THE ANDREW MARR SHOW

INTERVIEW:

ALEX SALMOND, MSP
FIRST MINISTER OF SCOTLAND
SEPTEMBER 14th 2014

ANDREW MARR:
And now to the first of our big political beasts of the morning. Alex Salmond is with me now. First Minister, good morning. I must ask you, first of all, about this ghastly news about Mr Haines overnight, your reflections on that.

ALEX SALMOND:
Well it’s an act of unspeakable barbarism that we’ve seen. Obviously our condolences go to the family members of David Haines who’ve borne this with such fortitude in recent months.

ANDREW MARR:
And some of the family are of course in Scotland.

ALEX SALMOND:
That’s correct and David himself spent many years in Scotland. We’ll be convening a resilience meeting at 10.30 to look at our specific responsibilities in these matters. We’ve had a number of meetings obviously over the last …
ANDREW MARR:

(over) A resilience meeting? Sorry.

ALEX SALMOND:
Well it’s the Scottish Government’s equivalent of COBRA. We have very specific responsibility – for example the privacy of the family members of David Haines in the next few days is one of our concerns. There’s also a wider responsibility to the communities of Scotland. Very important in these difficult international times that we hold our communities together. I mean, for example, the Muslim community of Scotland isn’t responsible in any shape or form for atrocities or extremism in Iraq or elsewhere.

ANDREW MARR:
So there’s community relations to be thought about?

ALEX SALMOND:
It’s very, very important. I mean just like a few weeks ago the Jewish community of Scotland wasn’t responsible for the policies of the state of Israel. Now thankfully we have strong communities and, therefore, we haven’t had difficulty in that, but it’s something you must have …

ANDREW MARR:
Sure.

ALEX SALMOND:
… total vigilance and the message has to go out of course that any aggravated racial or religious attack will be met with the full force of the law and will not be tolerated.

ANDREW MARR:
What about the other big controversial issue which is actually paying for hostages: the French and other governments pay to get hostages back; the British Government doesn’t. Do you support that?
ALEX SALMOND:
We’ve given total support to the Foreign Office in their efforts to secure (tragically unsuccessful efforts) David Haines’ release as we will give support to any other hostages who may be concerned. So you can’t have a situation where you bow to terrorism, you can’t have a situation where terrorism influences policy and strategy. It would be I think useful if a strategy and a policy were developed because there has been – I’m talking about generalities, not specific to any hostage …

ANDREW MARR:
(over) For a better system of negotiation or what?

ALEX SALMOND:
No in terms of the overall attitude to Iraq. I mean famously the President of the United States says we’re going to develop a strategy. I think a strategy is urgently required.

ANDREW MARR:
Well we’re now in the situation where we don’t really know what the British Government’s attitude is going to be to bombing or not. What’s your view? If there was a Scottish Government with its own air force and so forth, what would your view be?

ALEX SALMOND:
Well I think there’s an urgent requirement to get back under collective action through the United Nations. There is no reason whatsoever to believe that China or Russia or any other country will see their state interests as being anything other than dealing with this sort of extremism and barbarism. There is a real opportunity, I would have thought, for effective international legal action, but it must come in that fashion, and I would urge that to be an urgent consideration to develop a collective response to what is a threat to all humanity.

ANDREW MARR:
Absolutely. Well let’s change gear and go to the politics of Scotland now. It does seem to be really going down to the wire, an absolute whisper of a difference between
the parties according to the opinion polls. Can we be absolutely clear, if you win by 0.001 per cent or 100 votes or 10 votes, is that it – Scotland is independent, you have the negotiations, there’s no going back?

ALEX SALMOND:
Well Harold Wilson famously “One vote’s enough in a referendum”, but we’re not aiming to win by one vote. We’re aiming to achieve a substantial majority if we can. And one of the great assets of the Yes campaign is we don’t regard any section or sector of Scottish society or any geography of Scotland beyond our reach. We tend to take the attitude that there isn’t so much as a No vote in Scotland, there are only deferred Yes’s, and that’s been one of the successes of our campaign.

ANDREW MARR:
But I ask you again - because it looks like it’s going to be very, very close - a Yes is a Yes is a Yes; that’s that?

ALEX SALMOND:
Well that’s the Edinburgh Agreement.

ANDREW MARR:
Yes.

