ANDREW MARR:  
Now at the SNP conference in Perth yesterday, the party’s new leader Nicola Sturgeon launched a blistering attack on Labour in Scotland.

CLIP: NICOLA STURGEON  
Think about how much more we could win for Scotland from a Westminster Labour government if they had to depend on SNP votes. *(audience laughter)* They’d have to deliver real powers for our parliament, they’d have to rethink the endless austerity that impoverishes our children. And, conference, hear me loud and clear when I say this: they’d have to think again about putting a new generation of Trident nuclear weapons on the River Clyde. *(applause)*

ANDREW MARR:  
Now Labour are currently without a leader north of the border; they’re choosing a new figure next month. And Neil Findlay is a Member of the Scottish Parliament and backed by a host of Scottish trade unions. He’s here in our Glasgow studio. Welcome Mr Findlay.
NEIL FINDLAY:
Good morning, Andrew.

ANDREW MARR:
If you win this contest, how much power do you think that you would have personally to move Labour in Scotland a bit to the left as the country seems to want?

NEIL FINDLAY:
Could I say first of all, Andrew, it was very interesting to hear Nicola’s speech yesterday. I actually agree with her on Trident: I don’t think we should be renewing Trident nuclear weapons. But the whole issue about powers is around what you do with those powers. There’s no point in devolving powers if you’re not prepared to use them, and I don’t think that the SNP government have used the powers that they have already to best effect.

ANDREW MARR:
But there was a great argument about whether Labour in Scotland was simply a branch office, as the former leader said, of the London party. Do you think you would have real autonomy and influence in Scotland to move Labour in Scotland in the direction you wanted rather than taking your orders from Ed Miliband in London?

NEIL FINDLAY:
Well the party has to make that decision and have real autonomy in Scotland. There was a report produced a few years back by Jim Murphy and Sarah Boyack, a very good report, and we need to implement that report and give the leader autonomy over the Scottish Labour Party.

ANDREW MARR:
Now you said you agreed with Nicola Sturgeon on Trident. On issues like Trident – a very important issue – on taxation and so forth, do you think you would be able to follow your own instincts in Scotland without reporting back to London the whole time? Would you be able to have in effect a different Labour Party in Scotland than the Labour Party dominated from London?
NEIL FINDLAY:
Yeah, I think the party has to have more autonomy over policy. Over policies like you know we should be able to take the railways back into common ownership in Scotland. I think we should do that. I think there’s opportunities for us to, for example, bring PFI contracts back in-house. These are issues that the Scottish Labour Party could make decisions over and should make decisions over. And if that’s different from the Labour Party at a UK level, then so be it if that is in the best interests of Scotland.

ANDREW MARR:
Is it plausible to have as it were a more socialist Scotland inside a union?

NEIL FINDLAY:
Of cour…

ANDREW MARR:
I’m thinking, for instance, about income tax. People can move back across the border and so forth. It’s more difficult.

NEIL FINDLAY:
Well I believe in the principle of progressive taxation and I think many people, not just in the Labour Party but across society, believe in that. The issue of social justice and issues around jobs and housing and employment were the main themes that came through in the referendum and we have to respond to that very positively with a radical Labour programme based on the issues that people were raising during the referendum.

ANDREW MARR:
But I could see room for terrible problems and arguments if you in Scotland were saying, for instance, we are going to get rid of Trident, we’re not going to have a new generation of Trident, we agree with that, and the London Labour Party doesn’t. How do you resolve that?

NEIL FINDLAY:
Well you know that would be a decision that you know the different component parts of the Labour Party across the UK would make. If we have …

ANDREW MARR:
(over) Well which part is what I’m asking?

NEIL FINDLAY:
It’s alrea… Andrew, it’s already Labour Party policy in Scotland to oppose renewal of Trident. It has been for some time.

ANDREW MARR:
Yeah, but the question is you might have … Would you agree, for instance, at the moment that Scotland has moved a bit to the left of the rest of the UK, so you would have a more left wing Labour Party in Scotland than you would have in England?

NEIL FINDLAY:
Undoubtedly the views of the public have shifted. I think the issues that I’m putting across about building social houses, about having the devolved power to implement the living wage in Scotland – all of these issues that I’ve been raising during my campaign are mainstream issues in Scotland and they were the issues that people were discussing with me day in, day out during the referendum.

ANDREW MARR:
And do you think that’s why perhaps Ed Miliband is so unpopular in Scotland – down to 15 per cent in one poll?

NEIL FINDLAY:
Well your poll today tells us that we are ahead for the General Election.

ANDREW MARR:
(over) That’s a UK poll.

NEIL FINDLAY:
Well I saw Ed Miliband up close, out engaging with the public during the referendum, and the reaction was exceptionally good.
ANDREW MARR:
So you could have a policy in Scotland – as, for instance, on Trident or income tax or whatever – that was different from the policy in London, and you could sustain that you think?

NEIL FINDLAY:
Well if we have devolved powers over these areas and if we have devolved decision making at a Scottish Labour Party level where we can make our own policy, then of course we could.

ANDREW MARR:
What’s your view about devolving taxation to the Scottish Parliament? Do you think they should have the power over income tax, for instance?

NEIL FINDLAY:
Well the principle that I’m working to is whatever powers we get should not make Scotland worse off. We have to ensure that we get a good deal for Scotland. I think we have to be careful on income tax, so that we don’t end up with a worse deal.

ANDREW MARR:
There’s an awful lot going to rest on your shoulders if you do lead Labour in Scotland because the polls at the moment suggest the SNP are going to take you to pieces and that we could have an SNP group of twenty or thirty MPs down south after the next election, as Nicola Sturgeon said, calling the shots. Does that prospect frighten you?

NEIL FINDLAY:
No, I don’t think that’s going to happen because I think the territory that I want us to get onto – where we actually say that we’re going to build 50,000 social houses, where we’re going to have the power over the living wage, to introduce the living wage, where we can talk about no more tuition fees for students – all of those things I think are very popular and I think they will bring people back to the Labour Party.
ANDREW MARR:
Neil Findlay, a big battle for you ahead whatever happens. Thank you very much indeed for joining us this morning.

NEIL FINDLAY:
Thank you.

INTERVIEW ENDS