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INTERVIEW WITH:

THERESA MAY, HOME SECRETARY

ANDREW MARR:

The target of reducing net migration to tens of thousands looks an impossible dream now for the Conservatives; so what is the plan? Well, the spotlight is on the Home Secretary, Theresa May who joins me now. Before we turn to immigration directly, the UKIP effect, would you acknowledge it’s been very damaging for the Conservatives and are you worried about what’s going to be
revealed over the course of the next twelve hours or so with the European results?

**THERESA MAY:**
Well I’m not going to predict. I try never to predict election results so I’m not going to comment on what we might see from the European elections. Obviously, what we saw on Thursday was UKIP taking council seats. Actually, all the evidence showed they’d been taking votes from across the political parties and taking votes from Labour as well as from Conservatives. But interestingly, if you look at what happened on Thursday in the Council elections, I think the results are more complicated. Yes, we as Conservatives lost councils. We lost councillors and there are many hard working and dedicated Conservative councillors out there who lost their seats, through no fault of their own. Mid term elections, then councillors tend to bear the brunt of those. But also, we held councils in key areas like Tamworth and Trafford and Swindon and we took a council from the Liberal Democrats in Kingston. So yes, we lost some councils and councillors but also we took a council and made gains in some key areas, some of which are key General Election battle grounds.

**ANDREW MARR:**
Some of your Conservative colleagues on the back benches in particular, feel that they will lose their seats to UKIP, because it’s not just a question of losing votes, you’ve lost activists and indeed party members to UKIP and they’re saying there should be leeway for local pacts with UKIP where the
Conservatives are strong Eurosceptic and that can be arranged. Would you like that to happen?

**THERESA MAY:**

No. There will be no pacts between the Conservative Party and any other political party. As Conservatives, we all believe, I believe in actually going out there and persuading people, talking to people about what we, as Conservatives believe in. And I think it’s important that we show what we will do in responding to the genuine concerns that people have about a number of issues. But on the … *(interjection)* … if I may just say, on the issue of the results and looking at results, what is perhaps most interesting if you look across them, is that no party has actually won a General Election without being the largest party in local government. Labour are not the largest party in local government now.

**ANDREW MARR:**

Right.

**THERESA MAY:**

The Conservatives are.

**ANDREW MARR:**

Just coming back to UKIP. Will you actually discipline party members who try to organise local pacts with UKIP?

**THERESA MAY:**
What I expect Conservatives to be doing is standing as Conservatives and going out there and very clearly giving a Conservative message about what we believe in, what we stand in, what we’ve been doing on issues that matter to people.

**ANDREW MARR:**

But you’ll back them if they try to fix a UKIP pact?

**THERESA MAY:**

No, there will be no pacts. There are not going to be pacts between the Conservative Party and UKIP or any other political party, Andrew, because we recognise the concerns that there are out there and we’ve got a job to do. I recognise as Conservatives, we have a job to do, to persuade people who have moved away from us, to come back and to vote for us again. I recognise the genuine concerns that people have and I think what we see is that our long-term economic plan is working, the economy is turning round. That hasn’t perhaps fed through to everybody, there are still some people who feel some economic insecurity; they’re concerned about issues like immigration and welfare ...

**ANDREW MARR:**

Which I’d like to come on to right now if I may. Do you accept the figures of two hundred and twelve thousand net immigration? Two hundred and two thousand from Europe, released. Do you think those are accurate figures?

**THERESA MAY:**
Well, the Office of National Statistics is an independent body and they produced these figures and yes, I accept the figures that they produce and we have seen, as you say, an upturn in immigration from the European Union, but crucially, overall, since we came into power there are over seventy thousand fewer people immigrated in to the UK last year than did four years ago when we came into government.

**ANDREW MARR:**

But my question is really about overall levels of immigration and you’re still a million miles away from the promise of tens of thousands that David Cameron said – he said no ‘ifs’ no ‘butts’ immigration will be down to tens of thousands. It’s over two hundred thousand and I put it to you that this is the moment when you should get rid of that promise, or accept that it’s not realistic and in a grown-up sense, say we’re not going to get to tens of thousands before the General Election. I don’t see how you possibly could do.

**THERESA MAY:**

No, we still have that aim, for the tens of thousands. But of course, it has, you’re right, it’s become more difficult and net migration is too high. That’s why I want to continue working to bring it down. And what we see is in those areas which we can control, that is immigration from outside the European Union, everything we have done as a government, has been having an impact and so we see that net migration from outside the European Union is down to its lowest level since the late 1990s.

**ANDREW MARR:**
But inside the European Union, as you’ve acknowledged, it’s very different. Is that no ‘ifs’ no ‘buts’ promise of just under tens of thousands now redundant?

THERESA MAY:

No. As I say, I’ve still got that target and I think it’s important ...

ANDREW MARR:

(over) It’s a hope, it’s a target, not a pledge?

THERESA MAY:

It’s, it’s always been a target for us to drive towards that and what is crucial and one of the things ...

ANDREW MARR:

(over) Sorry, not a pledge, not a promise?

THERESA MAY:

It is a target that we have had, that we are working to reduce net migration to the tens of thousands. We are seeing an impact, crucially, we are seeing an impact in what we are doing, where we can control immigration from outside the European Union. As I say, net migration from outside the EU is now down to its lowest level since the late 1990s ...

ANDREW MARR:

(over) It’s, it’s been – sorry.
THERESA MAY:
I was going say, from migration inside the EU, which you referred to earlier ...

ANDREW MARR:
Yes.

THERESA MAY:
... we are doing what we can to affect that as well. So we’re tightening up on benefits.