ALEX SALMOND:
If you remember the Prime Minister and I signed the Edinburgh Agreement and that says we’ll have the referendum, it’ll be decided by simple majority, both sides will accept the result. And then crucially, Andrew, the government of Scotland and the government in London will get down and act in the best interests of the people of Scotland and the rest of the United Kingdom having accepted that democratic verdict.

ANDREW MARR:
And so if it’s a No vote by a whisker, again is that it? Do you come back for another referendum in a few years’ time? I mean you’ve talked in the past about it being for a generation. Is that still your view?
ALEX SALMOND:
Yes it is. And by that what I mean is, if you remember, previous – I mean I know you do – constitutional referendum in Scotland. There was one in 1979 and then the next one was 1997. That’s what I mean by a political generation. In my opinion, and it is just my opinion, then this is a once in a generation opportunity for Scotland.

ANDREW MARR:
So you’re talking there about 18 or 20 years gap or so forth.

ALEX SALMOND:
Yeah.

ANDREW MARR:
So can you pledge that Alex Salmond will not bring back another referendum if you don’t win this win?

ALEX SALMOND:
Well that’s my view. My view: this is a once in a generation, perhaps even a once in a lifetime opportunity for Scotland.

ANDREW MARR:
Now if you win on Friday, you presumably have a malt, a round of golf, and then what happens?

ALEX SALMOND:
Well I’ll probably go to the Ryder Cup the following week. I’m not so sure about the malt. Look we’ve got urgent business following a Yes victory on Friday. Firstly I think it’ll be a day of celebration obviously – that Scotland will have achieved something astonishing in democratic politics. But there’s a lot of business to do and the first and urgent business is to bring Scotland together because on Friday, after a Yes vote, there’ll cease to be a Yes campaign and a No campaign. There’ll be a Team Scotland. And I’ve said very clearly that I want into that Team Scotland as many voices as possible – people who have got something to offer and contribute – so you bring the country together.
ANDREW MARR:
(over) And you were talking about … you mentioned Alistair Darling in the debate. To him. Are you talking about people like Gordon Brown and so forth, people who’ve been vociferous opponents of yours over the last few weeks?

ALEX SALMOND:
Well yes I did, you’re quite right about the debate and that’s exactly who I mean. And I’m delighted to say that some people have accepted that invitation already. Alistair Carmichael, the sitting Secretary of State for Scotland, has said quite clearly following a Yes vote he’ll resign and join Team Scotland. I welcome that. And Johann Lamont, the Labour Leader in Scotland, has made indications in a similar fashion. So I want that Team Scotland …

ANDREW MARR:
(over) So you bring together a team. Do you know roughly speaking who’s in the team and how big it is and they then go to negotiate the terms of separation with London?

ALEX SALMOND:
Yes I do and there’s three aspects to this, Andrew. One is we need and have recruited specialism in a variety of fields, some extraordinary people with great things to contribute - nobody has said no, incidentally – particular specialists both from Scotland and indeed international. Secondly, of course, there’s the community of Scotland, the third sector of Scotland, the STUC, the small business organisations, the charities of Scotland, the voluntary sector. Why? Because they have a particular detail over a range of things that will be negotiated, which is going to be very important. And then, thirdly, there’s that spectrum of politics to bring the country together. So you’ll expect from me on Friday under the circumstances of a Yes vote – and I’m presuming absolutely nothing – in the circumstances of a Yes vote you’ll get from me on Friday a strong and early indication about how Team Scotland moves into action and brings the country together.
ANDREW MARR:
And in terms of the negotiation, the most important thing is presumably still the currency because as you have your argument with George Osborne or Scotland has its argument with George Osborne about the terms of keeping the pound or not, there will be a period clearly of a certain amount of indecision. We know what capital does when indecision is around. It flees. It could be very damaging for the Scottish economy if this goes on for months and months and months, couldn’t it?

ALEX SALMOND:
No, I think we should have very early decisions. But remember, Andrew, for the 18 months following the referendum … Scotland has the referendum next Thursday, but for 18 months then in terms of monetary markets the Bank of England remains in control. And the Governor of the Bank of England has been very clear and explicit about this – that he is responsible for financial stability over that period, a very important point to make - but quite clearly it’s in everyone’s interest to have the earliest possible decisions on this matter and that’s what we’ll do. And my confidence is that you know once the smoke of the referendum has cleared the field, then on Friday everybody has an interest in following the terms of the Edinburgh Agreement and sitting down and in its own words, in the words of that agreement, acting in the best interests of Scotland and the rest of the United Kingdom. So I think you’ll get a different attitude – perhaps not on Friday but over next weekend – in terms of how we bring this together.

