ANDREW MARR:
Now it’s the big paradox of the Scottish referendum. The SNP, despite being on the losing side, has bounced back all the stronger. Its membership has surged and its new leader, Nicola Sturgeon, had no problem selling out rock star concert venues on her recent countrywide tour. She is somebody the Scots know pretty well by now, but not the rest of the UK. Perhaps that’s something that we can put right this morning because she’s here. Welcome Nicola Sturgeon.

NICOLA STURGEON:
Thank you very much. Nice to be here.

ANDREW MARR:
Now one of the things that may happen after the next election – we’re talking about mays and possibles of course at this stage – is there could be a Labour Party that depends upon the SNP for some kind of support, probably not a coalition but support from the outside as it were. And you have laid out what you would want in return – as it were your red line - so maybe we could go through them to start with. The first thing is a stronger home rule deal and that would mean in specific terms an end to the veto by British ministers over changes to welfare for a start.
NICOLA STURGEON:
Absolutely. I mean we saw in the proposals that were published by the UK government towards the end of last week that yes new powers are being proposed to be transferred to the Scottish Parliament, but in key respects Westminster is to hold a veto over what the Scottish Parliament can and can’t do. One specific example is around the bedroom tax. Overwhelming support in Scotland, as I’m sure there is in other parts of the UK, to abolish the bedroom tax. The Scottish government would nominally have that power but would require the agreement of the Westminster government to do that. That’s not real home rule.

ANDREW MARR:
So an end to the veto and greater borrowing powers as well?

NICOLA STURGEON:
Well I want full fiscal autonomy for the Scottish government. I want us to be responsible for raising our own revenues and deciding how those revenues are spent. But you know I think what is really important – if we’re going to be told that we’ve got home rule, then the proposals really have to live up to that – and what the UK government is proposing right now would leave something like …

ANDREW MARR:
(over) You think it’s not enough?

NICOLA STURGEON:
Well it would leave 70 per cent of tax setting in the hands of Westminster and round about 85 per cent of the social security budget would continue to be determined at Westminster. That sounds to me like continued Westminster rule, not the home rule that was promised during the referendum.

ANDREW MARR:
So if I’m Ed Miliband and I say to you, “Nicola, what do you want?”, the first thing you say is we have to rewrite the settlement document?
NICOLA STURGEON:
Well what I would be saying is I want the promises that were made in advance of the referendum … If you recall those frantic few days of the referendum campaign when we had UK party leaders coming to Scotland to promise the earth in terms of more powers – the vow as it was called – now I want that vow to be honoured and those promises to be delivered.

ANDREW MARR:
Now one other thing you’ve said is that you want an end to austerity economics with the next government. Now that implies to me that you want an end to the deep cuts that all the main parties down here seem to have signed up to in spending terms. You can only do that if you allow tax rises is the other side of it, isn’t it?

NICOLA STURGEON:
Well no because I think what we …

ANDREW MARR:
It’s got to be one or the other.

NICOLA STURGEON:
Well there are different choices that I think should be made and again we’re giving a very specific example of one of those big choices that we think should be made differently. You know where we’ve got Labour and the Tories joining forces, as they did a couple of weeks ago to vote for £30 billion of additional cuts, we’ve also got those two parties joining forces to say that they want to commit £100 billion to new Trident nuclear weapons. Now the choice I would make is let’s not renew Trident because, as well as the principled opposition to nuclear weapons, I think at a time of austerity it’s the wrong spending choice to make; and instead make that money available, as the SNP would want to see, to health and to education. Those are the first calls I would want to see on that money.

ANDREW MARR:
There is a classic problem with Trident though, isn’t there – forgive me for interrupting – because it’s clear the SNP wants an end to Trident? There’s a lot of
Labour MPs who’d like an end to Trident too.

**NICOLA STURGEON:**
Indeed.

**ANDREW MARR:**
However, if you look at the House of Commons, I see no way at the moment – even with a big SNP involvement there – that you’d be able ...

**NICOLA STURGEON:**
(over) Well I don’t …

**ANDREW MARR:**
(over) … to get that through the House of Commons because the Tories will always vote for Trident, a lot of Labour MPs will, quite a lot of Liberal Democrats. You wouldn’t be able to get the end of Trident through the House of Commons.

**NICOLA STURGEON:**
(over) You might. You might and I hope this would be the case – that Labour would take the opportunity of taking a different view and a different decision on Trident. You know I’ll put my cards on the table. I’m opposed to nuclear weapons in principle, but …

**ANDREW MARR:**
(over) And you think you could persuade Ed Miliband to change tack?

**NICOLA STURGEON:**
Well I know that there are many Labour supporters, traditional Labour supporters in Scotland who don’t support Trident and who would like to see Labour take the sensible decision on Trident. Now one of the things I think SNP MPs can do in the House of Commons … You know Scotland’s experience of general elections is either we end up with Conservative governments we haven’t voted for or we end up with Labour governments that very quickly disappoint like Tony Blair’s Labour government did. Now SNP MPs down in Westminster speaking up for Scotland can, I
think, force better decisions on some big issues that really matter. And you know if you look at polls in Scotland just now - as well as showing a substantial SNP lead, they show that the most popular outcome in Scotland of the General Election is a Labour government dependent on SNP support because I think people recognise that would lead to better decisions that were not just perhaps in the interests of Scotland but more progressive decisions for the whole UK.