ANDREW MARR:
Well it’s been reported this morning, there’s a range of things that you’re now looking at, including deporting people who’ve been in this country for six months and can’t get a job, back to their own country. Is that something that you’re looking at?

THERESA MAY:
We’re looking at a range of things. We have been looking at various measures and we will continue to look at measures because what matters is ...

ANDREW MARR:
(over) Are you looking at that one?

THERESA MAY:
... what matters ... Well, we’re looking at what happens to people – yes, we look at what happens to people when they have no longer exercising their
treaty rights here in the UK. We’ve already made a change in this area because...

**ANDREW MARR:**

*(over)* Would you have to change the law to enable you to deport people who’ve come here and can’t get a job or haven’t got a job?

**THERESA MAY:**

Well, we’re looking, as I say, we’re looking at a range of measures and obviously there are some things where you have to – can change and adjust the immigration rules. In some, it may require some legislation, but we’ve already put through, it’s just become an Act very recently, in recent weeks, a new Immigration Act, that has toughened up our ability to deal particularly with people who are here illegally. So what we have done is for example, we’re going to make it harder for people who are here illegally, to access the things that they need like driving licence and bank accounts. We’re tightening up the appeals process so that there are fewer routes for people to try to play the system to stay on here in the UK.

**ANDREW MARR:**

What about the amount of time that people can claim benefits for?

**THERESA MAY:**

Well, one of the changes that we made earlier this year, one of the crucial changes for people coming from inside the European Union into the UK, is that we said they can’t just come here and claim benefits straight away, they
have to wait three months to do that. They have six months’ ability to claim benefits ...

**ANDREW MARR:**

*(over)* But do you want to extend that ...

**THERESA MAY:**

Well, we’ll look at, we’ll look at that timing. We’ll look to see whether it’s right to make that six months overall. We haven’t yet got agreement across the Coalition to do that, but these are the sorts of measures we keep looking at because in immigration, you can never stand still.

**ANDREW MARR:**

And what about cracking down on employers who aren’t paying the minimum wage and therefore may be bringing in people from abroad, under the minimum wage and undercutting British workers’ pay?

**THERESA MAY:**

Well, we’re going to raise the fine that we can levy on employers who are not paying the minimum wage and again, that’s an important signal that we’re giving out there, that we are determined to take the measures that are going to make a difference.

**ANDREW MARR:**
So we’re going to see a new list of measures, a package of measures, which will include that, will include possible deportation and will include cracking down on so-called welfare benefit ...

**THERESA MAY:**

*(over)* What, what we have is a number of measures that we are looking at, at the moment, as possible ...

**ANDREW MARR:**

But there are still coalition problems?

**THERESA MAY:**

Well, we’re looking at a number of measures and it’s no surprise to anybody, that there have been some long-standing, possibly heated at times, discussions among the coalition on some of these issues on immigration. What matters I think to people, is that where we have been able to control immigration, we are seeing an impact in the figures.

**ANDREW MARR:**

Right.

**THERESA MAY:**

What also matters is that we recognise we need to do something about European migration. I mean, just look at the issue of free movement overall. Four years ago, in Europe, people weren’t talking about the abuse of free movement. From the beginning, I’ve been saying, we need to deal with this.
Now we have a whole list of other countries who are saying, yes, this is an issue let’s work together to do something about this.

**ANDREW MARR:**
But you need Treaty changes to get there, don’t you?

**THERESA MAY:**
No, there are measures that can be taken outside of Treaty changes, but we have said, as Conservatives, we need to look at the future. We need to look at what happens when countries come into the European Union and possibly, you know, not allow full, free-movement rights until their economy has reached a certain level. But of course, we’re the only Party, that has the policy, that ensures that we could do the renegotiation, the reform of Europe, that could put that into practice.

**ANDREW MARR:**
You pressed very hard to get Abu Hamza extradited to the United States, but why was it that it was possible to convict him on terrorist offences in New York on the basis of evidence which was virtually all British evidence, but it wasn’t possible for our authorities here to do that? Is there something wrong with our system that we weren’t able to do it here?

**THERESA MAY:**
Well, first of all Abu Hamza is now in the place that I believe is right for him, i.e. behind bars. He’s a dangerous man and it’s been absolutely right that he’s
been brought to justice. He did of course face some charges here in the United Kingdom and spent some time in prison.

ANDREW MARR:
But not terrorism charges.

THERESA MAY:
The decision, the decision as to whether to bring terrorism charges was not a decision for government, it’s a decision for the independent Crown Prosecution Service. That’s how, you know, where the decisions are taken here in the United Kingdom. But the crucial thing is, I was absolutely clear that I needed to work hard to ensure that he could be extradited to the United States; that’s what I did. We saw him on a plane, now we’ve seen him brought to justice and we wait for the sentencing but I suspect he will find himself behind bars for some time.

ANDREW MARR:
There is no vacancy but one day there will be and if you look at a range of papers, you are now – and indeed bookmakers – you are now the number one favourite to take over in due course from David Cameron. How does that make you feel?

THERESA MAY:
There is no question about leadership within the Conservative Party. The only leadership question there is in politics today is who is going to lead this country as Prime Minister after the next General Election, David Cameron or
Ed Miliband. The Party that has the long term economic plan to turn the economy around, or the Party that wants to go back to more of the same, more borrowing, more taxes, more spending.

**ANDREW MARR:**

No arm-wrestling with George Osborne or heaven forbid, Boris Johnson?

**THERESA MAY:**

No. What we’re all doing is getting on with the job of looking ahead to that General Election and getting across the message that it’s our long term economic plan as Conservatives, that is turning the economy around and people should not throw that away.

**ANDREW MARR:**

Theresa May for now, thank you very much indeed for joining us.

**END OF INTERVIEW**