A: In the 70’s actually when I lived up in the highlands but kind of a bit lapsed since then. Once you have children, get married and have a family and whatever, other priorities take over a bit.

Q: Right. So, what kind of things were you involved with in the 70’s?

A: Well, I was working in the SNP in the 70’s in a small rural town.

Q: Oh, right, okay. Were the SNP very active in there at the time?

A: They were active. They were very active in the region particularly. I mean, they’ve always been quite successful in that part of the world. I mean, that’s where originally most of that surrounding success was around there but they had-, when I was a member, they had something like fourteen or fifteen branches in the constituency.

Q: Just around there?

A: That’s right. There were two; there was Perth City and East Perthshire with the east of the city and then there was Kinross and West Perthshire was the other constituency, which was a more rural constituency. At one time, they had both the city MP’s were both SNP MP’s.

Q: Oh, right.

A: But I mean that constituency has been carved up now like they all have, so it’s not exactly the same boundaries. I’m not even sure exactly what it is, but they’ve always had at least one area. They’ve certainly got MSP’s. I’m not sure how they vary now but they’ve still got an MP there. It’s not exactly the same geography as it was before.

Q: Right.

A: It was basically a two way fight between the SNP and the Tories. I mean, the Labour party and the Lib Dem’s were pretty insignificant.

Q: Oh, okay.

A: It’s interesting.

Q: It’s interesting that the Tories have quite a strong-,

A: They’ve always-, well, yes, I mean, they did then. I was interested in statistics and in those days, the Tories still had about, certainly about twenty five percent of the vote in Scotland.

Q: Oh, right.

A: And even though that had crashed from quite a high, early back in the 50’s, there was still a not a derisory share of the vote, which meant that-, I can’t remember but they had quite a few MP’s anyway but certainly not the boost or their low number of MP’s that they’ve got now. At that time, and there were two elections in the 70’s and the vote was split, not completely equally but the three main parties were the Labour party, the SNP and the Conservative’s in terms of the vote. The Labour party was still the highest score and it wasn’t like there was like thirty five, forty percent ‘Yes’ appearing, but they got up to thirty percent in the second election and the Tories only got twenty four or twenty five. So, it was quite insular and the Lib Dems were still around so I think probably better than they’ve quoted now of course because we’re chatting but their vote was concentrated and because, as you’ll know with the first past the post system that they have, the best way of getting more numbers of MP’s is if the votes concentrate in those areas, if it’s just spread across the whole of Scotland then that area will tend to lose out, and that was the problem. I think the SNP like to run because they tend to get more of the working class urban areas, but there wasn’t enough to dislodge Labour so they kind of-, but I was quite interested in the statistics then anyway, as I was saying, before I got married and had children and any other kind of priorities.

Q: Did you stay involved with the SNP very much?

A: Well, actually I rejoined after the referendum again. I was swithering whether to join them or the Green party because I’ve got quite a few-, I share quite a few views with the Green party but I decided, on balance, tactically that it was probably more important to vote in the SNP until such time as we have another referendum. I mean, to be honest, I feel a bit guilty because I’m not going to do be able to take part, I just don’t feel like, you know, I’m going to be able to. It’s probably just old age, I suppose.

Q: Well, and family and other commitments.

A: Well, my children are grown up though they still, you know-, you don’t spend the same amount of time with them, partly because my son lives in-, where does he live now? Up north. He’s in his last year at university so he’s really got to decide, he’s got to get his degree this time around.

Q: Right, okay. Do you remember when you first heard that there was going to be a referendum?

A: I think, from what I can remember, it was about two years. Certainly, it was between eighteen months and two years before but I do remember there was a lot of fuss made at the back of the referendum, why are we giving two years’ notice and why don’t they bring it forward. I thought it was quite amusing the reaction, I thought, to the whole thing because you’re going to get blamed if you call something, “Oh, we’re going to have a referendum next month to few months,” and in some respects, I think it’s fairer to give everyone plenty of time down the line to think about the whole issue. I seem to remember it was about two years before it happened.

Q: Do you remember there being a lot of discussion about what was going to go on the ballot paper?

