

NIGEL FARAGE – INTERVIEW WRITE-UP

INTRODUCTION

"Euroscepticism is my religion!"

Nigel Farage was elected as MP for Clacton in 2024 and has been Leader of Reform UK since 2024. A former Member of the European Parliament for South-East England (1999-2020), Leader of the UK Independence Party (2006-2009, 2010-2016), and Leader of the Brexit Party (2019-2021). By many, he is perceived to be the 'Father of Brexit', being a prominent British Eurosceptic since the early 1990s. Under his leadership, UKIP gained a record 3.8 million votes in the 2015 elections, though such result translated to only one elected MP. A year later, Farage's political ambition had been achieved with Britain voting to leave the European Union in the 2016 referendum. After the UK had secured a trade-deal with the EU in December 2020, Nigel announced his retirement from frontline politics in March 2021. Nigel is currently the Honorary President of Reform UK and a presenter for GB News. Throughout his career, Nigel challenged the political correctness culture in British politics – regularly appearing in pubs and openly discussing topics that were often deemed as 'controversial' such as immigration.

LEADERS ADMIRE

Admired political leaders were noted as including Michael Foot, Enoch Powell, Tony Benn and George Galloway, distinguished in particular for their attributes as remarkable public speakers with admirable abilities for effective engagement with their audiences. Accentuation on the view that there were more examples of good and inspiring speakers from the past was emphasised, the general standard of political oratory perceived as being much less effective today.

Admired leaders' disarming witticisms as well as affecting audience engagement also noted, with a story about Tony Benn's joking objection about Nigel's cigarette smoking affecting him, whilst dismissing his own clouds of pipe smoke. This was during an address to 1800 A level students, and prior to our existing no smoking rules. Tony Benn's description of 2 types of politician: weathercocks, who spin with the wind, versus signposts, who are observational and show the way, reiterated a similar discussion that Daniel had with Tony Benn about weathercocks/ signpost analogies, referred to in his 'Political Perspective' section about Julian Lewis.

(Ref 'weathercocks', the word 'catchfar', the 18th century nickname for someone who follows their boss so closely that they blow with the political wind also springs to mind - described in Susie Dent's book: 'Word Perfect: Etymological Entertainment for Every Day'.)

POLITICAL INFLUENCE – HOW NIGEL CHANGED THE TORIES

"Part of my real success was that I loved talking to people – Westminster didn't understand."

© Jan Childs

- with appreciation to Nigel Farage

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The monolithic British political elite - same university, same people, similar wealth, were resoundingly censured as being typical of the circumstances of Britain's political elite. Nigel believes that the space for him was created because the party lost the will for courageous leadership and for seeking short-term gains rather than showing a journey towards something bigger.

The political elite's characteristic habits of socialising together (incestuous club detachment remarked on as being almost total), engaging only with known people and circumstances, plus having no passions outside politics, were perceived as being key contributory factors to a significant disconnect between people and politics. Stressed as being a really important point, was that senior politicians are seemingly outside their comfort zones in their general communications with the electorate by giving the impression of not genuinely enjoying meaningful engagement with people outside their close social and political environment.

MEDIA ENGAGEMENT

"If you have beliefs, you don't mind being abused. I represent views that I know, what I believe in".

A key reason perceived for Nigel's influence on the Conservative Party from 1999, was that no cabinet minister would have stuck to their guns when being mordaciously and aggressively challenged by the vituperative language and the specious or sophistic arguments sometimes put forward by media interviewers such as Piers Morgan. Capitulating to incidents of hostile interrogation rather than steadfastly persevering to asserting values and beliefs, was Nigel believes, the ignominious behaviour that helped to create the political space for people's interest in the way that Nigel expressed and stood by his beliefs.

The difficult part in dealing with an intimidating and interrogative interviewing technique was emphasised as consistently staying calm and rational in response. The guidance that Nigel was given by Kelvin Mackenzie (the media executive and former newspaper editor) i.e., – give simple messages in good understandable English, and express these with deep conviction, was seen as invaluable learning. Whatever the opposition, having the courage of your convictions, sticking to your beliefs and defending your values was acclaimed as essential.

