ANDREW MARR:
Now he’s been widely abused, egged and ridiculed, but Nigel Farage’s insurrection against mainstream politics hasn’t faltered. But there seem to be plenty of bad apples in the garden of England and tough choices ahead for UKIP’s saloon bar revolutionary. Mr Farage joins me now. Mr Farage, do you think women should be banned from wearing trousers?

NIGEL FARAGE:
No.

ANDREW MARR:
Do you think that homosexuality is an abomination against God?

NIGEL FARAGE:
You know if we want to go through some of the loopier comments of people connected to UKIP - although none of them holding senior positions at all - that’s fine, but we ought to do so with the other political parties as well. And what is happening here is out of a membership of 37,000 people, a handful of people who say batty, often idiotic and sometimes offensive things are held up as if they represent the view of UKIP as a party.
And it is wrong, it is disproportionate, it is unfair. I mean Ed Miliband’s on today. You know I wonder whether you’ll ask him why he’s got BNP defectors who now serve as councillors for him. I suspect you won’t ask him that question. If one of my candidates was found to have been BNP, this would be a huge story. So …

**ANDREW MARR:**

Okay well let me …

**NIGEL FARAGE:**

… so you know there is a lack of proportion here.

**ANDREW MARR:**

Well let me put the other side to this, which is everybody standing for UKIP knows the media spotlight is on them, you know …

**NIGEL FARAGE:**

Yeah.

**ANDREW MARR:**

… and time and time again it’s made very, very easy. You say it’s a mainstream plot against the party. It’s made very easy for the mainstream because there are so many people saying offensive things.

**NIGEL FARAGE:**

Well we have made mistakes - of that, there’s no question. Despite the membership form that we have that makes it absolutely clear we’re a non-racist, non-sectarian party, despite the fact that to be a candidate you have to go in at a much higher level of declaration, some people have got through. We should have weeded more of them out. However, when you look at the fact we’ve got nearly 2,500 people standing and a handful causes embarrassment, if you looked at the other parties … I mean they haven’t just said bad things. There was a Liberal Democrat the other week, a serving councillor, convicted of racially aggravated assault, and that doesn’t make the national news. So I’m not saying we’ve been perfect. We have made mistakes, but these people are not representative of UKIP at all.
ANDREW MARR:
Are you concerned that there is something in the way that UKIP is presenting or has presented itself that attracts such people?

NIGEL FARAGE:
No because they join every party. And, as I say, I mean you know nine Labour councillors left the Labour group in Harrow last year over accusations of racism. There was a Conservative last year, official in Essex, forced to resign over Islamophobic comments. You know we haven’t got a monopoly on unpleasantness and stupidity.

ANDREW MARR:
Yes.

NIGEL FARAGE:
But what I would say is this. Not only am I adamant that we’re a non-racist party. This week I’m going to fight back against it. You will see our election address for the local elections this year and you will see a lot of black ethnic minority candidates who are proudly standing for UKIP and I’m going to approach this differently in future.

ANDREW MARR:
Alright well let me ask you about something that you said yourself in an interview in the Guardian. You said that people should be worried if Romanians moved into the same street as them, and you wouldn’t say the same thing about Nigerians presumably or Chinese or anybody else?

NIGEL FARAGE:
Well the question was, the question was you know “If a whole load of Romanian men moved in next door to you, would you be concerned about it?” Perhaps you would, yes.

ANDREW MARR:
Why?

NIGEL FARAGE:
Because you know that what has actually happened is we’ve opened up the doors to
countries that haven’t recovered from communism and I’m afraid it’s become a gateway for organised crime. Everybody knows that. No-one dares say it.

ANDREW MARR:
But I mean most Ukrainian people are presumably law abiding, god fearing, hardworking people like most Poles who’ve come here and so on?

NIGEL FARAGE:
Yeah. We should be able, when we decide who comes to live and work in our country, to choose not just the quantity of people that come but the quality of people as well, and any normal country would do that.

ANDREW MARR:
We had 4 million people come in, according to the latest figures, under the last Labour government. What happens to Britain if there’s another 4 million people coming in?