ANDREW MARR:
Now you mentioned the Bank of England and of course under your plan Scotland will still be under the thumb of the Bank of England – basically based in London, full of English bankers, under the thumb of the Conservative Government.

ALEX SALMOND:
And founded by a Scot.

ANDREW MARR:
And founded a Scot indeed. But nonetheless it’ll be … it’s basically an English institution.
ALEX SALMOND:

(over) As Mervyn … No well come on, on the contrary. As Mervyn King pointed out memorably in front of a Commons Committee, the last Governor of the Bank of England, the Bank of England may have been called the Bank of England, founded by a Scot, but is the Bank for England, Scotland, for Wales and Northern Ireland, as Mervyn King said. And under our plan, of course, it would have joint responsibility. It would be a shared central bank …

ANDREW MARR:

(over) And do you accept their fiscal rules and their rules over spending and borrowing and so forth because that would …

ALEX SALMOND:

Sorry, the Bank of England doesn’t set fiscal rules. There will be a sustainability agreement …

ANDREW MARR:

(over) There has to be a different framework.

ALEX SALMOND:

(over) There will be a sustainability agreement between the governments in terms of both, for example, borrowing levels and debt levels. We set that out in our proposals. The Bank of England’s responsible for monetary policy no more than the Chancellor of the Exchequer controls interest rates because he doesn’t. The Bank of England operates as a operationally independent central bank and would be a shared central bank under our proposals. And that I expect very soon after next Friday when, as I say, the referendum incentive to provide obstacles in the path of Scotland will be dissipated. Then we’ll have commonsense agreements for common currency.

ANDREW MARR:

Mr Draghi has said in terms of … We had a slight passage of arms about Europe last time we spoke and I want to return to the European subject if we may. That for Scotland to share the pound without a fiscal compact would be against the rules of the
European Union. Is he right about that?

ALEX SALMOND:
No, it will be required in terms of the ………… in certain institutions you require monetary authority, you require a financial conduct authority. These are actually the rules. But yes, we did share some dispute about this, but I was interested in today’s papers, the article from Joseph Stiglitz, probably the most famous economist on the planet at the present moment, who makes two very important points: one, the success of small European nations, and says look in the land of Adam Smith no-one should doubt Scotland’s ability or economic competence; and also that in this particular situation then a shared currency is a very, very viable and a commonsense thing to do.

ANDREW MARR:
When it comes to Europe, are you still of the view that Scotland doesn’t need to reapply to Europe; that Scotland is already a member of the European Union post-independence?

ALEX SALMOND:
Well my view is the negotiations can be completed within 18 months. And of course that was backed up …

ANDREW MARR:
(over) Do you start from the outside coming in or are you inside already?

ALEX SALMOND:
No we’re inside because we’re inside in these 18 months, Andrew, between …

ANDREW MARR:
(over) Right, so you don’t have to apply for membership?

ALEX SALMOND:
Well we’re inside and we obviously have to negotiate our position and that requires the agreement of other European countries. But why am I confident about 18 months?
I mean let’s remember that …

**ANDREW MARR:**
*(over)* It’s a very short timescale for a lot of complicated negotiations.

**ALEX SALMOND:**
Well I was going to tell you because Professor James Crawford, who was actually paid by the United Kingdom government – a distinguished international lawyer – when he was asked about this, he said that was a realistic timescale.

**ANDREW MARR:**
So you really think that all the details of the separation can be accomplished in 18 months – military, financial, economic and all the rest of it?

**ALEX SALMOND:**
*(over)* Let’s … let’s just for the sake of analysts call it independence. I mean the Speaker of the House of Commons actually stopped things being called “separation” in House of Commons documents, so let’s just for the sake of argument call it independence. I mean I could quote legal opinion you know to the end of this programme and I could quote expert opinion, but can I just answer this in four figures, which is 1, 20, 25 and 60. One is Scotland’s percentage of the European Union’s population – 5 million against 500 million.

**ANDREW MARR:**
Yeah.

**ALEX SALMOND:**
Twenty is our share of the fish stocks. Twenty-five is our renewable energy potential and 60 per cent is the conventional oil reserves of the whole of the European Union in Scottish waters.

**ANDREW MARR:**
Alright.
ALEX SALMOND:
Now I don’t think that anyone in the rest of Europe is wanting to exclude fish rich, energy rich, renewable rich, oil rich Scotland. I think that is a ridiculous proposition.

