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## Appendix 2

### Focus Group 1

**First of all, if I say to you “David Cameron” what comes to mind? Just whatever words, thoughts pictures ideas, speak freely.**

A bit of a prat.

Are we allowed to swear?

You did say speak freely!

A lot of mouth, no action.

Yes.

A lot of promises, but undelivered.

Makes more promises, and from what I can tell they're being blocked by the Liberals.

Trying to make a lot of changes that might not go down well.

**Trying or making do you think?**

Well from a teachers' perspective *attempting* to make them.

He comes across as eloquent but out of touch with the ordinary man in the street really.

I agree, he comes across quite calm, like a family man, that's about it.

**Is he out of touch?**

I think he is, but he probably always has been, because he lives in a different world completely from the lives of the people here, a different world completely.

Silver spoon scenario isn't it really?

But they're all the same in all honesty so I don't see any difference between him and the likes of Blair, they grow up, they've got plenty of money and they go into politics and a lot of it is loose change for them anyway, they're not doing it for the money.

There's something likeable about Blair before, in the early days, from a character perspective.

I don't think any politicians can be all together with knowing what the people on the street want. Personally I think Cameron's the closest to all that because I think he knows he has to make the changes that normal people want changed.

**Is that because of the inevitability of being a politician and that inevitably their lives are different?**

Well he lives a completely different life from the rest of us.

He's trying to solve issues that really don't have a great deal of impact on him but do have a great deal on us.

He doesn't have to worry about paying a mortgage.

No, it wouldn't cause him a problem but he must be seen to be doing something, but it's not always the right thing.

I think he may have been restricted with the way the government is run, the chains round his neck from Nick Clegg and the crew. I think that's what's blown it all out of proportion, they shouldn't have joined up in the first place it shouldn't have gone the way it's gone. It has to be independent; Conservative or Liberal or Labour it can't be bits and bobs. Coalition sounds okay broadly but I don't personally think it works, it isn't working is it?

That's a good point.

With the political correctness – trying to cut through when people are saying you can't do this, you can't do this, it'll upset these people. I think it's hard for them to get through that now.

I don't know if anybody's saw it last night on tv but down South you can rent a shed and get 2,000 a month for these sheds. For me, when they were interviewing, they said well we can't really do anything about this because we can't prove anyone's in it – hello it's pretty bloody obvious who's in it, bulldoze them and get rid of the lot.

They said they have to give 24 hours notice before they inspect them.

And they all clear off don't they? This country's up the pole.

**Would anyone say they don't think David Cameron's out of touch? He actually seems to sort of have a feel for what's going on?**

It's hard for him I think the problem is he's got to do something hasn't he, he's got to look at what's currently going on.

Do you mean on his own personally rather than as a coalition?

**Yes.**

He's restricted, he could do more on his own, but can't because of other party.

If you look at the issues with the NHS, everyone like doctors are telling him he shouldn't go ahead with it, there are significant bits that aren't good for the country, that aren't good for the NHS but he's still insisting he's going through with it so he's not listening to what other professionals have to say about it. And taking that on board, he's just pushing ahead. That has nothing to do with anything he's inherited from the Labour Party in terms of financial situation that's very much a choice I would say to get the private sector involved in the NHS and carrying on the philosophy of being more concerned about the private sector than the public sector.

**Can I just ask why do you think that is?**

Because that's where the money is, they're bankrolled if you like by the big business therefore they expect something in return and in return they have to give concessions to business and people are suffering in the process or the public sector ones are suffering.

**Do you think the balance of they believe in it and they're being bankrolled or are they just because they're the ones paying the piper as it were?**

I think it's to do with the fact that traditionally they are the private sector party and also, as I pointed out, they are being bankrolled.

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It was the Labour government that brought in private prisons and they cost the country 3x the amount to run than state.

I quite agree with you on that.

Yes, they've both been guilty of pursuing that sort of thing because it's all about profit not about the service that they provide. It's all about someone making a profit out of it, whether it be a shareholder or some big successful entrepreneur.

**If David Cameron was a car what kind of car would he be?**

Not a Volkswagen.

An old man's car.

Skoda – because they're not that bad these days.

I think he's an old man's car, a jag.

Not a reliable one, something like a ford mondeo because they're kind of safe but a bit in the middle of the road.

Related to sales people, probably selling lots because you expect a lot.

Aren't jags German?

Pretending to be British.

A very very British one.

**A good mix of vehicles. Now Ed Miliband – what comes to mind when I mention his name?**

Smarmy.

Thick, young, inexperienced.

Hasn't had a chance has he?

Struggling to cope.

All mouth and trousers.

Lurking in the shadows.

He lacks a certain amount of confidence.

His brother would have fitted the bill better.

He has a lot to live up to with the brother thing.

Yes I think so too.

Makes you wonder why they chose him.

Well because of the unions and the votes, but I don't think he's the right guy in place to lead the Labour Party.