A: Yes. I seem to recall it was-, it wasn’t a key issue at first but it soon became one of the crucial sort of things, you know, how to word the question because obviously how you word the question has quite a strong influence in how people vote, and obviously they were going to make two different camps, two views as to how to frame it. I think it was inevitable but what they came up with was going to be something pretty like that because if Scotland had voted neutral, they don’t have a neutral question, then you know. It makes the whole thing-, it does discredit the process a bit.

Q: Yes, yes.

A: But I don’t think there was any way that either side of the debate were going to allow a question that wasn’t pretty balanced.

Q: Yes, and what about the devo-max option?

A: Well, I always thought that that should have been an option. I know it makes it more complicated but I mean, people in other countries have far more complex voting systems, what’s the difficulty in voting for three questions on the paper and the way the vote is split must decide the issue and finally you might have a vote again after that with just two questions.

Q: Yes.

A: It wasn’t insurmountable. They could’ve had three questions.

Q: It’s not really that confusing if you go through the papers and you’ve got like, 20 candidates on it.

A: I think it’s a bit insulting to the intelligence of voters to think that they couldn’t somehow get their heads around having a three question referendum.

Q: Do you think that was the issue or was it more of a political motivation? So, was that the reason that the ballot was going to be too complicated? Did you think they were kind of political with their motivation?

A: No, no, very strong political motivations. The reason was nothing to do with the fact that it was complicated, I don’t think. The government coalition didn’t want to surrender any more powers to the Scottish parliament and I think they knew that they would definitely would’ve ended up with a majority of people that would have voted for some extra powers and I think that would have done too. What they were hoping for was the result they got but probably with an even bigger and more decisive majority than fifty five, forty five, but then I’m coming from a slightly-, I mean, I’m sure you’ll take that into account.

Q: Oh, yes.

A: I’m coming from a slightly biased perspective.

Q: I mean, would you have-, personally, do you think you think you would have preferred the devo-max option to-?

A: Personally, I’ve always been-, I don’t like the word nationalist but I mean that’s what’s-, I’ve always been in favour of independence anyway, but I mean I’d be happy to vote for something significant, people power, but I think probably the opinion now has kind of swung in that direction. There are so many things have changed. It’s quite drastic because the landscape is changed and the Conservatives are really a tiny party now in terms of even voting on the number of seats, and the Labour party, I’ve seen a big change since the general election in 2010 but I think the opinion poll’s certainly are not looking very good for them at the moment at all.

Q: I mean, why do you think that is?

A: I think what’s happened is that a lot of-, I think the referendum in what they class as ‘urban areas’, I think a lot of people who didn’t vote Labour are just-, I’ve spoken to just too many people and read too many comments not to believe that there’s a significant number of working class people who have voted Labour all the way but some of them will not vote Labour again because they didn’t like the idea that the Labour party was associated with the Tories in the campaign, albeit that it was an umbrella campaign, but nevertheless, you know, they were seen to be sitting at the same table and saying the same thing on this. I think that was the kind of final straw.

Q: So, do you actually think it was more important that they were side to side with the Tories rather than they were against independence?

A: Yes, I think that was seen-, yes, I don’t think it was necessarily about independence. That’s the kind of paradox, you know, and I think a lot of-, I mean, I think a lot of working class people in Scotland have been very conservative with a small ‘c’ for a long time and that’s why they voted Labour for so long because they’d seen the kind of-, I don’t know what you call it, the class struggle and the things that Labour party stood for, especially after the war. They’ve seen all of that develop and it’s just in their blood, so they can’t really think of voting any other way, and it’s the first time they’ve been close to questioning something. When they see them all as side by side with the Conservative party which is… I think that was a step too far.

Q: Right. I mean, do you think-,

A: I don’t think the Labour party calculated it. I don’t think they even played a part of that into their thinking. I don’t know whether they considered that would work against them but that’s the thing nobody knew. When you lose a referendum, you kind of assume the loser loses and that’s it, but what seems to happen is the losing side have actually been reborn out of all the parties that have supported the ‘Yes’ vote have actually, their memberships have trebled, I think, more or less, even the tiny SSP, which is pretty well a fringe party even they did. It tells you something, you know, the Labour party’s membership, it’s very difficult to establish what it is. I think in Scotland, it’s probably pretty tight and I think they’re trying to offer out discount memberships to people now [laughter].