ANDREW MARR:
So for that to happen, for that to work and be stable, SNP MPs would have to be able to vote on tax issues for the English? There’s no way round that, is there?

NICOLA STURGEON:
Well as long as we’re funded in Scotland as we are just now, of course SNP MPs would vote on tax issues because those decisions affect the budget of the Scottish Parliament. Similarly with …

ANDREW MARR:
(over) But you can understand the irritation in England if the Scottish Parliament has control over its own fiscal and taxation affairs …

NICOLA STURGEON:
(over) But we … but that’s …

ANDREW MARR:
(over) … but Scottish MPs are saying to English voters we’re going to change your taxation in this regard or that regard.

NICOLA STURGEON:
But full fiscal control for the Scottish Parliament is not yet being proposed. Now I actually think where you have matters that are purely English matters, that have no impact on Scotland, I think there is a very, very strong case for English votes for English law. Scottish MPs shouldn’t be voting on issues like that. But issues of tax don’t fall into that category …
ANDREW MARR:

(over) But that covers tax and big spending issues. You mentioned the National Health Service.

NICOLA STURGEON:
Well if you take health, for example, we know – because of the Barnett formula – that decisions on the English health service, of those decisions’ impact on the budget of the English health service, then that has a direct knock-on effect to Scotland’s budget, and that’s why it would be perfectly legitimate in those circumstances for SNP MPs to vote on matters like that. Now we will take these decisions based on what we think is in the best interests of Scotland, but I would also want to see SNP MPs being a constructive and progressive force in the House of Commons, looking to make alliances for progressive politics - where we can, working with parties like Plaid Cymru, parties like the Green Party, to be a progressive force. I think the Westminster establishment really needs some more progressive voices at its heart.

ANDREW MARR:

And to be absolutely clear, part of that progressive movement would be voting on taxation and voting on big spending decisions which affect England?

NICOLA STURGEON:
Well if they affect Scotland. And both of the examples you’ve given me there, of course votes on these matters in the House of Commons have a direct impact on how much money Scotland and the Scottish Parliament and the Scottish Government get to spend. But what we’d be doing, we’d be voting in the interests of Scotland. And that’s what SNP MPs are first and foremost there to do: to make sure Scotland’s voice is heard in a way that all too often in the past hasn’t been the case.

ANDREW MARR:
Let me ask you what might be and I hope doesn’t come across as a rude question, it’s not meant as a rude question, but about your bona fides with a big SNP group supporting the Labour Party because you could see a situation in which Labour governs (with your help) relatively successfully for a while – you know taxes go up but not too much, the bedroom tax is got rid of and so forth and things bumble on –
and in five years’ time there is no great sense of crisis, there is no great belief that Scotland has to leave this arrangement, which would not support … you know would not serve the SNP’s interests well. Do you support the Labour Party as a flying buttress from the outside helping them or is the rope around the hanged man’s neck?

NICOLA STURGEON:
Well we act in the way that we think is in the best interests of Scotland. Now it’s no secret, I’m not giving you any exclusives here, that I want Scotland to become independent …

ANDREW MARR:
(over) We’d noticed, yes.

NICOLA STURGEON:
But you know you’ve probably noticed that over the past wee while. … but that will only happen when a majority of people in Scotland want that to happen. In the interim what is really important is that Scotland’s voice is heard loudly at Westminster, that our interests are protected better than they have been by Labour governments in the past, and that we are there to promote a progressive politics that I think a majority of people in Scotland want to see at Westminster, and challenge the Westminster establishment. And my goodness, the Westminster establishment really needs to be challenged.

ANDREW MARR:
Now there has been some suggestion that Scotland could achieve independence without a referendum in some situations. Are you absolutely clear it has to be another referendum?

NICOLA STURGEON:
(over) Absolutely, of course. I mean the only way for Scotland to become independent is for a majority of people in Scotland to vote for independence in a referendum. That is the route to independence. Do I think that will happen? Yes I do. I can’t sit here right now and …
ANDREW MARR:  
(over) And timescale?

NICOLA STURGEON:  
Well I was about to say I can’t sit here right now and tell you exactly when that will happen. It will happen when there is a demand in Scotland for another referendum. One of the things that I think will seriously concern people in Scotland is if we do have a European In/Out referendum and we may have the scenario of the UK voting to come out …

ANDREW MARR:  
Yes.

