ANDREW MARR:
Now then, 6 weeks ago the then Conservative MP Douglas Carswell cast a cloud over David Cameron’s summer when he defected from the Tories and joined UKIP. Two days ago, he won a by-election in his old seat of Clacton to become UKIP’s first elected MP. Welcome Mr Carswell. Tomorrow morning you’re back in the House of Commons again, now sitting on the opposition benches. Presumably the first thing that you’ll be doing is looking around for other people who might make the same journey as you?

DOUGLAS CARSWELL:
Well the first thing I want to do is push forward Zac Goldsmith’s excellent Recall Bill. I believe in recall so strongly. I recalled myself and there’s a good chance we can get that onto the statute book. I want to build a coalition across the House and see if we can make that happen.

ANDREW MARR:
And that’s to allow constituencies who don’t think their MP’s doing a good job …

DOUGLAS CARSWELL:
Absolutely.

**ANDREW MARR:**

… to force them to stand again?

**DOUGLAS CARSWELL:**

If your MP’s a deadbeat, in politics for themselves, local people should be able to do what they’ve just done in Clacton and are about to do in Rochester: bring them back and hold their feet to the fire.

**ANDREW MARR:**

I’ll come to Rochester in just a second, but presumably there are other Conservative MPs who you think may come over to UKIP between now and the election?

**DOUGLAS CARSWELL:**

I hope that does happen, but I think it’s important to remember that UKIP’s not the Conservative Party in exile and I’ve got good friends in the Conservative Party, I’ve also got one or two friends in other parties – people who want change. And perhaps if they want to be true to the principles of Keir Hardie, you know there is a party that they can look to and a party that reflects the values of those who went into politics to improve the lives of their constituents.

**ANDREW MARR:**

You’ve been talking to Labour MPs too. I notice this morning that Austin Mitchell describes the European Union as an albatross around his party’s neck, so I wonder if he’s the guy in Great Grimsby you’ve been talking to?

**DOUGLAS CARSWELL:**

Well Austin’s been saying much the same for many years and on that I think he’s proved ahead of his time. But you know I try and work with MPs from all parties, but I’m primarily interested in trying to make sure that voters make the journey that I’ve made. This isn’t about which 650 politicians make that journey.

**ANDREW MARR:**

Sure. So let’s turn to Rochester and Strood – a much harder seat for UKIP to win.
DOUGLAS CARSWELL:
Yeah.

ANDREW MARR:
But if you’re going to keep that bandwagon really rolling, you have to win that seat, don’t you?

DOUGLAS CARSWELL:
Yeah. I was down there supporting our excellent candidate Mark Reckless who chose to do the honourable thing and ask voters for their permission, and it actually felt a little bit like Clacton. I had lots of people saying to me they don’t normally vote or they normally vote Labour or they normally vote Conservative, but they like the look of this guy Reckless and I think things are looking okay there.

ANDREW MARR:
And if you win that seat, you presumably cause complete meltdown in the Conservative Party hierarchy?

DOUGLAS CARSWELL:
Well the fact is that Rochester is the 271\textsuperscript{st} most UKIP-y seat in the country, and if we can win there – and at the moment it looks as if we’re 9 points ahead, it’s going to be a tough fight but I think we can do it – if we can win there then I think things are looking fundamentally different. Not just for the Conservatives – this is important. The really significant result on Thursday wasn’t in Clacton. It was Middleton and Heywood. A solid Labour seat where the Labour Party has taken local people for granted came within a whisker of voting for change. Unfortunately David Cameron’s party meant that Ed Miliband’s MP still got in – 11 per cent of people voted for David Cameron’s party which kept Ed Miliband’s MP in the House of Commons – but I think the really significant thing is we’re starting to pick up support from the centre left.

ANDREW MARR:
And when you read assessments in the papers of 25 UKIP MPs, do you think that’s
plausible kind of or is that going too far?

**DOUGLAS CARSWELL:**
(sighs) Let’s not put numbers on it and let’s keep a sense of perspective. We’ve won a single seat. There are three hundred and something to go to get a majority. Rochester’s the next stop. We can do this, the potential is there, but I don’t like bravado talk and I’m not going to use it.