Q: Do you think that there are wider issues that people have not got-, losing faith in the Labour party?

A: I think there’s other wider issues as well, yes. I mean, a big one in UK terms is this whole programme of austerity and how it’s been dealt with. Perhaps not so many people have seen through that now, but anyone who really probes the policies, you’ll find that the Labour party’s policy isn’t that much different, even in a matter of degrees or billions of pounds or whatever it is, but actually fundamentally, they’re still supporting austerity as well, and that makes them a bit dishonest again because they’re trying to claim they’re opposing the coalition government. It’s not really because of austerity, it’s just a different degree of austerity. That’s right.

Q: Kind of like very similar ideology behind it still, do you think? They both have a very similar ideology behind it?

A: Essentially, yes. I mean, there are so many things in the British state which are-, I mean, I think probably another one is, might not have been for the sort of people up here and the referendum, but I think the Iraq war and all of the consequences of that has actually started to go completely against them. I mean, we’ve seen what happened with what was a Labour government, you know, took Britain into a war which has turned out to be-, and I don’t know, there’s plenty of people still going to defend the decision but I think a lot more people now, I think, think it turned into an absolute disaster and I can’t see how it’s actually stabilised that whole vision.

Q: I think, it’s like kind of the hoo-ha that went on quite recently after the referendum with changing around the head of the Scottish Labour party.

A: That was a good example, I think, of the turmoil they were in because she was, I think, what you would call ‘old Labour’ to be using the term politically, quite conservative with a small ‘c’, and quite loyal but obviously trying to put the Scottish stamp on the Labour party, but I think realising the consequence of the decision to come from one place and I think that’s the problem. I think the issue came to a head and… But at least I’ve got more respect for her than I do for Jim Murphy. I just think he’s a con man [laughter]. Honestly, I really do. He’s done so many somersaults in his position of supporting the poor but I don’t seem to be convinced.

Q: How do you think people see Ed Miliband at the moment?

A: I don’t know. Sometimes I feel a bit sorry for him because I don’t think he’s differentiated himself sufficiently from David Cameron. He seems to have, even though it was the trade union support that got him in rather than his brother if I remember. David Miliband was a favourite of parliamentarians under grass roots, remember. It was the trade union that supported him and I assume that’s because of his background because he doesn’t strike me as being a left wing socialist.

Q: He doesn’t come across as being a very vocal trade union supporter.

A: No, he’s not really. He doesn’t at all. I don’t think he’s been effective enough in standing out and I think the problem that Labour have got in this coming election is that I know a lot of people don’t trust them to manage the economy and after what happened in 2000, you probably can’t blame them. What I find really very surprising is it’s not just through the referendum, there’s the presence of Gordon Brown but the fact that it looks like he might be sticking his head up above the parapet and getting involved again.

Q: Were you surprised to see that?

A: Well, in some ways I am, but then again for some bizarre reason, he’s still quite popular and certainly in parts of Scotland but I think more people are looking at all the silly things that he did in office. I think more and more people are realising that he wasn’t really a very good Prime Minister or Chancellor. I don’t think he’ll do the cause that much good. He won’t make any difference in England anyway because I don’t think he’s very popular in England and I don’t think he was as a Prime Minister. I don’t think it’s necessarily because he’s Scottish, I just think that he just didn’t come across-, I mean, you’ve got to have some charisma when you’re-, maybe Tony Blair had too much but I think any Prime Minister or leader of the country has got to have a little bit of relationship to…

Q: How do you think Ed Miliband scores on the charisma then?

A: I think he’s got some but I don’t think it’s enough.

Q: Do you think that’s something that does sway people?

A: They do, no question about it. A lot of workers do respect, almost admire, a strong leader even if it’s not necessarily all the strong characteristics you want. I mean, I think that’s partly why Tony Blair was re-elected another time, The same as poor Margaret Thatcher, I mean, two totally diametrically opposite people but they were both strong leaders in their own way. I think that does earn you quite a lot of respect among people, quite a lot of people actually if you know what they stand for. As I said, the trouble with Tony Blair was that he didn’t know what he stood for. I don’t think Miliband has got enough of that if I’m honest. I think he will struggle to be-, having said that, I don’t think Cameron is that-, he’s certainly not in the way that Margaret Thatcher was.