NIGEL FARAGE:
Well I think it becomes a more divided society. I mean you know that’s what I see. I see anger amongst our young, who find it much more difficult to get jobs than they used to. I see a lot of people who’ve suffered wage compression over the course of the last 10 years. They’re taking home the same or less money and yet the gas bill’s gone up, and that has certainly provoked a feeling that we’ve got a very distorted labour market. And we have divided communities. I mean, look, we are not against immigration. We want good, positive immigration. But let’s …

ANDREW MARR:
Really?

NIGEL FARAGE:
Yes of course, but let’s do it the way the Australians do it. Let’s have a points system. Let’s have people who come here that have got skills; that want to integrate into our society and will be of benefit to us. What we’ve currently got, and what is not being discussed at all in these European Elections, is the fact that we have an open door to 485 million people, any of whom can come – regardless whether they’ve got good things to
bring or not.

**ANDREW MARR:**
A lot of people have felt there is a whiff of racism about your party. You’re saying this week that will be blown away forever?

**NIGEL FARAGE:**
Yes, I mean I have never believed in the past in positive discrimination. I’ve believed in treating everybody equally. You know I’ve never gone for all female shortlists or whatever. But to see what’s written every day, describing my party as being racist and homophobic, we will deal with that head-on this week. And what you’ll see …

**ANDREW MARR:**
*over* Are there things in the way the party organises itself and in the party’s rulebook that need to change to help that process?

**NIGEL FARAGE:**
No. No the rulebook is very, very clear. I mean you know there are, as I mentioned earlier, former BNP activists in the Labour Party, there’s a former BNP activist standing for the Conservatives in a couple of weeks’ time. You know we’ve got rules to prevent all of that. Sometimes people don’t quite tell us the truth and, yes, we need to put more resource and more money into making sure this can’t happen again, but it is not representative of our party.

**ANDREW MARR:**
Well no other party leader has had to describe his members or some of his members as “idiots”.

**NIGEL FARAGE:**
No, well no other party leader is taking on the establishment. You know we have three political parties who signed us up to a political union in Europe. That is where most of our laws are made. We have open borders which has had a very damaging effect on millions of ordinary families in this country and I’m taking on the establishment and they’re fighting back.
ANDREW MARR:
And one of those establishment members, David Cameron, described you as “chicken” for not standing in the coming by-election. Are we going to see Nigel Farage MP at the next … after the next election?

NIGEL FARAGE:
Well you know my focus is May 22\textsuperscript{nd} and I thought for an hour or two about Newark and realised that I couldn’t actually go there because I’m busy touring Britain. I want UKIP to win the European Elections this year and I’m going to focus everything I can on that. We’ll talk about the General Election afterwards.

ANDREW MARR:
Now you’ve wanted to push the Conservatives into offering a referendum, which they now have.

NIGEL FARAGE:
Yeah.

ANDREW MARR:
How close are you, do you think, to doing the same thing to the Labour Party?

NIGEL FARAGE:
Well I think the voices within the Labour ranks are beginning to be heard more and more - the wiser, more mature backbenchers realising that unless Ed boxes off this issue, it could cost him a majority last year. And I was out yesterday in Deal – out canvassing, a part of Kent that used to have a big mining community, there’s a solid old Labour vote there – and what is for certain is that we are digging deep into that old Labour vote. If UKIP beat Labour in those European Elections, I believe we’ll change Ed Miliband’s position on the referendum.

ANDREW MARR:
Later on we’re going to talk about the debate issue, I’m sure. Before we do that, can I talk about your own position because you’ve been criticised very heavily for taking so much money from the EU which is not audited and not looked after. One of your
posters had some guy sprawled in the back of a limousine saying you know, “Your taxes are paying for his celebrity lifestyle”.

NIGEL FARAGE:
Yeah.

ANDREW MARR:
It could be your celebrity lifestyle, some might say.

NIGEL FARAGE:
Which we want to get rid of. We are the turkeys that would vote for Christmas. We don’t want British MEPs, we don’t want British commissioners. We want to end all of this.

