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Reform leader ruled out of Radio 4 show to avoid upsetting woke staff, biography claims

BBC BIAS ROW AFTER DESERT ISLAND DISCS 'BANS FARAGE'

THE BBC has been hit with new allegations of bias following claims Nigel Farage has been 'banned' from appearing on Desert Island Discs.

A new biography claims the Reform UK leader will never be invited on to the prestigious Radio 4 show as his presence would make woke Corporation staff feel 'unsafe'.

Producers are also said to fear a backlash from other potential guests, who may boycott the programme if it gave the populist

EXCLUSIVE

By **Glen Owen**

POLITICAL EDITOR

politician a platform. Last night, Mr Farage told The Mail on Sunday: 'I have come to expect nothing less from the BBC - their blatant bias has been obvious for years. The BBC will have a rude awakening under a

Reform government'. But the broadcaster - which has been hit by repeated claims of Left-wing bias - responded: 'We do not ban any individuals from appearing on Desert Island Discs and that includes Mr Farage.'

Reports of the ban come in a forthcoming biography of the Reform leader written by former Tory deputy chairman Lord Ashcroft. He quotes a BBC source as saying

**SHOWBIZ
EXCLUSIVE**



**Strictly's
Shirley in hot
water over
huge fee for
cruise show**

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'If they let him on half the staff will think Radio 4 is an unsafe space'



ON AIR:
Mr Farage
on the
BBC's radio
rival, LBC

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that Mr Farage 'has effectively been blacklisted' from the show, which has run for 84 years and was once named the greatest radio programme of all time.

The source said: 'Farage is regarded instinctively by many BBC staff as unacceptable. At least half the staff would think Radio 4 had become an "unsafe space" if he was on Desert Island Discs. Nothing would be written down, it's just classic liberal-Left BBC.'

'It's impossible to state quite how snobbish it is, especially on this kind of programme where political bias goes unrecognised. I also think they're worried that if Farage went on, other potential guests might start a boycott.'

The comments come in the book *The Farage Factor*, subtitled *Reform UK And The Remaking Of British Politics*, which will be published next month.

Earlier this month, a member of Mr Farage's team contacted Radio 4 to ask whether he qualified for an invitation to be interviewed by

'Having Nigel on might trigger a guest boycott'

host Lauren Laverne about the eight recordings, book and luxury item he would take to a fictional desert island.

They were told: 'As we are now well into production on our latest series, we're not currently looking for new castaways. When making decisions about the very few active politicians we have on the programme, we make the bookings over quite a long time period ensuring a range of voices.'

The BBC added it would 'stay in touch' and 'revisit Nigel's interest for a future series'.

Both Sir Keir Starmer and Tory leader Kemi Badenoch have appeared on the programme, which has shown no qualms about inviting figures from the hard Left.

Matt Brittin, who succeeded Tim Davie as the BBC's director-general earlier this month, has reportedly described one of his main challenges as trying to 'Reform-proof' the BBC - making sure any future government cannot change the way the broadcaster operates.

In November, Mr Farage branded the Corporation 'rotten to the core', and claimed it has

One rule for them: Left-wing firebrands who DID get invited to the desert island

By Chris Hastings

SOME of the UK's most infamous Left-wing firebrands have been invited on to Radio 4's Desert Island Discs.

Arthur Scargill appeared in 1988 when he was president of the National Union of Mineworkers - and used the esteemed programme to defend his conduct of the year-long miners' strike which sought to cripple the UK.

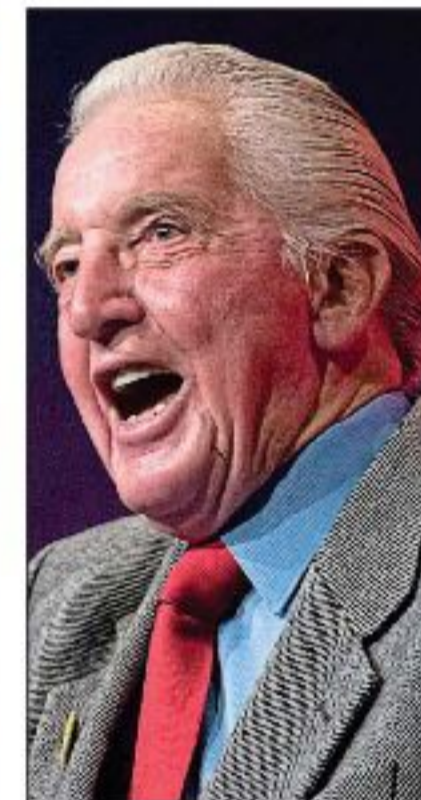
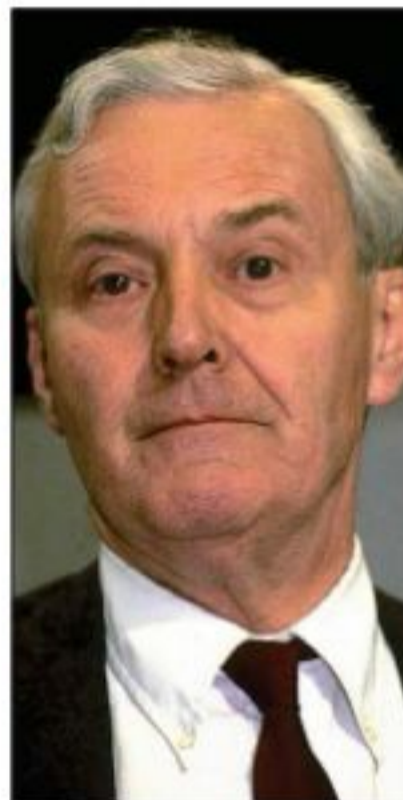
Mr Scargill, who argued the Thatcher government had engineered the confrontation with miners for party political ends, said his only regret was not starting the strike before 1984.

