

ANDREW MARR SHOW, 1ST MAY 2016

NICOLA STURGEON, Leader SNP

AN: So you're not going to do it, Nicola Sturgeon. Oil is too low and you don't really mean it?

NS: I'm not sure anybody should put much faith in the political predictions of Nigel Farage, but that's another matter altogether. You know the question of whether or not there will be another referendum on Scottish independence lies very much in the hands of the Scottish people. I can't persuade people that I didn't persuade in 2014. If the SNP and those who believe in independence can't do that we won't have earned the right to ask the question again. But on the other side of that, if we do see rising support for independence, and certainly the prospect of Brexit I think if Scotland voted to stay in would definitely lead to growing demand for Scottish independence. Then if we see that growing demand nobody has the right to stand in the way of that.

AN: Well that's new to me at least. You've always said, 'almost certainly.' Now you say definitely, so it's hardening that view?

NS: What I said is I said it would definitely lead to growing demand for Scottish independence.

AM: Okay, but not necessarily a referendum?

NS: Look, I think the Scottish Parliament and our Manifesto is very clear here. If there is a situation – and, you know, what I've also said to you before and I'll say it again today, I hope this scenario doesn't arise because I hope the UK as a whole votes to stay in the EU. But if we're in a scenario where Scotland is faced with the prospect of being taken out against our democratically expressed will, then I think the Scottish Parliament should have the right to propose a second independence referendum, whether it chose to

exercise that right, of course would depend on the circumstances. But you know I'm four days away from an election which is fundamentally and primarily about the Scottish health service, our education system, our economy and the direction of our country over the next five years. And my message is if you want the country to keep moving forward on all of these fronts then make sure you re-elect an SNP government with me as First Minister.

AM: But you have said that you think there will be a second referendum called by you as First Minister, which means in the next four years. You've said that this morning in the Herald.

NS: Firstly, a minor correction, Andrew. The next Scottish Parliament term is five years, but anyway that's just a minor point.

AM: Five years, I'm sorry.

NS: But look, I am very clear, and I don't think anybody listening to this programme will be surprised by this. I want Scotland to be independent. I think it's the best future for our country, so clearly I would like to see a second referendum. I would like to see Scotland be independent and I would like to see that sooner rather than later. But it's not just a decision for me. It's a decision for the majority of people in Scotland and there will only be a second referendum, and there will certainly only be independence if a majority of people in Scotland want that. In the meantime I, if I am re-elected as First Minister on Thursday, will do everything I can, use every power at my disposal to make our education system even better, to make our health service even better, to grow the Scottish economy and create jobs and these are the issues very much uppermost in people's minds as we go into the final few days of this election campaign.

AM: And I will come to them. But just on this all important trigger question. You've said two things. You've said, Brexit almost certainly produces a referendum and you said but you want to see

the Scottish peoples' enthusiasm for that, which can only be measured these days by opinion polls. And it's beginning to appear as if a couple of weeks or a couple of percentages ahead would be enough for you to say yes, the Scottish people want this to happen, therefore it will.

NS: The Manifesto that we published a couple of weeks ago makes this clear. You know we would want to see clear and sustained evidence that independence has become the preferred option of a majority of people in Scotland and I recognise –

AM: Okay. So what does 'clear and sustained' mean?

NS: - well look, we will see that if that is shown not just in one opinion poll, not just in two opinion polls, not a flash in the pan, but something that has clearly become the position in Scotland.

AN: So for how long would those opinion polls have to –

NS: I'm not going to put a timescale on that because I recognise that talking about the date of a second referendum before we've won the argument for independence is putting the cart before the horse. I recognise that if I want Scotland to be independent then I've got work to do, patiently and respectfully and with a lot of humility to try to persuade the people that we didn't persuade in 2014. And if I'm not successful in doing that, Scotland won't become independent. If I am successful, if all those of us who believe in independence are successful then we will. It's rooted in democracy.

AM: If, against your hopes and wishes, the UK votes to leave the EU won't a lot of Scottish people see that as a kind of double fear? Outside the EU, then outside the UK, that's just a bit too scary.

NS: Well no, on the contrary. I think many people in Scotland, if that scenario arises, which you rightly say I hope it doesn't arise, will see as a democratic outrage. If Scotland votes to stay in, and the polls all suggest that although I don't take anything for granted obviously but if that happened because we were outnumbered in the UK we were faced with the prospect of being taken out, I think people would be pretty appalled at that prospect, particularly, not entirely because of this but particularly because in the independence referendum those who campaigned for a No vote, people like David Cameron, told us that it would be voting Yes that would jeopardise our membership of the EU. So there would be I think a lot of justified anger is that prospect arises, but you know I'll be trying hard to persuade people to vote to stay in.

AN: If these things happened and the UK was out of the EU and Scotland voted to leave the UK what would be the relationship between Scotland and the EU? Would you have to reapply again? Have you had any work done, conversations about this?

NS: Look, I am sitting here right now seeing – I hope we're talking about a hypothetical situation

AM: I understand that.

NS: No, but it's - you can't just dismiss that. I'm not going to get dragged too far into the realms of speculation about this, because I hope that Scotland votes to stay in and I hope that the UK votes to stay in and I've campaign for Scottish independence all of my political and adult life, but I don't want to see the UK vote to come out of the EU because I think it would be damaging for the UK and I care about, you know, every part of the EU notwithstanding the fact – the UK notwithstanding the fact that I'm a supporter of Scottish independence. So I'm going to campaign for an In vote, I'll obviously principally do that in Scotland but I hope that people in other parts of the UK vote to stay in as well.

AN: Looking in the front page of some of the Scottish papers today with you brandishing a cane and charging across the classroom –

NS: I think – to be clear Andrew, that's a cartoon. It's not actually me brandishing a cane.

AM: I'm delighted to hear that. But the suggestion is that you're going to go into some kind of confrontation with the EIS, the Scottish teaching union, and you're going a bit Michael Gove. Michaela Gove.

NS: I don't think anything could be further from the truth. I've made no secret in this campaign about my passion for education. I think we've got a good education system in Scotland, we've got great teachers in our schools. But we still have, like many other countries do, a gap in attainment between young people from our deprived areas and those from our most affluent areas. I want to close that gap and I'm putting –

AM: How, how?

NS: well, I'm putting forward proposals in our manifesto to invest significantly more money specifically in tackling the attainment gap, two quarters of a billion pounds over the next parliament. I've put forward proposals to get more of that money directly into the hands of head teachers, best placed, in my view, to decide how to do that in their individual schools. I've put forward proposals for more transparency around the performance of our schools so that we can know what the attainment gap is and measure our progress in closing it.

AM: All of this costs money. Next year you get the power to properly vary income tax rates. Will you put up the top rate of tax to pay for some of these things?

NS: The top rate of tax I would put up if I could be sure it wouldn't lose us revenue. We don't control tax avoidance measures in Scotland.

AM: Sorry, just to jump in there. Is that because you're concerned that people will simply leave the country and move to avoid paying tax?

NS: I've got independent advice that says if the additional rate, which only 17 thousand people in Scotland currently pay. If that goes up and it doesn't go up in the rest of the UK you could see people shift their income perhaps out of Scotland or into capital gains for example. So I would like to put that up but I want to be sure that we won't lose revenue from it. But I'm not proposing to give higher rate tax payers the tax cut that George Osborne is proposing that will allow me, if I'm re-elected to raise an additional at least £1.2 billion in extra revenue over the parliament to invest in health and education and I'm not going to put taxes up for low paid workers, cos I don't think it's fair to transfer the burden of austerity onto their shoulders.

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