**ANDREW MARR:**
Now I know before you joined UKIP, you sought private assurances that you were not joining a party tinged with racism.

**DOUGLAS CARSWELL:**
Yeah.

**ANDREW MARR:**
You presumably got those. But then in your acceptance speech after your victory, you made a big point of saying that you were friendly towards first and second generation British immigrants …

**DOUGLAS CARSWELL:**
Yeah absolutely.

**ANDREW MARR:**
… and that you wanted compassion alongside passion. Does that mean that you are still at some level slightly concerned that there is at least a perception that the UKIP family include people who are xenophobic?

**DOUGLAS CARSWELL:**
Number one, that’s a statement of my own personal values. I feel very strongly. I went to a school where a third of the children were of a European heritage, a third were from an African heritage, a third from an Asian heritage. Those values are incredibly important to me and they were important to me long before I ever went into politics. But I think the really important thing to remember is I’ve been talking about
an optimistic, inclusive vision of Britain in Clacton for nine years and it works. People often dismiss UKIP voters as pessimistic. If you offer them sunshine, if you offer them the values best reflected in the opening ceremony of the Olympic Games, they want that. They want optimism where there is pessimism and they respond positively to that vision of Britain as it could be.

ANDREW MARR:
Because your former leader referred to UKIP famously as “closet racists”, didn’t he?

DOUGLAS CARSWELL:
There are many things my former leader did that I think were ill-judged and that was one of them.

ANDREW MARR:
Do you think that the Conservative Party, with whom you spent most of your political life, is a good party badly led or do you think there is something fundamentally wrong with it?

DOUGLAS CARSWELL:
A bit of both. I mean I think it’s – to use a metaphor – I think it’s a little bit like HMV music, once ubiquitous when it came to buying music. The way the Tory Party is retailing politics is like the way HMV retailed music: it’s a defunct retail model. I argued that we needed to Spotify politics, we ought to make the Conservative Party a bit more like Spotify, but the Conservative Party can’t change and won’t change because there are too many vested interests that are against recall, against open primary, against direct democracy, against change. Why? Because if we had direct democracy many members of the Conservative Party and the leadership would be replaced.

ANDREW MARR:
So you want to shake politics up entirely. Your new leader, Nigel Farage, however doesn’t seem absolutely on course with you on some of those issues - I mean, for instance, his suggestion that we should not allow anyone into this country who has HIV because of the costs to our National Health Service. Do you agree with that?
DOUGLAS CARSWELL:
Listen, I think this row has been slightly confected. No one is seriously suggesting that we should screen people for HIV coming in. What I think Nigel rightly said is we need a system like in Australia – a tough system where we control our borders, but it’s got to be humane. And being humane also means discretion and common sense.

ANDREW MARR:
Yes. But if you take something else that Nigel Farage said – and we exactly understand what he was saying – he said on a train he was appalled by the number of foreign languages he was hearing around him. He seems to at the very least have a very different tone from Douglas Carswell.

DOUGLAS CARSWELL:
I would never … I’m comfortable with Britain as it is. I put it like this during the campaign when I was asked this question by people in Clacton. There is a doctor in my constituency who was born in Romania and people queue up outside her surgery to get to see her every day. That is the issue – the fact they have to queue. I think actually we could do with some more skilled doctors in our corner of Essex. We need an Australian-type system that would allow that.

ANDREW MARR:
So you have a more inclusive approach perhaps than what people think of as being the traditional UKIP view?

DOUGLAS CARSWELL:
Look, anger and pessimism are not nice things and they can only animate and motivate people for a short period of time. What we need is sunshine. We need optimism and we need a vision. The reason why some people feel pessimistic is because our political leadership in Westminster has failed to offer an optimistic, inclusive alternative.

ANDREW MARR:
Yes.
DOUGLAS CARSWELL:
I think UKIP can do that. UKIP can be the force for change that this country so desperately needs.

ANDREW MARR:
I don’t know if you heard the weather forecast, but it wasn’t sunny. Douglas Carswell, thank you very much indeed for joining us.

DOUGLAS CARSWELL:
Thank you.

INTERVIEW ENDS