Q: In terms of his kind of leadership or with her or-?

A: Well, both, both of his party and of the country, but I think he’s probably got more of a problem with the leadership of his own party actually.

Q: Oh, right.

A: Because there’s always that very, the surplus right wing, you know, that sort of neo-liberal, party they’ve got. I think they’re comfortable and the anti-European will be as well of course. I think he’s trying to hold all of them on board as well and I don’t think-, he’s constantly having to put his eyes on them all the time and finding out what they’re up to, because when it comes to ruthlessness, there’s no one more ruthless than a Tory party when it comes to getting-, just look at the way they dealt with Margaret Thatcher. They didn’t waste any time on her and they don’t do it all in public either. They just do it. They do it behind closed doors and stick the knife in their own leaders back if they think she’s going to be a liability. I mean, I think for example, just as speculation, the next election, if either of the two main parties win the majority, but if Labour ended up the bigger party or they were able to come to some kind of a deal with minority parties, either the Lib Dem’s or even the SNP. I think then Cameron’s position would be on a tight rope.

Q: Do you think it’s likely that there might be an alliance between Labour and the SNP, in Westminster at least?

A: There won’t be. There won’t be anything in Scotland like the coalition we’ve got just now. There might be an agreement to support them on key issues. From what I know of the SNP, they won’t-, there’s no way they will go into a coalition with any of the Westminster parties. They’re more likely to band together with the Green’s and Plaid Cymru, because they’ve probably got more in common with those two parties. They might support Labour on maybe a limited programme or something like that. I think that’s as far as it would go but they’ll never-, they won’t support the Tories under any circumstances. I think if it is a new parliament, I think the Tories are going to be struggling because I don’t think the Lib Dem’s, assuming they get any kind of-, if they do get a reasonable recovery, it’s a dodged bullet. I don’t think they’ll be so keen to get back in with the Tories a second time. I think it’s probably a most fascinating time in terms of election.

Q: I mean, how do you think the outcome of the general election is going to look in Scotland?

A: Well, I’m a bit reluctant to broadcast a complete turnaround but I think the Labour party will lose quite a lot of seats, yes.

Q: Yes, because we were saying, I mean it looks from the polls that SNP are going to do very well this time.

A: Well, I think they’re going to do well. I think it’s a bit rash to expect them to completely wipe out Labour. I think, there’s always going to be-, and I think partly, I’m a bit apprehensive because I think we’re going to see quite a dirty campaign. I might be wrong. I hope I’m wrong but I don’t think I am. I think with the power of the media, I think we’re going to see a lot of propaganda over the next, you know, won’t start for a while yet but,

Q: Do you mean propaganda from both sides?

A: Well, at least there is one newspaper now which prints an alternative view to otherwise a pro-independence paper which there wasn’t before the referendum so I suppose that’s another welcome development the process has turned out is that there’s one paper which is-, I mean, the Sunday Herald was, I think, as well but that’s only a Sunday paper so you can’t have the same impact as a daily.

Q: I mean, what do you think about media coverage in general of the referendum?

A: Well, the other thing I was completely disenchanted with was the BBC actually and to a lesser extent, ITV. I just found their coverage was quite biased but then when I thought about it afterwards, I suppose it’s logical because the BBC kind of is almost part of the British state in a sense. It’s almost the fabric of British as much as anything, as much as our Monarch in some ways.

Q: Yes.

A: It’s probably not so bad. They can probably see a future threat, you know, if Scotland had broken away and become independent, you could see where they would have to be broken and I think they would’ve been broadcasting. It’s interesting, that’s one of the powers that was never devolved and still isn’t on the table about being devolved again because the control of the media is fairly important to any political system. I mean, propaganda is one of the most powerful tools you’ve got so I can understand why they were reluctant to evolve broadcasting and I can understand why the BBC took the line but nevertheless, I was disappointed with the coverage of it, yes.

Q: Do you think people were biased of the BBC or do you think-?