The experiences that politicians have of being pressurised by the media and being hounded whilst walking through a press cacophony of cameras can present a particular challenge. The danger was noted too of scenarios where there is potential for political blundering by a mask slip; a classic example cited as Gordon Brown's "*bigoted woman*" comment, inadvertently made in a private conversation during political campaigning in 2010.

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CONNECT PEOPLE & POLITICS

"Every pub's the parliament".

In contrast to the oft favoured strategy of politicians trying to avoid the press in informal circumstances, when Mail on Sunday journalists were trying to find out which pub Nigel would be in at a particular time, he would turn the tables and surprise them by letting them know where he would be and when. This cooperative approach helped minimise the media's usual strategy of highlighting pub visits just to take photographs of Nigel drinking pints and focusing their interview reports on drinking rather than tuning in to the important political messages he wanted to convey.

Nigel's approach of getting genuine enjoyment from engaging with people and use of EQ by creating a sense of 'one of us' includes having a real interest in and understanding of the financial and other challenges hard working people are facing. A contrasting and much more effective approach than that perceived by the political elite. Sounding like '*reading from a script*' when projecting a point of view in a public forum or in dealing with challenging questions or issues was noted as frequent behaviour of senior politicians and roundly condemned.

STAY CALM UNDER PRESSURE

The training ground for the EQ attribute of remaining calm under pressure acknowledged as being the most effective, was during the often-heated discourse within the European Parliament. However long it takes, and despite being subjected to ongoing disputes and invective comments, standing up for what you believe in and articulating this clearly and unambiguously can prevail.

When asked about the vilification Nigel received about his comments relating to the Edward Colson statue in Bristol, being told by Piers Morgan on ITV that he was '*responsible for the deaths of 20,000 people*', was a particular '*stay calm under pressure*' challenge. While there may be increasing calls for historical monuments associated with Britain's imperial past to be removed, Nigel emphasised his belief that if such monuments are removed, this should happen based on informed debate and due democratic process. The action of the protestors who made their own decisions about what was right or wrong and forcefully toppled the statue, prompting Nigel's assertions about the danger of '*mob rule*' actions that contravene democratic representation.

Refs: [Nigel Farage branded 'outrageous' in furious row on GMB after defending statue of slave trader Edward Colston \(msn.com\)](#)

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KEEP IT SIMPLE

Keeping political messages simple was highlighted as essential for effective engagement with the electorate. Margaret Thatcher's communication effectiveness with the voting public noted by likening household management with treasury expenditure being especially commended. Harold Wilson was also admired for his ability to engage with people, and for them to feel *'he's like one of us'*. Expressing things in an unequivocally simple way, avoiding alternatives such as *'on the other hand'*, was the prescribed straightforward approach for political expression.

POLITICAL LESSONS

Following the Conservative Party's success in the 2019 general election with the electoral switch from the Labour Party in the so called *'Red wall'* seats, Nigel believes presents a real opportunity for the Conservative Party to build on. (The *'Red wall'* term is attributed to James Kanagasooriam, reported in a Financial Times article 14th December 2019 and relates to constituencies in the Midlands, Yorkshire, North East Wales and Northern England which historically tended to support the Labour Party, ref: [How the Labour party's 'red wall' turned blue | Financial Times \(ft.com\)](#))

To maintain this switch of voting allegiance, needs however an approach that builds and maintains a more productive connection between people and politics by more effective emotional engagement with the electorate. Most importantly, connecting with people in a way that shows a genuine interest in the challenges and issues that they are facing, providing effective leadership with simple messages that are clearly and unambiguously articulated, and following up with relevant policies and promised action. While Nigel no longer has a formal political party role, his ongoing influence on political issues continues via social media and other communication channels.

ADVICE TO YOUNGER SELF

A brief and purposeful quoted message to younger self:

"Do less and do it better."