NICOLA STURGEON:  
… and Scotland voting to stay in. But independence will only happen when a majority of people in Scotland vote for that to happen.

ANDREW MARR:  
If there was a European referendum, as you’re suggesting, and England voted to leave the EU and Scotland voted to stay in and therefore the whole UK left, what would happen to Scotland?

NICOLA STURGEON:  
Well I think there would be huge consternation and concern. That would deeply, deeply …

ANDREW MARR:  
(over) I mean you couldn’t stop the English from leaving.

NICOLA STURGEON:  
Well I’ve put forward a proposal that I know the First Minister of Wales has indicated that he may be supportive of as well, although obviously I can’t speak for him – is that there should be some kind of double majority situation around the EU
referendum. You know during the referendum on Scottish independence, we were
told repeatedly that the UK was a family of nations, that we were an equal
partnership. Well if that is true, then I think on an issue like whether or not we’re
members of the EU – in order for the UK to come out, there should require to be not
just a vote for that across the UK, but a vote for that in each of the component parts of
the UK.

ANDREW MARR:
Yes.

NICOLA STURGEON:
And I will be pressing that case in order to make sure that no part of the UK could be
taken out of the European Union against its will.

ANDREW MARR:
But if there’s an option of a Labour SNP … Labour, SNP supported government after
the election – big if – Alex Salmond and your colleagues come down here intending
to be helpful and to create a workable government because the Tories are already
putting up posters suggesting it would be chaos and mayhem and you could see that
chaos and mayhem might so spook Scottish voters that they wanted independence
sooner rather than later?

NICOLA STURGEON:
Well we will be in the House of Commons first and foremost to stand up for Scotland
and to do what we think is right for Scotland’s interests. Now as part of that, we will
never …

ANDREW MARR:
(over) Which could mean a period of instability?

NICOLA STURGEON:
Well I don’t think democracy should ever be described as instability. People you
know get to vote and will make their preference known in the General Election. What
I was going to say is a fundamental part of standing up for Scotland’s interests is a
commitment that I’ve given that the SNP will not formally or informally prop up a Conservative government. Scotland by and large doesn’t vote Tory. They’ve got one MP in Scotland right now and I think that’s an important thing for people to understand.

ANDREW MARR:
Nicola Sturgeon, Scots – as I said before – know you quite well. A lot of people will be watching, hearing you for the first time in England. Now you’ve been a very close ally and friend of Alex Salmond for many, many years, but you’re clearly a different kind of politician, you’re a different person.

NICOLA STURGEON:
There are some obvious differences. (laughs)

ANDREW MARR:
Yes there are some obvious differences and we can see them. But apart from those – apart from the fact that you’re wearing a dress and he very rarely does – what is the difference between Nicola Sturgeon as SNP Leader and what we’ve seen in the past?

NICOLA STURGEON:
Well I’m not going to sit here and you know go to great lengths to try and tell people what’s different between me and Alex Salmond. We’ve worked together for twenty years.

ANDREW MARR:
(over) Sure.

NICOLA STURGEON:
I’ve been his deputy for ten years. I was part of his government for seven years and we will always work together. One of the things that I think people who are schooled in the Westminster way of politics and have watched Tony Blair and Gordon Brown scratch each other’s eyes out over the years, I think people find it quite difficult to understand that there’s no competition between me and Alex Salmond. We’re on the same team, we’re on the same side. But you know I’m very interested in politics, in
reaching out, in building alliances, and looking not just at what divides us as politicians but what unites us. And in this election people in Scotland, whether they voted Yes or No in the referendum, have an opportunity through voting SNP to make sure Scotland’s voice is heard in Westminster in a way that it hasn’t been before, and I think that’s a massive opportunity.

ANDREW MARR
Okay. Just before we finish, and briefly, the oil price at the time of the referendum, the Scottish government was doing its sums at $110 a barrel. It’s now down to $50 or thereabouts. That’s a huge, huge lump out of Scottish spending as you’d hope for. Is there part of you that’s quite relieved that you’re not running …

NICOLA STURGEON:
(over) No.

ANDREW MARR:
… a new government with the oil price plummeting.

NICOLA STURGEON:
No because you know you don’t hear any other oil producing country during a period as we’re in just now of low oil prices saying oh my goodness, we can’t afford to be independent. If you look at Norway right now, they’ve got their massive oil fund to help them through the period of oil prices. Now the key thing here is that our oil resources over decades have been mismanaged by Westminster governments and the choice for Scotland in the future as oil prices start to go up again, as they inevitably will …

ANDREW MARR:
Alright.

NICOLA STURGEON:
… is how do we manage that resource better in the future.

ANDREW MARR:
Nicola Sturgeon, thank you very much indeed for joining us in the studio this morning.

NICOLA STURGEON:  
Thank you.

ENDS