ANDREW MARR
Have you spoken though to the Spanish and the Italians and the French and the Belgians, all of whom who’ve expressed some worries in private in the past about separatist groups and so forth?

ALEX SALMOND:
Well the answer’s yes …

ANDREW MARR:
(over) You have?

ALEX SALMOND:
… to all of these points, Andrew. Yes.

ANDREW MARR:
Okay well that’s very interesting. Can we move onto another huge issue I think for an awful lot of people? You’ve mentioned the NHS again and again and again over the last couple of weeks. Isn’t it true that the biggest threat to the NHS in Scotland or in England is this new trade investment pact being carried out between the EU and the Americans, which will allow American companies to come in and sue the Scottish Government if you didn’t allow the privatisation of the NHS in Scotland?

ALEX SALMOND:
I think it’s a very substantial issue, which is exactly why we’ve been looking to exclude it from the trade agreement, refused currently by the United Kingdom government, as one of the ministers said in the BBC yesterday. But can I just say it’s an argument for independence because if NHS remains in that trade agreement, then as long as a state does not have a private sector of any substance then they’re able to protect the public health service. The danger to the NHS in Scotland coming from that
agreement would be if there’s privatisation within the UK as a state. Then of course your argument would be correct.

ANDREW MARR:

(over) But the EU …

ALEX SALMOND:

(over) The Scottish NHS … No the Scottish NHS could then be under attack. It’s actually, Andrew, a very substantial reason for being independent.

ANDREW MARR:

(over) But the EU … Sorry. The EU, which you want to join, is determined to get this pact. How are you going to move into the EU and stop them, get them to exclude the health services?

ALEX SALMOND:

Well can I try again? Look the position is if you take the view that you don’t want a substantial private sector in your health service, then you’re allowed to do that even under the terms of the agreement. It’s where you’ve opened up your health service.

ANDREW MARR:

Alright.

ALEX SALMOND:

And if it’s opened up in England, it’s another reason why if we stay within the United Kingdom, if we vote No on Thursday, then it does open up the National Health Services in Scotland to potential privatisation. In today’s papers one of the most interesting declarationS is from Harry Burns who recently retired as the Chief Medical Officer of Scotland, who writes eloquently not just on this issue but on the general issue of how the National Health Service would be better if we take authority and control …

ANDREW MARR:

(over) One more theme …
ALEX SALMOND:
(over) … into Scottish hands.

ANDREW MARR:
Okay one more theme before we run out of time. You’ve made it very clear yourself that you support the Queen as head of state.

ALEX SALMOND:
I do.

ANDREW MARR:
You were asked on Mum’s Net does that mean that the Hanoverian Family, the Hanoverian succession will carry on in an independent Scotland. Why shouldn’t an independent Scotland be able to choose her own head of state?

ALEX SALMOND:
Well just a little bit of history. I remember my answer on Mum’s Net, I pointed out that Scotland and England had the same monarch for almost 100 years and we’re independent countries, Andrew. And I’m quite certain …

ANDREW MARR:
(over) A lot of your supporters are Republicans and would like to see a Republican Scotland.

ALEX SALMOND:
Well I’m sure there’s quite a few Republicans in England as well, but the balance of Scottish opinion is very substantially we want Her Majesty the Queen to be Queen of Scots and her successors.

ANDREW MARR:
And her successors. So can you be absolutely clear there will not be a referendum on the Scottish monarchy after the Scottish vote for independence if it happens?
ALEX SALMOND:
Well the poll that showed so much consternation last week, the Yougov poll that you were asking the Chancellor about and looked quite overwrought about last week, also asked the question on the monarchy. I’m sure a very, very substantial majority of people in Scotland want to see Her Majesty the Queen as Queen of Scots and I’m sure under these circumstances she’ll be …

ANDREW MARR:
(over) And King Charles III and so forth?

ALEX SALMOND:
And she’d be proud to serve. And King … Prince Charles and the Duke of Rothesay is of course …

ANDREW MARR:
He would be King Charles III of Scotland?

ALEX SALMOND:
… is greatly respected and loved in Scotland and of course reciprocates that with his love and respect for Scotland.

ANDREW MARR:
And that is a pledge from you?

ALEX SALMOND:
Well I’m First Minister of Scotland and that is my judgement – that we want to see Her Majesty the Queen as Queen of Scots – and I think that’s a fantastic title and a fantastic prospect.

ANDREW MARR:
Alex Salmond, thank you very much for joining us this morning. Thank you.