JEREMY VINE:
Now Downing Street has strenuously denied reports that an ally of David Cameron referred to Tory activists as “mad, swivel-eyed loons”. The remarks are alleged to have been made at a private dinner. The individual was quoted as saying that Conservative MPs who’ve taken a hardline position on Europe as well as equal marriage have only done so under pressure from local party associations. And I’m joined now by the leading Eurosceptic Conservative MP, John Redwood. Good morning to you.

JOHN REDWOOD:
Good morning.

JEREMY VINE:
So what exactly do you want on Europe?

JOHN REDWOOD:
Well we want the new relationship which the Prime Minister started to set out in the
Bloomberg speech. A large number of Conservative MPs have always felt that there is too much federal power and centralised control over us from Brussels.

**JEREMY VINE:**
This was a speech at the beginning of the year?

**JOHN REDWOOD:**
Exactly right. And we worked with the Prime Minister, he listened very carefully and he moved the policy in a direction we desperately want because the Government cannot govern properly, it cannot control our borders, it cannot make all the decisions it wants on welfare eligibility, it cannot decide who to extradite to stand trial overseas, it cannot sort out our energy policy problems because Brussels makes these decisions.

**JEREMY VINE:**
And as you push the Prime Minister, you want him to offer an in/out referendum by, what, the next election or the one coming or what?

**JOHN REDWOOD:**
Well we’re very happy with the policy of negotiate and decide and what we want is for him to get on with the negotiation. We want this new relationship; and to make sure that the new relationship is a good one that most British people can accept, that has to be put to the British people - do you want the new relationship or would you simply rather not be part of it at all?

**JEREMY VINE:**
But you feel at the moment you haven’t seen the flavour of his negotiating position. Is that right?

**JOHN REDWOOD:**
Well no we haven’t, and it’s early days, but what I and my colleagues want him to do now is to get on with that negotiation because we think the new relationship has to be based on trade. It mustn’t be based on common government. And what you need to remember is that the Conservative Party has been a very united party on Europe since about 2000 because we were very happy in opposing the Nice Treaty. We all voted
against the Nice Treaty in the House of Commons, we all voted against the Amsterdam Treaty, we all voted against the Lisbon Treaty. Now that some Conservatives hold ministerial positions, it doesn’t mean the Conservative Party suddenly accepts all those treaties. Those treaties were wrong, they took much power away from our country, and we need to have a new relationship.

JEREMY VINE:
For people trying to understand where this has blown up from, it seems to be the local elections, you suddenly see 23 per cent of the vote …

JOHN REDWOOD:
(over) No, no, no.

JEREMY VINE:
… going to UKIP and you all panic and start shouting about Europe. That’s what it looks like.

JOHN REDWOOD:
No, no, it isn’t like that at all because, if you see, we started this campaign early in this Parliament when we tabled a proposal to have an earlier referendum than the Prime Minister wanted and about a hundred colleagues were either in support or abstained against a three-line whip to make that point. We then went to the Prime Minister privately and helped him with the Bloomberg speech, and we’re very happy with his new policy as outlined by the Bloomberg speech. And now we wish to get on with it because this won’t wait because we need to sort out welfare, we need to sort out borders, we need to sort out migration flows, we need to sort out energy - to name but a few - and all those things puts ministers in a position where they can’t do what they need to do because the European Union won’t let them.

JEREMY VINE:
When you say “this won’t wait”, you sound as if you’re threatening the Prime Minister.

JOHN REDWOOD:
No I’m not threatening the Prime Minister at all.

**JEREMY VINE:**
(over) Well if he does delay longer than you want …

**JOHN REDWOOD:**
(over) I’ve just explained, I welcome his Bloomberg speech, I welcome the new relationship he is seeking. I wish to help him create that new relationship and he has a very united party behind the idea of a new relationship. It’s only the BBC who thinks that there are tens of thousands of Conservatives who want the current EU relationship and are fighting back. There are just a handful of people in the Conservative Movement that think the current relationship works. The rest of us are completely united behind the Prime Minister in saying the current relationship is quite wrong for Britain and we want that new relationship based on trade. Of course we want the trade, but we don’t want the government.

**JEREMY VINE:**
(over) Why then, if you are united, why did someone close to the Prime Minister apparently say that Conservatives in the local party are “mad, swivel-eyed loons”?

**JOHN REDWOOD:**
Well I was very glad that that’s been strenuously denied. And if there is such a person - not named of course - then they should be reprimanded because I and my colleagues think our members are very good people who work hard for their local communities; they serve as councillors. We agree with their views on Europe. We think that the European Government is not working in Britain’s interest. It is taxing us too much, it’s bossing us around too much, and we want that new relationship.

**JEREMY VINE:**
You were there in the Nineties. You saw all of this happen to John Major and the result of it was that Tony Blair won a landslide. He won three! You want to go there again?

**JOHN REDWOOD:**
No, no, of course not, and the message from John Major was that he was quite wrong to join the currency union and did so much damage to the British economy by doing that. That was the big European mistake he made and I’m very pleased that David Cameron and George Osborne have no intention of going anywhere near the euro and the currency union.

**JEREMY VINE:**
But it’s the divisiveness that cost you the election.

**JOHN REDWOOD:**
No it’s not, no it wasn’t; it was the economic mess that the European scheme created. And I think the Conservatives have learnt a very big lesson from that: do not enter European economic schemes because they destroy jobs, destroy hopes and destroy ambition in our country. We’ve learnt that. We are fully united behind not wanting to go anywhere near these kind of schemes. It’s a media myth that it was the divisions that caused the problem. The thing that caused the problem for the Conservatives was the bad economic policy forced on us by the European entanglement.

**JEREMY VINE:**
Thank you very much indeed, John Redwood, Conservative MP.

**INTERVIEW ENDS**