ANDREW MARR: 
The Green Party launches its campaign for the European Elections tomorrow. There’ll be focus on policies for the environment obviously and a lot of talk about how the Greens differ from the established parties. But they’re not the only ones making that pitch. It’s a big theme too with UKIP. I’m joined now by the Greens’ Leader Natalie Bennett. Welcome to you.

NATALIE BENNETT: 
Good morning.

ANDREW MARR: 
Thanks for coming in. If one looks at the pitch that you make in these elections, there’s a great deal about fracking in it. It seems to have become one of your great causes recently.

NATALIE BENNETT:
Well I think that’s certainly an issue that we identify with, but of course what we’re campaigning on is much broader than that.
ANDREW MARR:
Much broader than that.

NATALIE BENNETT:
That we acknowledge that currently our economy, our politics, our society isn’t working for the common good, so we’re talking about good jobs that pay at least a living wage that you can live on, we’re talking about fighting against privatisation – the kind of rush to privatisation in the health service that I hope you’ll be talking about later – and we’re of course talking about the issues of climate change, which fracking is very much a part of.

ANDREW MARR:
You say that you can stop fracking in its tracks in this country. Is that realistic really?

NATALIE BENNETT:
Yes, I think so. I mean the fact is we don’t know. First of all, if we go to Lord Browne, the Chair of Cuadrilla, he says we’ll know in five years if we have frackable gas in Britain. So this at the moment is a very uncertain industry that may never get off the ground anyway. But there’s also massive and growing public resistance to it that we’ve seen at Balcombe, at Barton Moss, and we’ve been very much there on the frontline of that you know supporting those campaigns.

ANDREW MARR:
Now when it comes to the European Union, you’re in favour of the free movement of people and particularly people coming in and getting full access to public services. So you are on the unpopular side of the argument, it seems, at the moment?

NATALIE BENNETT:
Well I think lots of people acknowledge that you know immigrants coming into Britain from the EU contribute a great deal to Britain, and also of course we have the option of a great many Britons, an almost equal number of Britons live in the rest of Europe as we have European citizens here. And the fact is we’ve also got to acknowledge that we have to respect the rights of refugees, we have to respect the rights of British people who have foreign spouses. And you know at the moment with
our immigration policy, we’re absolutely cutting our nose off to spite our face in terms of this year, for the first time, the number of foreign students applying to British universities has gone down, and that’s a huge cost that’s come from our immigration policy.

ANDREW MARR:
I notice that you’re in favour, you say you’re very much in favour of national minorities and regions and so forth, and I know that the Greens in Scotland are part of the Yes to Independence campaign. Is that the case for the Green Party generally? Are you pro-independence for Scotland?

NATALIE BENNETT:
Very much so and you know we believe that we need to, in terms of the broader European Union, we need to respect the principle of subsidiarity. We very much need a reformed European Union where people make decisions much more locally, just as we need a much more democratic European Union and we need a European Union that’s not working for the interests of big multinational companies but for the interests of people – which means, for example, no EU-US free trade deal.

ANDREW MARR:
I see. Now, as we’ve seen from the papers, all the stories about the European Elections are about the rise of UKIP and Nigel Farage. Are you pitching yourself essentially as the anti-UKIP Party in these elections?

NATALIE BENNETT:
I would very much put it like that. UKIP is the party of fear - saying be fearful, vote for us. We’re saying hope for a better society, a society that works for the common good - so vote Green for that. And of course this is a proportional representation election. We’re part of the fourth largest group in the European Parliament. We’re in there making a difference - you know really doing the work in Europe, not just being anti-Europe.

ANDREW MARR:
Well Greens are very powerful in Germany and many other European countries. Why
is … Is it simply an electoral representation issue that means the Greens have not ever broken through really in this country?

NATALIE BENNETT:
Well …

ANDREW MARR:
I mean you’ve had some local elections, you’ve had some local successes, but you’ve had nothing like the success that Greens across the continent have had. Why is that?

NATALIE BENNETT:
Well of course we have the first-past-the-post electoral system, but we have shown that we can beat that. We of course elected Caroline Lucas as our first Green MP in Brighton Pavilion in 2010 and that’s a huge breakthrough that shows that you know Brighton Pavilion can elect a Green, anywhere else in the country can do it too. You know we run Brighton and Hove Council, we’re the opposition on Norwich. We’re likely to be the opposition on Solihull after the local elections. You know we’re making advances under first-past-the-post. But the fact is that the European Elections, they’re proportional, so everybody’s vote counts.

ANDREW MARR:
The other parties have all got different sources of funding – rich people or kind of the unions, whatever it might be. Have you got any money at all?

NATALIE BENNETT:
Yes we have … we have two things. We have money from our members and supporters, which you know we’re not talking about rich people but you know every £5 or £10 counts. But most of all what we have is shoe leather and enthusiasm. We have a lot of people out there on the ground you know delivering newsletters, knocking on doors, and that’s what we work on basically.

ANDREW MARR:
Alright, thank you very much indeed for joining us this morning.
INTERVIEW ENDS