ANDREW MARR:
But you’ve gone right … You said yourself you’ve gone right up to the edge of the rules, possibly beyond it, in claiming your own expenses. Surely that is not a good …

NIGEL FARAGE:
I claim no expenses at all and we have … You know once again the British media get this wrong. We get a fixed rate allowance to spend as we see fit, and I have chosen to spend it on fighting and campaigning to get Britain out of the European Union. Now I know in Brussels they’re not terribly happy I’ve done that, but I believe through my lawyers what I’ve done is within the rules.

ANDREW MARR:
And how much money are we talking about?

NIGEL FARAGE:
I don’t know, and the last time I named a figure I was accused of taking millions from the taxpayer. Every British MEP costs £1.25 million a year to the British taxpayer.

ANDREW MARR:
Perhaps the answer is not to vote for MEPs in that case?
NIGEL FARAGE:
Well I think the answer is to vote for MEPs who would like to close the thing down and not waste all that money.

ANDREW MARR:
Okay. Of the 14 MEPs you had last time, 5 have fallen by the way. That’s a very, very high rate of attrition.

NIGEL FARAGE:
It is. Well we …

ANDREW MARR:
Why do you think that was?

NIGEL FARAGE:
Because we simply didn’t have people who were frankly of the right calibre, and we’ve de-selected people, we’ve been pretty ruthless. UKIP has changed a very great deal.

ANDREW MARR:
As a gardener, you seem to spend more time weeding than growing or pruning.

NIGEL FARAGE:
Well I don’t know. If you look at the opinion polls, we’re leading in the opinion polls. We have done now for the last seven or eight days and I think that’s not a bad place to be.

ANDREW MARR:
Indeed. Do you think that after this – because we’ve had European Elections in the past where parties have come shooting up, the Greens came shooting up for a while and then disappeared again – do you think you can translate this into parliamentary seats? Do you think there is as it were a nascent UKIP group already in Parliament perhaps on the right of the Conservative Party which UKIP MPs could help to organise?
NIGEL FARAGE:
Well there are some on the left of the Labour Party who actually would agree with us on many of the issues of open door migration and the question of who governs this country. I mean I remember after the last European Election you know being told, “Well done, Nigel, you’ve come second in a national election. It’s a fantastic achievement, but you’ll never repeat it in domestic politics”, and last year in the English County Elections, we got nearly a quarter of the vote. If you look at all of the last by-elections to Westminster, we’ve come second in all of them. We haven’t yet – we nearly did in Eastleigh – we haven’t yet …

ANDREW MARR:
Haven’t broken through.

NIGEL FARAGE:
... got over the line, but we’re getting closer.

ANDREW MARR:
Can I put to you the situation of a Conservative Member of Parliament who is in favour of a referendum - it is absolutely clear that Cameron has to give a referendum after the next election – and has also said, “And in that referendum, I will urge a No vote to leave Europe.” Would you actually stand against that kind of person?

NIGEL FARAGE:
Well there’s a bit of a problem here. That five years ago we sat here and discussed the European Elections and you put it to me five years ago that Mr Cameron said vote Conservative because if he becomes Prime Minister, there was a cast iron guarantee he’d give a referendum.

ANDREW MARR
(over) You can’t hold me responsible for Mr Cameron …

NIGEL FARAGE:
(over) No I don’t hold you responsible, but I’m making the point we’ve heard these promises from David Cameron before.
ANDREW MARR:
Yeah. So if, I don’t know, somebody like Bill Cash is standing – someone who’s got a longstanding record and …

NIGEL FARAGE:
Yeah, I think …

ANDREW MARR:
... would you really stand against him?

NIGEL FARAGE:
I think Bill Cash is more part of the problem than the solution.

ANDREW MARR:
More part of the problem than the solution?

NIGEL FARAGE:
Yeah I think that Bill Cash you know for years has droned on about Europe, bored the country to death, never offered any positive solutions. And what we’re saying is freed from the EU, we get our …

ANDREW MARR:
(over) He’ll get you for that.

NIGEL FARAGE:
Well he can try. … we get our democracy back, our pride back, our self-respect back, and we can become a globally engaged nation.

ANDREW MARR:
We’re going to talk later on about the debates, but for now, Nigel Farage, thank you very much indeed for joining us.

INTERVIEW ENDS