

Real change, or a cry for help? The rise of UKIP

Published: January 13, 2026, 2:25 pm

UKIP has won its first seat in the House of Commons. That, I admit, saddens me. Everything about UKIP is, as far as I can see, opposed to the principles and values I stand for.

As far as we can tell, and precisely because Douglas Carswell had to talk about it in his victory speech, UKIP is racist. I think racism not just profoundly unacceptable, but deeply offensive, and morally repugnant. I do not think UKIP has even tried to discuss immigration without embracing racism.

I believe UKIP embraces a crude faith in the market, although most people do not realise it. Again, Carswell embodies that. He wishes to privatise the NHS, but few who vote UKIP will realise the implications.

UKIP's grasp of economics is, to be polite, weak. But its desire to cut the size of the state, which is implicit in its wish to cut taxes, would create massive inequality, enormous tax loopholes and a level of state spending last seen before World War 2, when children left school at 14, we had no NHS and few lived to claim their pensions for long. This just cannot work.

And I believe that UKIP's anti-EU stance is that of the fighter for petty freedoms, whose mistrust of health and safety laws goes hand in hand with anti-trade unionism and a stated dislike of human rights, although in all cases they have little clue as to the benefits to their well being any of these have delivered until asked context specific questions.

Most of all, by offering the electorate what seem like a string of untruths to get elected UKIP show a profound contempt for democracy.

But they have been elected. And that's the real worry. If people vote UKIP they must be really fed up, and they are.

Mainstream politicians also lie to them. No one is talking about how they will achieve cuts, even though they all say they are needed when the truth is that this is simply not

the case.

No politician talks about the need to stop harmful capital flows that undermine economies as an essential way of preserving local jobs.

No politician is telling the truth on TTIP that will consign democratic control of large parts of the economy to history.

No one is saying that the problem with the NHS is the market based model on which it is now built.

No one talks seriously about the tax gap, and their ambition with regard to tax abuse remains firmly at the level of tackling the international arena whilst turning a blind eye to the tax corruption that is blighting our domestic economy, our High Streets, growth and the job prospects of so many.

No one talks about the need for sustainability.

No one talks about how we do protect jobs, because this is a real concern for people - and to pretend it is not is just to deny the truth.

Instead we have a tacit and complete agreement between all the major parties that they will not challenge the mantra of 'free' markets that so many can see abuse them and which give rise to the feeling that Westminster is as remote from them and as uncaring as the employers who have been all too ready to cast them aside by moving jobs elsewhere.

And the inevitable result is that extremists and those offering snake oil solutions - and parts of UKIP probably fall into both categories - become attractive.

But I still see that more as a cry for help than a real belief in what UKIP are offering - because UKIP are so unsure themselves as to what that offer is.

But it's all deeply depressing nonetheless. I could try to console myself that this is all a backlash against a failed Coalition - and Labour's retaining its share in the North West and the Tory and Lib Dem collapses could all be interpreted as that. But that would not be true. There is something more significant in this. And the message is really to neoliberalism - much as UKIP embraces it in its entirety - and is that actually what people want is community more than anything and no one is giving it to them - and that is why they are so deeply disappointed.

And the depressing fact is that so far no one - least of all Labour - has listened. That's a real cause for despair.