The lifelong trade unionist said the miners would emerge victorious in the long run despite losing the dispute, adding that he looked forward to the 'establishment of socialism' in the UK, which would be 'because of, rather than despite, the strike'.

In an appearance the following year, the former Cabinet Minister Tony Benn condemned the 'terrible' legacy of Thatcherism.

He also celebrated a tradition of Left-wing radicalism which he claimed stretched back to the Peasants' Revolt of 1381.

The veteran Labour politician disputed the idea that the British public regarded him as a 'crank', saying: 'If you followed me around and just got the sense of warmth. I mean, how on Earth do you think I have survived if peo-



ROGUES' GALLERY: Former castaways Ken Livingstone, Tony Benn, Arthur Scargill and Dennis Skinner

ple did wave their fists at you, but they don't. I am not saying people share my views. That would be a great error.'

Mr Benn chose Karl Marx's *Das Kapital* as his reading material on the fictional island.

In 1990, Labour firebrand Dennis Skinner, nicknamed the Beast of Bolsover, shared his far-Left views on politics and Parliament.

The MP, a staunch supporter of the National Union of Mineworkers, showed his militant tendencies by picking *Daddy, What Did You Do In the Strike?* by Peggy Seeger as his favourite track.

Three years later, it was the turn of Ken Livingstone, the former leader of the Greater Lon-

don Council and one of the most prominent Left-wing politicians of modern times.

The MP for Brent East was a bitter opponent of Margaret

'Condemned the legacy of Thatcherism'

Thatcher. True to his socialist roots, Livingstone chose Joe Hill - named after a prominent trade unionist and sung by the American activist Paul Robeson - as his favourite track.

In his 1989 appearance on the

programme, the Left-leaning playwright Sir David Hare highlighted what he called the 'hard Right' ideology of Margaret Thatcher, and wondered why she was 'so angry' all the time.

But perhaps the most controversial castaway in the history of the programme was Lady Mosley, the widow of the British fascist leader Oswald Mosley and a former friend of Adolf Hitler.

During her appearance on the programme, Lady Mosley denounced the horrors of the Holocaust but said the idea that six million Jews had been murdered by Hitler were 'just not conceivable'. She also expressed her admiration for the Nazi leader.

become a 'byword for sleaze, hypocrisy, arrogance, anti-Semitism and worse'.

Writing in the Daily Mail following a string of rows about the BBC's 'Leftist bias' and coverage of Israel, he said: 'I believe that its overhaul is long overdue. In particular, the licence fee as we know it has to go - and for good.'

'Contrary to false rumours spread by my critics, Reform UK does not wish or intend to abolish the BBC in its entirety. We want to keep and enhance what's good about the Corporation. Its news reporting and

the World Service are critically important to our national life - though a commitment to true impartiality must run through the newsroom, top to bottom.'

He added that there needed to be a 'fundamental change' to the way the BBC is funded, writing: 'The licence fee is an appallingly regressive tax, the same to a billionaire as to a bankrupt. Those who do not stump up the £174.50 annual fee are liable to a fine - anyone who fails to pay a fine imposed by a court faces being sent to jail.'

His intervention followed a row

about Panorama's misleading editing of Donald Trump speech on the day the US Capitol was stormed, January 6, 2021.

The controversy culminated in the departure of Mr Davie and head of news Deborah Turness as Mr Trump filed a \$10billion (£7.4billion) lawsuit against the Corporation in a Florida court.

A BBC source said last night: 'The choice of guests on Desert Island Discs is editorially driven and we welcome a range of contributors on the programme including politicians, authors, aca-

demics and well-known names across many fields to discuss their lives through their love of music.'

'When making decisions about the very few active front-line politicians we have on the programme, we make the bookings over quite a long time period ensuring a range of voices.'

'We are always open to inviting guests from across the political spectrum and have said we would be happy to revisit [Mr Farage's] interest for a future series.'