ANDREW MARR:
Now after the former Conservative backbencher Douglas Carswell rather
dominationally defected to UKIP last month, there were rumours of more to follow, and
yesterday Nigel Farage pulled another Tory rabbit out of his hat in the form of Mark
Reckless. The big reveal took place at UKIP’s conference in Doncaster where the
party also discussed new policy ideas, although not all of them survived the weekend
as you will see in a minute. But when I spoke to the UKIP leader last night, I began
by asking him if he had any more defectors lined up.

NIGEL FARAGE:
We’ll have to see, won’t we? I mean there is a great deal of disenchantment with
David Cameron’s leadership in the Conservative Party, but equally don’t
underestimate the fact that there are Labour backbenchers who are thinking about this
as well.

ANDREW MARR:
Are you saying this morning, therefore, that you expect defections from the Labour
Party and more defections from the Conservative Party?
NIGEL FARAGE:
I am saying there is a widespread feeling that the political leaderships of Labour, Lib Dem and Conservative are becoming so hopelessly out of touch with opinions in MPs constituencies that it wouldn’t surprise me if we saw more defections.

ANDREW MARR:
Right. Now I was looking at Mr Reckless’s speech announcing his defection, and he said in that that the country was “overregulated and overtaxed”. And in that context, I’d like to ask you about your proposal to put 25 per cent VAT on a wide range of what you call “luxury” goods. First of all, have you worked out exactly how this will be done?

NIGEL FARAGE:
I have to say I personally am very happy to give freedom to our spokesmen and spokeswomen to float ideas, but I’m pretty certain all the while I’m leader that will not be in our manifesto.

ANDREW MARR:
That’s very interesting. This is the fastest u-turn we’ve heard. Are you saying that is no longer a policy?

NIGEL FARAGE:
It was never put forward as a policy. It was put forward as something that should be investigated. What was put forward as a policy was the idea there should be no tax on the minimum wage, that nobody earning £13,500 a year should pay income tax. What was put forward as a policy was that the idea that nurses, experienced nurses now pay 40p tax is ridiculous and they should be taken out of it.

ANDREW MARR:
So to be absolutely clear, the much touted, much discussed 25p luxury VAT is dead, as far as you’re concerned?

NIGEL FARAGE:
As far as I’m concerned, it’s dead. It was a discussion point yesterday. It isn’t going to happen.

**ANDREW MARR:**
You made a great point of saying that UKIP now turn its tanks in both directions - on the Labour Party as much as on the Conservative Party. That means you have to win this forthcoming Northern by-election, don’t you really, to show that that’s more than just words?

**NIGEL FARAGE:**
Well if we did win the Heywood and Middleton by-election, you would then be saying we’d seen one of the biggest swings in post-1945 politics in this country. You know we start this by-election a very long way behind the Labour Party. That said, I am confident we’re going to give the Labour Party a run for their money. I can’t say more than that.

**ANDREW MARR:**
But if this is a kind of populist revolution of the kind you were describing and you compare it with what’s happened in Scotland, then we ought to see an earthquake happening up there too, shouldn’t we?

**NIGEL FARAGE:**
Well we may do. I don’t know. You know nor do you. All I can say is something remarkable is happening in British politics, but I’m not going to stand here and predict we’re going to win that by-election but I am going to predict we’re going to give Labour a very, very big run for their money.

**ANDREW MARR:**
You said yourself that if you were a young guy in Spain or Portugal, you’d probably come here. You understood all of that. But what do you say to people like the IoD and many big businesses who say that our growth - Britain has growth of a kind that very few other countries in the world have achieved at the moment - is partly based on a huge supply of skilled, hardworking, educated and dedicated people coming to work here and that by doing … by closing the door, you imperil our growth?
NIGEL FARAGE:
The point we’re making and the point that is resonating with Labour and Conservative voters in a big way across this country is you cannot choose the numbers that come to your country all the while you’re members of the European Union and all the while the British passport, which of course says on it the first two words ‘European Union’, is extended to nearly half a billion people.

ANDREW MARR:
I’m still slightly unclear as to whether your hostility to this is cultural or economic. If you were persuaded that Britain’s economic growth at the moment required a higher level of immigration than you would like, would you be in favour of it or would you still say this is against the interests of British born workers and therefore I want to stop immigration?

NIGEL FARAGE:
I think the duty of government is to look after the country and protect it and then to look after its people, and I think the integrity of our communities, of our society, the opportunity we give young people to get on, the opportunity we give working age people to earn a decent living, I think those things matter more than a couple of pips up on GDP figures over the course of the next decade. And I think what really this immigration debate is coming down to is there are some things in life that are more important than just money.

ANDREW MARR:
Can I ask you finally about your hostility to what’s going on at the moment over the skies of Iraq and Syria. What’s your message now the vote has been taken to the RAF pilots and their families and their commanders?

NIGEL FARAGE:
You say we’re hostile. And by asking the question that way you’re saying that somehow there is an aggression about UKIP, and there isn’t and I am not going to be drawn in to trying to appear to be disloyal to the British services. I’m not. But there are some wars that are just wars and sensible wars and there are some wars that aren’t,
and we have engaged in the last 15 years in a series of wars that have not been in our national interest and have actually left the countries that we were supposed to be helping in a worse condition. We need to have a long, cold, hard think.

ANDREW MARR:
And so to be absolutely clear, you say there are just wars and there are unjust wars. Do you regard this one as an unjust war?

NIGEL FARAGE:
I don’t think they’ve thought about the end game of this. I don’t believe a war can be won just by bombing alone. If we’re serious about fighting Muslim extremism, we need a regional approach, we need several governments involved, we need lots of boots on the ground provided by Arab states and African states. And if we’re serious about it, then I would not object to the British taking part and offering help, experience and expertise. What was proposed in the House of Commons yesterday doesn’t pass, for me, any of those tests.

ANDREW MARR:
Nigel Farage, thank you very much indeed for joining us.

NIGEL FARAGE:
Thank you.

INTERVIEW ENDS