well, 2014 was remarkable, we won the European elections, we had to surprise defections, principled resignations, and we won by-elections that people didn't think we would win, we've dipped a little bit since then, we're now in the short campaign, Ofcom have ruled we are one of the four major parties, we got the opportunity to get our messages across and we are the only party, you know, we're quite distinctive, we are the only party saying we should govern ourselves, not to be part of political union with Europe, control our borders and put in place an Australian-style points system, and actually, that is a strong, positive message. And what I really think is this: UKIP will succeed or fail in this general election depending on the number of people who didn't vote in 2010.

Can I get those people who didn't vote in 2010 to agree with me to turn out on May 7, that's the key.

MH: Nigel Farage, thank you very much.