ANDREW MARR SHOW
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ARRON BANKS

AM: We’re going to talk about the future of UKIP as a party, but one of your targets, as it were, are all of those Labour seats in the northeast of England and in the Midlands which voted heavily for Brexit.

AB: Well, I think if you look at the general election, there were probably up to 30 seats the Conservatives won as a result of UKIP actually drawing the votes away from Labour. And I think we’ve seen the follow-through in Brexit really, where you know, the Leave vote was very big in Labour areas.

AM: You’re putting money and organisation into those seats. How many do you think you could win?

AB: I think we could win up to 30 or 40 potentially. I think there’s much greater opportunity than the Labour Party. I think they’re totally disconnected with their actual voters, and we saw that as we went around the country. I mean, if you look at some of the seats, up to 75 per cent or 70 per cent voted Leave.

AM: And your campaign, Grassroots Out, very much highlighted immigration as the big issue. Would it be the same kind of campaign again?

AB: It was actually Leave.EU. But that’s funny.

AM: But there was Grassroots Out as well, wasn’t there?

AB: Well, they got involved but it was –

AM: I get confused.

AB: Well, we do as well.

AM: Is it going to be an immigration-based campaign, do you think?
AB: I don’t think it’s necessarily immigration. I mean, I think it’s the whole disconnect between this kind of metropolitan elite that sneer at working people, and I think there’s a great opportunity to take some real policies back into these Labour heartlands for working people.

AM: I guess, if there was one moment or poster which crystallised people’s worries about the Brexit side of the argument it was that Breaking Point poster with the migrants leading up, and Nigel Farage. Do you regret that in any way?
AB: I wasn’t really involved in that. That was a UKIP matter.
AM: Did you think it was a mistake?
AB: I didn’t think it was a mistake. I think that in terms of the referendum it was very much the economy versus immigration, and I think it put immigration right at the forefront of people’s thoughts. I thought it was not a mistake at all.

AM: I noticed you grimacing when I said a potential bid for the leader at the beginning of the programme. Are you not – I thought you were thinking about putting your hat in the ring for that?
AB: That’s just the way I smile, Andrew. I don’t know. I haven’t really decided. I think it probably will be someone like Stephen Woolfe or someone else. But I haven’t discounted it completely.

AM: Now, you have very strongly backed Andrea Leadsom. She said, ‘I don’t want Arron Banks’ money, I don’t want UKIP support,’ and so forth. But you see her as essential. Why? Do you think the establishment will still try to stop Brexit happening?
AB: Let’s be clear, I’ve had absolutely no contact with Andrea Leadsom and her team. But what I do fear is Theresa May, which I think will be the death of Brexit by a thousand cuts.
AM: You think she would betray the referendum, in effect?
AB: Absolutely, yes. And I think this kind of Project Fear has now moved into Project Smear, the whole of the media are behind May
and I think there’s a good reason for that. I think that they’ll delay Article 50 and I think the reason is very clear.

AM: So to be absolutely clear, you think that she might not, for instance, trigger Article 50 until it’s too late, until maybe another party has taken power or things have moved on so long, or that she will try to get the single market and keep free movement of people?
AB: I think she will probably try to do just that, and go for the Norway option. Because what happened in Norway was that people were against being part of the European Union but the political elites have actually pushed as much as they can into that.

AM: If Andrea Leadsom wins, and a lot of UKIP people – you have said and many people think – will simply move into the Tory party. And therefore UKIP’s future has got a question mark over it. If Theresa May wins you have said you’re going to pour ten million pounds into reviving the fight against Theresa May’s version of Toryism.
AB: Well, I think that if Theresa May wins UKIP will be back with a vengeance. I think if Andrea Leadsom wins it will be a slightly different scenario.

AM: Are we talking about a new party here?
AB: I think we potentially could be talking about a new party, and I think there are very good sound reasons for that as well.
AM: What are they?
AB: Well, if you look at our Leave.EU campaign, we had nearly a million online followers, the social media reached up to 15 million people a week, and we had tremendous reach. Our database has got something like 40,000 Conservative Party members on it. And albeit that the Conservative Party’s a dying membership, it’s only got 100,000 members, you contrast that to Labour with 500,000, I think there’s a huge opportunity for a different type of party.
AM: So a new name, a more online party, more money, fresh faces, and taking on both Labour and the Tories.
AB: Yes. And perhaps more direct democracy. The elites have hated the referendum, because it took the power away from them, and actually I think this has been a wonderful thing. So actually the idea of more referendum and going down the Swiss kind of model I think would be fantastic.
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