A: Yes, I think quite a few and actually when you look into some of the people working at the BBC, the presenters, they’re connected with the Labour party anyway so it’s not surprising that John Smith’s daughter-, do you remember John Smith, the MP?

Q: Yes.

A: He would’ve been Prime Minister, you know, if he hadn’t died prematurely. Sarah Smith, actually who is a presenter.

Q: Oh, okay. I didn’t realise the connection.

A: She’s John Smith’s daughter and she’s actually quite good but I don’t think-, if it’s going to be an influence, I don’t think she’s suddenly, you know, jumped camp and switched the opposite-,

Q: What about the newspapers at the time?

A: Well, in fact most of the newspapers in Scotland have been rubbish for decades anyway. I mean, there’s one or two quality papers. I was a bit disappointed with some bits of The Guardian but The Herald, thankfully, the Sunday Herald came out of it sort of a few months before the referendum, and the Glasgow Herald I think was still a reasonably good quality paper. Most of the time, The Guardian was pretty good as well but the other papers-, one of the tabloids, like the Mail and The Express and The Record are just rubbish. The other papers at the other end, the highbrow and like The Telegraph are just dreadful [laughter]. I mean, they come across as being intelligent. They dress it up in flowery language but their message is very right wing and I don’t like it. I think the fact that you probably want an unbiased view so you’re probably better going to the Financial Times because at least it’s kind of they tend to quote facts but it’s more a financial paper.

Q: Yes.

A: So, I think the newspapers were predictable in the way they quoted things but most of them printed either inaccuracies or even downright lies. That’s what I felt anyway, that’s my view.

Q: Do you think that the SNP ran a good campaign?

A: I think they made one or two mistakes and I think they never-, I mean, it’s not entirely their fault but they never sufficiently, clearly, if you like, separated the issue of independence and the ‘Yes’ campaign from their own political party. In a sense a few things are wrapped up totally because the SNP’s been the only party that’s always, you know, that’s been its prime objective and of course it’s had to develop lots of other policies but I suppose it was inevitable. I mean, a lot of people saw it, “Well, if we vote ‘Yes’, we’re going to be saddled with an SNP government for the next…”, you know, if they’d thought about it logically, they’d realise that wasn’t the case. I think there was still that-, it tended to be dominated a bit and the ‘Yes’ campaign in some respects, it wasn’t sufficiently affected and didn’t make it clear that it was a-, but on the other hand, it must’ve been fairly effective because they recruited a lot of people, especially younger people who had never been involved in politics before. To me, that was one of the most encouraging aspects of things. Whereas, I saw that my generation were actually quite almost reactionally conservative at voting and they were worried about what was going to happen to their pensions and mortgages which I felt was very-, a little bit selfish of them. The younger people actually, I was quite encouraged by their optimism and positive message that they took out of it.

Q: Do you think the ‘Yes’ campaign targeted itself well towards younger people?

A: I think it did. I don’t know how effectively it targeted them but whatever it did, it was obviously more successful in recruiting them, I think, than the ‘Better Together’ campaign was. The fact that it’s continued, you know, with the support, although you can almost say it’s always easier and it would then be simplistic levels but it’s always easier to have a campaign about something positive than it is about-, because everywhere you looked at the ‘Better Together’ campaign, they never made a big thing about Britain or being British. I’m not quite sure why because it’s the one area where I would’ve respected them, you know, if they’d actually played their traditional values. I could’ve respected that. There were people I know that voted ‘No’ and the reason they did was this emotional connection of being British and I could respect that, but it was the only element I could respect because I thought all the other arguments put forward were largely negative and scaremongering. It was not about what we could have but about what damage will we do if we vote ‘Yes’, you know. It deposits an unknown, you’re going into the unknown. The currency was a perfect example of how-, I mean, to be honest, it doesn’t essentially ultimately matter what currency. Okay, there might be a few hiccups somewhere but ultimately, the markets, the money markets will decide and look at the position of the whole country and economy, and they’ll decide in the medium term how viable it is. Any country that’s become independent, it’s always set now anyway, unless they’re a banana republic or unless they’ve really got nothing to-, so, I found nearly all the arguments against were quite negative and pernicious almost. They didn’t make anything of the concept of being British. A little bit was thrown in but it was never-, but then perhaps they didn’t feel the need to do that.

