THE ANDREW MARR SHOW

INTERVIEW:

DOUGLAS CARSWELL, MP

UKIP

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ANDREW MARR:

Now, as we were talking about in the paper review, various groups are vying to lead the Out campaign and the EU referendum have been falling out with one another. Does this matter at all? Well yes it does because the outcome will shape the kind of Brexit campaign we see. Will it all be about immigration or about a great economic future? One of those splashing around in these murky waters is UKIP’s only MP, Douglas Carswell. Welcome. Now you are UKIP’s only MP, that is factually correct, but you don’t get on terribly well with UKIP’s leader and your Brexit campaign is not the UKIP camp based on, is it? So why are you in UKIP at all?

DOUGLAS CARSWELL:

Well hang on a second. UKIP’s National Executive Council, it’s a formal ruling body, has made it quite clear that UKIP’s formal position is to be supportive of all campaigns; we’re equidistant. We see this as a great opportunity. We don’t decide who gets designation, but we are backing both and we’re more than happy. More than half of our councillors are signed up to Vote Leave. I can tell you one thing: the UKIP Parliamentary Party is 100 per cent on board with Vote Leave.

ANDREW MARR:
But that’s because that’s you. I mean there isn’t a single other major UKIP figure, apart from yourself …

DOUGLAS CARSWELL:
(over) That’s … that’s … that’s not …

ANDREW MARR:
(over) … who backs Vote Leave, is there?

DOUGLAS CARSWELL:
(over) … not so. I noticed in my Twitter feed this Saturday a number of our MEPs were out leafleting for Vote Leave.

ANDREW MARR:
Alright.

DOUGLAS CARSWELL:
Most of our councillors are supporting Vote Leave.

ANDREW MARR:
For those people who are already confused and watching, explain to us the difference between Vote Leave and Leave.EU, which is the Aaron Banks and Nigel Farage supported one.

DOUGLAS CARSWELL:
Well look Euroscepticism is an authentic, populist, popular expression of dissatisfaction. You’re going to get different suggestions as to how we should fight the campaign. But you know let’s be clear about this. I think there is – and you’re right about this – I think there is a difference of strategy between the two campaigns. On the one hand, I think Leave.EU seems to want to put more of a focus on identity and questions of immigration. I happen to believe and I think Vote Leave happens to believe that we want an optimistic, upbeat, internationalist message that focuses on the …
ANDREW MARR:

(over) So less about … less about immigration. But if you look at the polling and if you look at where people’s priorities are, like it or not people are really, really worried about immigration and if you underplay that or undercook that, you could lose the campaign.

DOUGLAS CARSWELL:

Immigration is incredibly important, it really is important, but it’s also really important that we say as part of taking back control we’re not just looking to take back control of our borders; we also want to take back control of our money. Every week … this week we will have sent £350 million to Brussels. That’s enough to build a new NHS hospital. That’s sixty times the NHS cancer fund. So what we need to do is yes we need to focus on immigration, but we need a broad repertoire and we need to appeal to the undecideds. There’s some very encouraging polling out this week that showed that actually our side, the leave side is ahead. But you know what’s really important is we recognise the undecideds in all of this, and the undecideds I think we need to make sure that we’re talking their language.

ANDREW MARR:

So what’s the problem with Leave.EU, the Aaron Banks based one, the one that Nigel Farage is fighting with?

DOUGLAS CARSWELL:

Look I …

ANDREW MARR:

What’s the problem with them?

DOUGLAS CARSWELL:

… I’m not … I’m not going to be critical of any other Eurosceptics. We’re all on the same side, we all want the same thing. I’ve got enormous admiration for Nigel Farage. It’s thanks to Nigel that we’re getting this referendum in the first place. But look, this isn’t about the personalities and preferences of politicians. There are …
ANDREW MARR:

*(over)* They’ve been very rude about you.

DOUGLAS CARSWELL:

Well I … Andrew, you know I am never rude …

ANDREW MARR:

I know you’re not.

DOUGLAS CARSWELL:

I’ve been in politics. I don’t make personal attacks. If other people perhaps do that, you need to talk to them about it. We’re all on the same side. What matters is that we’re getting this referendum and we need to make it clear to people that if you vote to stay in, you’re voting for David Cameron’s appalling deal. If you vote to come out, we’re taking back control. Look we face enormous economic and demographic challenges as a country. We can’t address those by remaining part of the EU. We’ve got to take back control, take back control of our priorities, our spending priorities.

ANDREW MARR:

The other … The Grassroots organisation Grassroots GO, again supported by Aaron Banks, has nearly half a million people in contact. It seems to be a massive organisation. Isn’t the truth that the rival organisation, the one that Nigel Farage and Aaron Banks are supporting, is going to become the designated one? It’s got a much wider spread in terms of people who are coming to meetings, people who are contact with it, and it has a wide spread of support generally.

