

## Interview with Gawain Towler

By [Ciarán Morrissey](#), Comment Editor (2015/16)

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Image: York Union

Before the York Union's debate regarding Britain's place in the EU, Nouse sat down with the man arguing for the motion. Gawain Towler is UKIP's press secretary and has been for 12 years. He was previously a Philosophy student in Derwent in the early 90's, and is a former chairman of the York Tories.

**In your view, is the British media trying to demonise the anti-EU elements in British politics, such as David Cameron's "fruitcakes, loonies and closet racists comment"?**

I wouldn't say it was the media. I think that those are days passed, in all honesty. I've been running the media ops for UKIP for ten years, and frankly, these are the barmy days of people phoning us up - in the past, it was very, very difficult indeed to get anything in to talk about it; so much so, we had to chuck legal complaints at the BBC after the Euro elections in 2004, and they did a study which came out as the Lyons Report, and they basically admitted that they had, indeed, marginalised and underplayed it. But since then, to be fair to them, they have given us far more credit.

We threaten the establishment, we threaten what we call the legacy parties, and, the fact is, most of the media establishment, if it's print, they are already loyal to a party that pre-exists. If it's broadcast - ITV, essentially, isn't interested in politics. It has to cover it a bit, but it'd far prefer not to. Celebrities are far more interesting, which is true - whereas the BBC has its charter. BBC news coverage, I think, now, gives us a fair crack of the whip. I do.

Our beef - if we have a beef at all - is with the way that, in light entertainment, and elsewhere, the sneery attacks on eurosceptics are still entirely normal. And, when you think that, depending on which opinion poll you take, they're over 50%. Even the one that says there's been a drop in scepticism, if you actually do the maths on it, 56% want a Britain which is only in a free trade zone with Europe, which is our position, by the way \*laughter\* so there's still a majority of people who want a position that we hold.

Basically, it's not nearly as bad as it was, though there are still issues, and print is much more in the bag with other parties.

**If there were to be a vote, and the UK voted to stay within the EU, what would then happen to UKIP, as a party? Would it continue in the same way, would it balkanise, what?**

I would think it would continue in the same way. I think the SNP survived for a good hundred years, or ninety years before they succeeded in forcing a vote, and they've not gone away despite the fact that they lost their vote? I see no reason why we'd lose. We would continue to fight, I mean, we believe that this is about democracy and we will continue to fight for what we believe in. So, it would be a setback, yes \*laughter\*, but that wouldn't stop us.

**Do you believe that, like the SNP membership, losing a vote could paradoxically galvanise support for you?**

Possibly. It depends how it was done. You must remember the amount of promises they got in the last couple of weeks. I wonder what we'd get. \*laughter\*

**Does UKIP have a credible post-EU withdrawal platform or is it, like many say, just going to be subsumed by the Tories?**

Um, no. I think we're now a different beast. It's possible some would peel off, yeah. And some would peel off to Labour as well, I mean this is this mad media idea that we're just a bunch of disenfranchised Tories. We're not, and the result in Heywood and Middleton proves that. So that doesn't work anymore. It just doesn't work anymore. Yes, some would peel off, of course they would. Many, and particularly those who've been members for a long time, have wanted that, in order that they can go home and tend their roses and be the retired people they'd like to have been. So there would be a lot of that, but I think the core, and an increasingly large number, would stick, because it's not just about Europe, it's about democracy at local council level, national level and at European level. I could give you a thousand different examples of what, for example, the breaking of the cabinet system of government at local council level. We think that it anti-democratic. It is wrong.

**So would you support mayoralities in local government?**

Conceptually, yes, but it's interesting to note that most places that've had the opportunity have voted against having them.

**Like in Greater Manchester? Though, that has been shoved through.**

I know, against the will of the people. And so, it's like regionalisation. The only time there's been a vote, it was two men and a big white plastic blow-up elephant defeated the government; in the vote in the North-East. I don't think there is a great drive in England for regionalisation. I think people feel that there's a deliberate divide and rule policy on the part of the government.

**If we are, as you advocate, in a free trade zone within Europe, but not in the EU, if we follow UKIP's policies could we end up in the situation that Norway is in where they are bound by the rules of the EU but have no grounds to change them?**

There's a complete misnomer about the idea of - what are they called - fax democracies regarding Norway's position. Actually, Norway has a great deal of influence because if you look at most of the technical rules - and these are the ones we're talking about - the technical rules of Europe, they come from supra-supranational bodies, such as the UN and various other bodies, filtered down. So, we are the sixth largest economy. Of course we're not going to be in the same situation as Norway. We're going to be in a much stronger position.

To read the interview with Towler's opponent, Edward McMillan-Scott, please [click here](#).

To read a full review of the debate, please [click here](#).



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