THE ANDREW MARR SHOW
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INTERVIEW WITH: MICHAEL MOORE.MP. SECRETARY OF STATE FOR SCOTLAND

ANDREW MARR: The Secretary of State for Scotland, Michael Moore is here in the studio. Welcome. You were at the centre of these negotiations in Scotland. First of all, are we right that this agreement will be unveiled and signed tomorrow. There isn’t a last minute hitch; the deal is done.

MICHAEL MOORE: I have reached agreement with the Deputy First Minister, Nicola Sturgeon, which has gone to the Prime Minister and the First Minister and we will sign that in Edinburgh tomorrow. I think the context for this is very, very important because what we are now setting up is to allow people in Scotland to make the most important political decision in three hundred years; the choice as to whether or not we stay in the United Kingdom or go our own separate way. I think that, you know, the challenge that has been placed to both governments in the last few months was to ensure that we get a referendum which is legal, that’s fair, that’s decisive and that is made in Scotland, and I think when people see the detail of what we announce tomorrow, they’ll see that we have achieved that.

ANDREW MARR: And it’s going to be a straightforward ‘in’ or ‘out’ question, there won’t be a further devolution max question, that’s something that was very important to David Cameron, but when it came to the timing, Alex Salmond wanted in 2014, because it’s the anniversary of the Battle of Bannockburn and he wants to be able to frame the question, and he wants sixteen and seventeen year olds to be able to vote on it. On all of those things, he’s won and you’ve lost and Michael Forsyth says it’s been a walk-over.

MICHAEL MOORE: Well, Michael and others have not yet seen the detail at all, so I think it’s premature for anybody to be reaching any views on that. I have and I’ve seen that we’ll unveil the details tomorrow. I think people can have confidence that when they see that agreement, it will ensure that both governments’ sets of objectives have been achieved. We’ve had some very constructive engagement here so you know, what we will achieve...

(interjection)

ANDREW MARR: You don’t think that Alex Salmond has run rings round you.

MICHAEL MOORE: Not at all because what we were looking to ensure was that we had a referendum that was legal. Bear in mind, eighteen months ago when he won his historic victory in the Scottish parliament election, won a majority there, suddenly there was this issue, this manifesto pledge to honour and we are helping him to do that because the Scottish parliament hasn’t had the powers – let’s make it legal, let’s make it fair and I think that goes to the heart of the rules of engagement which again will be clear tomorrow. Let’s
make sure it’s decisive because we need to make sure that once we’ve decided this, then it has been resolved.

ANDREW MARR: Why is it going to happen in 2014? David Cameron said again and again that he wanted it to happen more quickly than that.

MICHAEL MOORE: I think that you know, there are a lot of good arguments for saying things should happen sooner rather than later – the debate is there. But what we are agreeing is that details of this process should be made in Scotland. It is something I said to the House of Commons back in January, something the Prime Minister has regularly said as well. What this will allow us to do is having sorted out the process, actually move on to the big issues, put up in lights, the key issues that are now at stake, which frankly at the moment are buried away.

ANDREW MARR: Sure, I mean David Cameron is quite clear; he didn’t want to wait eighteen months and it gives Alex Salmond more time to build the case for independence, so he will be pleased with that.

MICHAEL MOORE: Hang on, I’m very happy for us to take whatever length of time it requires to thoroughly investigate all these different issues but if you look at the key issues about the economy, about our security, about our place in the world, all of these issues – there’s a very strong, positive case for Scotland to be part of the United Kingdom. We’re actually better together and we’ll be weaker apart.

ANDREW MARR: Okay. Explain to us how you’re going to explain to sixteen and seventeen year olds, who are going to get the vote for a Scottish referendum, a huge question for their country and the future of their country and the future of Britain, but are then not going to be allowed to vote in the next General Election. That’s a bizarre position isn’t it?

MICHAEL MOORE: Hang on; I’m afraid you’re going to have to wait for the detail tomorrow about how this is going to be formulated, how the detail of this will be sorted out. As a Liberal Democrat, I’m very comfortable with the idea of sixteen and seventeen year olds participating in referendums and in elections. I’d like to see that for all elections. What I recognise is there isn’t a consensus about that at Westminster. What the debate will enable in the future is to work out how that plays through.

ANDREW MARR: But you are a leading Cabinet member, is the government’s position, moving towards sixteen and seventeen year olds getting the vote generally?

MICHAEL MOORE: I have just said that there is no consensus on this at Westminster. As a Liberal Democrat, I’m perfectly comfortable, I think it’s right that sixteen and seventeen year olds should have the vote. I recognise not just my Coalition partners but many in parliament don’t agree with that. We’re not creating any precedents here. I would point out however that in Scotland, when the Scottish parliament has had referenda in the past on
health boards and the like, they have set the franchise themselves and included sixteen and seventeen year olds.

ANDREW MARR: None the less, you must accept that if it’s going to happen in Scotland in for this, this is an issue which is going to become much more live and hard to push away for other elections, including Westminster elections. This is back on the table as a pretty big change for Westminster too, surely?

MICHAEL MOORE: I anticipate there will be a lively debate about lots of the detail about this process but I also am delighted that we’re now at a process, an historic moment where we’ll have agreements between the UK government and the Scottish government that allows us to get on with this referendum because frankly, the big issues about what’s special about the United Kingdom, what is important for us – none of that has really been terribly well examined. We, as Unionists have been guilty in the past of taking a lot of that for granted.

ANDREW MARR: You’ve got to get out there and make the argument. What about the question of some sort of fresh hold or margin, which has to be reached before independence is triggered. It’s such a big thing that plenty of people argue that you know it shouldn’t be a straight forward numerical victory of those voting, but there should be some other hurdle put in there.

MICHAEL MOORE: I’ve never at any stage in this process heard anybody suggest there should be a hurdle. If I may say so, you in the past have studied Scottish politics very, very closely, you saw what a hurdle did … (interjection)

ANDREW MARR: It goes back to Cunningham and 1979 and and all of that, yes(overlaps)

MICHAEL MOORE: …this has to be a straightforward, fair process. A framework of rules that are accepted by all sides. That will allow us to focus on the big issues of the economy, about Scotland’s place in the world and how secure we are.

ANDREW MARR: In your waters, is Scotland going to vote for independence?

MICHAEL MOORE: I’m very confident that Scotland will stay part of the United Kingdom. The latest polling is very clear on that. A 25% lead for those who want to stay part of the UK. I’m confident, because when people examine our opportunities in the economy, how much more secure we are as part of the UK, they routinely and regularly return to saying, let’s stay part of the UK.

ANDREW MARR: All right, Michael Moore for now, big day in Edinburgh tomorrow, thank you very much indeed.

MICHAEL MOORE: Thank you.

END OF INTERVIEW WITH MICHAEL MOORE