NICOLA STURGEON

ANDREW MARR SHOW
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AM: Good morning to you.
NS: Good morning, Andrew.
AM: So this is a very important moment for Scotland as well as the rest of the UK. You’ve been watching David Cameron’s negotiation. What did you make of it?
NS: Well, I think the negotiation and the outcome of the negotiation is somewhat immaterial. If like me, you’re passionate about remaining within the European Union, nothing that came out of the negotiation is going to change your mind. Likewise, if you’re absolutely determined to vote to leave the European Union I don’t think there’s anything there that’s going to shift your opinion. I guess, if I’m concerned at all about the negotiation it’s that those people who are undecided, who have been encouraged by David Cameron to look at the outcome to base their opinion on will be disappointed by it. Because it didn’t live up to many of the expectations that he himself created. And that for me is all the more reason why it’s time to get away from the narrow issues that were involved in that negotiation onto the big picture case. Why is it better for us to remain within the European Union? That’s the campaign that I look forward to taking part in.

AM: And if an independent Scotland was at the EU table you would want, presumably, a somewhat different EU than David Cameron does.
NS: Well, David Cameron and I will both cast our votes to stay in the European Union on the 23rd of June, but I strongly suspect we’ve reached that conclusion for very different reasons. David Cameron seems to want an EU where the social and employment protections that it brings are watered down. For me, these are parts of the reasons for being in the EU. And actually one of the
reasons why it would worry me greatly if the UK was to come out of the European Union is that we’d then have David Cameron’s majority Conservative government unfettered when it came to employment rights or social protection. So we have a different vision of what the European Union should be, and you know, perhaps in a referendum that’s no bad thing because we’ll be able to appeal to different strands of opinion.

AM: You’re going to get almost certainly new powers over aspects of fiscal policy in Scotland that would enable you to top up, as it were, benefits for migrants who came into Scotland. Would you do that?

NS: Well, you know, we are in, as you know, the midst of a discussion about the fiscal arrangements that will go around that, so that’s not settled yet. But you know I’ve got no proposals to do that. We’ll put forward our proposals for the use of new tax and welfare powers in the run-up to the Scottish parliament elections. I, you know, I think I take a different view in terms of the debate about migration to David Cameron. Yes, of course people are concerned about migration, but European Union migration into the UK, and the evidence shows this, actually has a net economic benefit rather than an economic detriment. So we take a different view there. But I think it’s important that the alternative view is heard in this debate.

AM: Sure. Do you think what’s being done to EU migrants into this country is fair to them?

NS: I do think when you start going down this road; I think the danger is the freedom of movement that is one of the underpinning principles of the European Union starts to be fragmented. And I’m sure David Cameron would be one of the first to complain if people from the UK who had migrated to other member states of the European Union – and there are many of them – started to be discriminated against. But, you know, what has come out of the negotiation, I don’t think really adds up to all
that much and I don’t think it’s going to change very many opinions, apart from, as I say, those who are undecided. People who have been encouraged by David Cameron all along to look at the outcome and what he has delivered. It hasn’t lived up to what he said some months ago.

AM: Wasn’t a big enough rabbit. Now, can I ask you about something else we’ve talked about before but is now much more on the horizon, which is what happens if the UK overall votes to leave the EU but Scotland doesn’t? Would that definitely trigger a Scottish referendum?

NS: Almost certainly. I think that would be the demand of people in Scotland. Now, let me say very clearly, and I’ve said this to you before and I’ll say it again today, I hope this scenario doesn’t arise.

AM: I understand yes.

NS: It’s not the scenario I want to see arise. I hope the UK as a whole votes to stay in the EU for a whole variety of different reasons. But if you cast your mind back to the Scottish referendum, and I would say to the IN campaign in this referendum, don’t make the same mistakes the NO campaign made in the Scottish referendum by being miserable and negative about everything. But if you cast your mind back to that referendum, the NO campaign then said that if Scotland voted Yes our membership of the European Union would be at risk. Now, that was rubbish then, but that was a key argument. If a couple of years later we find ourselves having voted to stay in the European Union, being taken out against our will, I do think there are many people, including people who voted No in 2014 who would say the only way to guarantee our EU membership is to be independent, and that I think is inescapable.

AM: You presumably don’t want this to happen, because among other things, if Scotland was out of the EU as part of Britain and then separated from the UK and went back into the EU, we would
then have to have a border between Scotland and England, because England would be outside the EU.

NS: There would be a number of aspects of that that would require to be debated in the context. But you know, people in Scotland, and I take nothing for granted about Scottish opinion in this referendum, although all the polls would suggest there will be a significant vote to stay in the European Union – but I think Scotland’s always seen itself as a European country. My view, as you know, is that we’d be far better served as an independent member state amongst the other independent member states. But I think if we were to be taken out of the European Union when we had expressly said we wanted to stay in, then that would trigger a demand for a second independence referendum. I know people – I’m getting anecdotal here – but I personally know people who voted No in 2014 who were passionate in their No vote in 2014 who would change their minds if we were in this scenario. And that I think is just something that is inevitable. But as I started out by saying, I’ll be campaigning for Scotland to vote to stay in. I’m not sure if anybody else in the rest of the UK will want to listen to my opinion, but if they do I’ll be seeking to persuade people across the UK to stay in as well.

AM: And I introduced you at the start by saying that you weren’t very often on the same side as David Cameron. You are this time. Would he be welcome in Scotland? Would you share a platform with him?

NS: I’m not sure it would help his cause too much. I think he should perhaps think twice about that. I remember during the independence referendum we used to be overjoyed every time he made a foray into Scotland to campaign there, because we thought it would actually sell votes for the Yes campaign. So you know, I’ll be making to case, I’ll be making a positive case, but as I said earlier on, my reasons for wanting to be in the EU I guess are rather different to David Cameron’s, and in many respects. So
perhaps if we appeal to our own strands of opinion, then we will maximise the chances of a vote to stay in.

AM: A friendly warning there from Nicola Sturgeon. Thank you so much for joining us this morning.

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