ANDREW MARR:  
Now Scotland’s future is much under discussion at the moment. A conference in Edinburgh on Friday organised by the Times newspaper brought together many of the key political players, including the First Minister, Alex Salmond, who of course wants a referendum on independence but not yet. Meanwhile David Cameron is offering more devolution, but it’s not quite clear what that means. To explain all of that, I’m joined by the Scottish Secretary Michael Moore who’s at the Lib Dem conference in Inverness. Good morning, Mr Moore. Thank you for joining us.

MICHAEL MOORE:  
Good morning.

ANDREW MARR:  
Can I start by asking about the timing of this referendum because it’s perfectly clear that the Nationalists are determined that it’s going to happen in the Autumn of 2014 while many other people, including [inaudible] would like to see it happen before that, possibly next year. Who is going to win that tussle?
MICHAEL MOORE:
We’re in a discussion, but I think the point you made about not having it yet strikes most people as a bit odd because the SNP has existed to deliver independence since it was created and we’ve set out how you can actually do this within five hundred days rather than the thousand days that the First Minister thinks that we need. We’re already in the midst of the great, big debate here in Scotland about what our future should be, and I think it’s so important that we should seek to have it as soon as possible. And we’re beginning to see evidence from business that the uncertainty is damaging major companies like Weir Group, SSE making that clear …

ANDREW MARR:
Yes, but …

MICHAEL MOORE:
… so let’s get on with the debate.

ANDREW MARR:
But you can’t as it were force the First Minister of Scotland and the elected Scottish Government to have the election, the referendum before they want to have it, can you?

MICHAEL MOORE:
Well both Scottish governments are showing people their options. We’ve got consultations out at the moment. We know that the Scottish Parliament doesn’t have the power to run the referendum. I want to work with the First Minister to make sure we devolve the powers, so that we can have a legal referendum. But I think it’s important that in the course of that, we get a decisive referendum and that we get it as soon as possible on fair terms. That discussion is ongoing, but I think in the public debate here in Scotland most people want to see it happen sooner rather than later.

ANDREW MARR:
Can I turn to what the Prime Minister said when he was up in Scotland recently? He quite clearly said there would be more devolution of some kind if Scotland did not
vote for independence, but he wasn’t at all clear what that might mean. Can you enlighten us any further?

MICHAEL MOORE:
What the Prime Minister recognised was that the debate on further powers for devolution for Scotland is an ongoing one; it’s a live one that’s been going for generations. And what he made clear is that there won’t be any change to the legal settlement around devolution until after the referendum resolves whether we’re staying in the UK or going our own separate way, but he acknowledged that the debate will continue. And in our own party, we are looking at what those powers might look like under home rule. The Labour Party yesterday said it was looking at that. I think there will be a broad based debate here in Scotland about those powers, and over time we will focus in agree what those should be.

ANDREW MARR:
But to give people some sense of what that might be, the so-called Devo Plus option - I’m sorry about the jargon - would mean the Scottish Parliament being able to raise, indeed having to raise in tax - income tax and possibly corporation tax - the same proportion of money roughly speaking as is spent in Scotland by Scottish institutions: about 60 per cent of the total. Is that the kind of thing that you think is on the table?

MICHAEL MOORE:
Well at the moment through the Scotland Bill, we’re looking to transfer the most significant package of financial powers from London here to Scotland …

ANDREW MARR:
(over) But much less than that.

MICHAEL MOORE:
… that we’ve seen since the Act of Union. Well yes indeed, it’s a smaller package than the kind of things you’re looking at, but that debate about what level of taxation or what types of taxation we should devolve is a lively one. Now as Liberal Democrats, we’re working through our views on that. We’ve got a very ambitious thought about all the different taxes that could be devolved. But we’re not the only
ones in that debate. The Labour Party, the Conservative Party, the trade unions, even the SNP, everybody has a role in that. There isn’t a blueprint there, Andrew. There’s a lot of ideas and, like we always have in Scotland, we’ll have a damn good argument and then hopefully we’ll come to an agreement and then take the powers forward.

**ANDREW MARR:**
So to be clear, you would like more powers going beyond the Scotland Act, the Scotland Bill that’s going through at the moment to be devolved in due course?

**MICHAEL MOORE:**
What we’ve always… If we reflect on the devolution debate over the generations, we’ve always debated the ideas, then we’ve come together, found common ground, consensus has emerged …

**ANDREW MARR:**
*(over)* But you must be able to …

**MICHAEL MOORE:**
… and we deliver on that.

**ANDREW MARR:**
You must be able to tell us whether you would like to see more devolution of powers to Scotland or not?

**MICHAEL MOORE:**
Well as a Liberal Democrat, yes I would …

**ANDREW MARR:**
*(over)* Right, okay.

**MICHAEL MOORE:**
… and we as a party have long argued that. But …
ANDREW MARR:

(over) Now sorry …

MICHAEL MOORE:

(over) … the crucial thing is that we do that by consensus. We need to work with others to ensure we get the consensus and then we deliver it.

ANDREW MARR:

That being the case, it’s quite clear from the polls that the Scottish voters would like at least three options on the agenda when they vote. They would like the status quo to be there, they would like full independence to be there, and they would like some form of extra devolution to be there. If that’s what people want on the ballot paper, why not let them have it?

MICHAEL MOORE:

Actually I think there’s two different things here. I think people want more powers - I absolutely agree with that - and as a Liberal Democrat, I want to see that over time. But quite separate to that, I think most people want the central issue resolved: are we staying in the United Kingdom or not? And that requires a single question that resolves that issue decisively …

ANDREW MARR:

Yes.

MICHAEL MOORE:

… and then we can resolve what those extra powers will look like. We don’t need the referendum to give us permission to have the debate to deliver those new powers. That argument is already underway.

ANDREW MARR:

So on the straightforward union or not argument, who’s going to lead your campaign?

MICHAEL MOORE:
We’re going to have a broad based campaign. I think you know all the different parties - the Labour Party have said Alistair Darling will be part of it, we’ll have senior figures from the Liberal Democrats as part of that too, the Conservatives, and people, most importantly perhaps, beyond politics will all be part of that - because there’s a big positive case to be made for Scotland staying in the United Kingdom and many people who will be there to make it.

**ANDREW MARR:**
Right. Let me ask you about what a local man, Keith O’Brien, the Cardinal, has said this morning about gay marriage. Very strong words, taking on the government over that, and really warning you all that if you persist with that, you’re going to get into a headlong confrontation with the Catholic Church.

**MICHAEL MOORE:**
Well let’s just be clear we’re consulting on this, but two important points: we’re not seeking to change religious marriage and we’re not seeking to impose it on religious groups. What we are saying is that where a couple love each other and they wish to commit to each other for their life, then they should be able to have a civil marriage irrespective of their sexual orientation. So there will be a lively debate, a considered debate, but I think that’s important.

**ANDREW MARR:**
Do you find the Cardinal’s language was inflammatory?

**MICHAEL MOORE:**
I was in the Vatican a couple of weeks ago talking to cardinals and others about the big issues of our time that affect the church. We can have strongly expressed opinions, we need to have a lively public debate, but it’s important we reflect on the central issue which is to ensure that we enable people to have access to civil marriage irrespective of their sexual orientation.

**ANDREW MARR:**
Alright, Michael Moore in Inverness, thank you very much indeed for joining us.
MICHAEL MOORE:
Thank you.

INTERVIEW ENDS