Q: Well, I mean, what do you think? Do you think people-, like it was a big thing for people who voted for independence was that sense of Scottish identity?

A: Yes, I think some of it was but I think more of it increasingly throughout the campaign, some of that became associated with posing austerity or voting for something which meant we could have a different economic path rather than just being about a Scottish identity, and I think more and more it became-, I think it’s become more about that now. I mean, I think the Scottish identity thing has been developed, you know, has increased over the last few decades anyway. I know when I was in the SNP, it’s a completely different landscape altogether because the SNP was seen as basically a sort of fringe, almost comical, not comical but it wasn’t taken entirely seriously. There have been areas where it was quite strong linked, mainly where I live, it was actually a respectable proposition. By that, I mean the working class, central belt and other big parts of Scotland, they didn’t do terribly well.

Q: Do you think that’s because it was seen as being a one issue party?

A: Yes, partly that side but it wasn’t seeming to identify with enough working class people and that’s just historical, I think, inevitably because it goes back to the-, I think the SNP was founded not long after the war but it was still a tiny percentage was supporting and it was considered totally almost lunacy for Scotland to be independent, but it wasn’t taken seriously as an initiative, so it was kind of restricted to-, and I think it probably got more votes from people who had been Tory or right wing. It did originally and also as it got more votes from Conservatives who kind of maybe had the luxury of looking at other options but that’s why they never made any great feat because Tory would get a vote from the majority of the working class folks. It was never going to, you know, turn things upside down and of course, I think that’s what’s spoilt the pudding because that’s what’s been happening over the last few months. That’s where the danger to Labour party, I think, because if they lose that vote, and I think they have lost some of that, it’s just depending on how much.

Q: Do you think, I guess going forward, that now that idea isn’t so crazy anymore, the idea about independence and-?

A: Well, I personally always thought it was quite a viable option anyway but yes, it’s becoming more credible to a lot more people now and I don’t think it’s just a negative reaction to, you know, “We don’t want any more austerity”, you know, and we’re turned off. I think it has to be a positive view behind it. I still think people are more likely to be persuaded by a positive argument than a negative one ultimately. I think that’s been shown in the political campaign is bringing up a constantly negative argument then it does turn people off eventually.

Q: Yes, and do you think people are disappointed with the discussions about extra powers going on at the moment and the vow and this sort of thing?

A: I think they’re just a confidence trick to be quite honest. I think some people are taken in but I think a lot of people are beginning to see that they’re not even going to have delivered what they supposedly promised, albeit it was written on the back of a fag paper, almost. The eleventh hour was conjured up. I think even they are not going to be delivered so people are a bit cynical about that, yes.

Q: What about the SNP under Nicola Sturgeon?

A: I think it’s been almost a seamless transfer of power. I think it’s done the party and caused no harm at all. I think as far as I can see, she’s more popular than any other leader in Scotland anyway.

Q: Do you think more popular than Alex Salmond was/is?

A: I think she does appeal-, Alex Salmond wasn’t that popular with quite a lot of women, I’ve gathered.

Q: Right, okay.

A: I don’t think Nicola Sturgeon could be seen to be unpopular by any section particularly so I think that’s an unexpected consequence but I think it was inevitable that she was going to take over if he ever did stand down but I think, again, it was just something that wasn’t seen by the other parties or opponents so it might actually work in their favour. So, although he was seen as a casualty initially, he’s actually not such a casualty now because he’s still going to stand in Westminster, so it’s quite-, it’s funny the way that things worked out but no, I think Nicola Sturgeon is very effective and she’ll be a very effective leader. So far, she hasn’t done anything.

Q: Do you think she’s going to have the support kind of internally in the party?

A: Yes, I think so, yes.

Q: I mean, she’s a lifer really, isn’t she? I mean, she’s been involved for decades with the SNP.

A: Yes, I think nearly as long as Alex Salmond. Yes, I think she has actually. Yes, she’s got quite a long history, yes.

Q: Great. Well, I think that’s pretty much everything actually.

A: Good.

Q: Thank you so much.

**[Transcript Ends 00:37:19]**