DOUGLAS CARSWELL:

You’re inviting me to say something that …

ANDREW MARR:

I am.
DOUGLAS CARSWELL:
… unkind about another set of Eurosceptics.

ANDREW MARR:
(over) No I’m …

DOUGLAS CARSWELL:
I’m never going to do that. I wish GO well. I was out at the weekend and the weekend before last delivering leaflets. We’ve got a great ground game in Vote Leave. We delivered millions of leaflets. I’m not going to be disrespectful of any other Eurosceptics. We’re all on the same side. These are good people. I think Vote Leave will get designation. I think they’re a great team, they’re led by people who’ve done this before, and I think what’s important is that we make sure that people realise that David Cameron’s deal is pretty duff.

ANDREW MARR:
Okay, now I know this seems small beer but Dominic Cummings and Matthew Elliott, the two people running your campaign as it were or running your side of the Brexit campaign, have come in for a lot of criticism and they’ve been accused being divisive and difficult and so forth. You have presumably worked with both of them pretty closely, so what’s your view of them?

DOUGLAS CARSWELL:
I’ve known Dominic and Matthew for twenty something years and do you know what impresses me? They’ve done this before. Each of them has actually run and won a referendum campaign. Not just won it. The AV referendum. If you remember that, this stage before the AV referendum the against side was 2-1 behind. He turned that round. These are experienced people, they know what they’re doing and I’ve …

ANDREW MARR:
(over) Mr Banks says “they couldn’t run a sweet shop”.

DOUGLAS CARSWELL:
Look I’m never going to be personal. If some people want to make disparaging comments about fellow Eurosceptics, you need to talk to them about it.
ANDREW MARR:
I think people, disparaging or not, are just simply confused as to why the Brexit campaign is not a single organisation. This could be your one chance to get Britain out of the EU, you know one chance in your lifetime, my lifetime. If people re-squabbling at this stage, it’s disastrous for you, isn’t it?

DOUGLAS CARSWELL:
It’s tempting, isn’t it, to say why don’t you just merge, and if it was just about personality I think of course that would happen, but it’s about strategy. I think there is a fundamental strategic difference. We’ve talked about merger. Yes we want to work with and cooperate with Leave.EU, but fundamentally they want to focus on issues of identity and immigration. I believe we need an optimistic, internationalist campaign based on the idea that we would be better off out economically. Our children and our children’s children would be better off and more prosperous if we leave. Our food bills would be lower, our energy costs would be lower, our tax bills would be lower. We need to leave the EU so we can take back control of our money and our spending priorities and that’s a fundamentally different type of campaign.

ANDREW MARR:
And you need to reach out to lots of people who are not sure about whether we should be in or out and frankly haven’t thought about this very much before. Nigel Farage says he is the man today to do this, he can reach those people. Why is he wrong?

DOUGLAS CARSWELL:
Nigel’s absolutely fantastic at reaching out to people who are fed up with politics, we all know that, and Nigel’s got an absolutely vital role to play in doing that. We also need other people. We also need … Look 87 per cent of people didn’t vote UKIP at the last general election. I know that, I felt that particularly strongly. We need to reach out to the 87 per cent of people who didn’t vote UKIP and that’s why we need a broad based, optimistic, upbeat campaign.

ANDREW MARR:
And to achieve that, you need some more big figures presumably from the cabinet and so forth who you’d like to come into your campaign. Of all of those … If I gave you a wish list, who would you really like to come out tomorrow and say I’m with Leave?

**DOUGLAS CARSWELL:**
I welcome absolutely anyone from David Cameron himself to Boris Johnson to Aaron Banks.

**ANDREW MARR:**
(over) I don’t think you’re going to get David Cameron.

**DOUGLAS CARSWELL:**
(over) We need them all. We want them all and I welcome absolutely everyone who joins the campaign to leave. I’m not going to be disparaging about anyone.

**ANDREW MARR:**
No, no, but people like Michael Gove, Boris Johnson, those are the big prizes for you presumably?

**DOUGLAS CARSWELL:**
It would be wonderful to have them on board, but you know we need everyone. And ultimately in a referendum everyone from David Cameron to individuals in my constituency, they all get the same vote.

**ANDREW MARR:**
And are you assuming, finally, we’re talking about June?

**DOUGLAS CARSWELL:**
I think it’s very likely to be June and I think the machinery of government that David Cameron has around him is very much sort of working on a June 23rd date.

**ANDREW MARR:**
You have a frantically busy few weeks ahead. Thanks so much for coming in this morning.
DOUGLAS CARSWELL:
Thanks so much.

INTERVIEW ENDS