I'll be honest with you, I think his heart's in the right place but today people want the likes of Blair and when you see the guy in charge of the party you want charisma or whatever and he doesn't have it. Cameron has it a bit more but not in the same league as Blair was. So they're all sort of Blair clones.

Bring back Maggie.

Yeah.

If you're looking for a good leader you'd look for good leadership traits – you'd want them to be honest, you want vision, clear vision for us, focused, I think he's got those good traits.

But there's just something about him.

He's just a bit gray.

I worry about his experience, how old is he?

Similar age to Cameron? 43.

Really? I thought about 30.

He comes across as younger, must have had a tough life.

**Do you know anything about his life? Family?**

Dunno.

Has he got family?

Yeah, he has, have I not seen that somewhere?

There was fuss about him not being married so he got married quietly in the summer.

That in itself suggests secretive.

As you said Cameron's like family man.

I think Miliband is capped by the recent events in the Labour Party and what's going on and the people around him and he's almost, sometimes we can see when it's difficult to argue something when if you look back not too far it's that party that made all the mistakes and that's a big burden to him really.

**And if he were a car?**

A mini metro, he's not a family car.

I see him as Batman and Robin, nothing to do with cars but with both of them that's how I see it basically – maybe a sidecar on a motorcycle.

A bit sleek?

Maybe a smart car pretending to be something a bit special but he's not really.

I think he could end up being quite smart but not yet.

Like someone said earlier he is inexperienced, but on the flipside of it, he'll still have fresh ideas without experience burdening him and he might not be afraid to try as someone else who might fail. but I see the point that at the end of the day he's been left with an absolute mess really, he's not in a good position.

**Okay, thank you, let's talk briefly about Nick Clegg, what comes to mind when you think of him?**

He's blown it really.

I think he's been quite shrewd really, he's raised the profile of the Liberal Party far more than, I'm not saying he's made a success of it but he's been had him and the party talked about and if he hasn't joined up to this coalition then I don't think, I don't know what would have happened but they certainly wouldn't have had the prominence that they have now.

That prominence will blow in the next general election.

I'm sure it will, but from his point of view it might drop it back but then maybe another 10 or 12 years...

I think when he was answering everything right in the debates and he know what he was talking about and then with the education system recently with the universities and going back on what he said his credibility's absolutely blown.

**Is that just Lib Dem not Conservative?**

They said originally they weren't going to increase the fees for the youngsters, they were going to do this and they were going to do that; there was no way that they can. It was part of his manifesto and they ultimately he capitulated so there's a situation now where the youngsters who will be voting next time won't be voting for him I doubt very much because the university debt saddled with.

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I reckon he caused the riots because it was all to do with university fees.

But university fees you don't have to pay until you earn a lot more money than you do currently.

But who wants to be saddled with a lot of debt.

It works out at more than £9,000 when you throw everything in.

But what's the incentive to go to University when you're going to have to pay that much and there's no guarantee of a job.

You have to be earning over 15, 16 grand.

Its going up to 21 grand.

Well most graduates won't earn that unless they go into the City so they won't pay it back for years.

### **Is Nick Clegg a leader would you say?**

No.

No.

He's like an assistant for Cameron, that's what it feels like to me, Cameron runs the show.

### **Is he a strong assistant?**

No, I don't think so.

Because of the differing views they've got he can't support the prime minister in everything and it's only very limited things that he can because he's got to show to be independent because he's got to satisfy his own MPs and his own voters so he's a bit stuck really.

His manifesto was so far away from Conservative's you think how they could possibly go together.

No, they don't.

### **And if he was a car? What would he be?**

An allegra.

One with a square wheel.

A very old car.

A car that always breaks down.

### **Posh car? Cheap car?**

Very cheap car.

Impressive on the outside but when you turn the engine off.

Furious it's not going anywhere.

Spluttering.

### **Right, we're going to talk a bit about some political issues briefly – firstly in this area.**

What are the issues in the local area?

Things have changed, the village used to have lots of different types of shops, but when we introduced the Tesco and the road link and all the rest of it all the businesses went out, now it's sort of regenerated into bars and that sort of thing. Reinvented itself.

It's the friendliest village in Britain.

If call the local areas [local town], there's more shops shut in [local town] now than anywhere. If you go there now if you go through certain areas there are that many for sale signs on shops it's unbelievable. The only things surviving now are the charity shops or pound shops.

And loads of debt shops, you know like

Cash converters... cash for gold

There's one of these Brighthouse ones... 125% interest or so

Cash your giro

There's one where you can bring your clothes in and get cash for clothes

To me that shows how bad the recession has hit [local town], don't know about [local small town].

Our town centre is horrible, I grew up in [local town] and go in a lot and now it's full of horrible people because the only people it attracts are, I'm trying really hard to be PC but ... just scumbags, teenage mothers going to weigh their gold in that they've probably stole off someone's neck and it's just horrible people.

I'm near [local small town] which was on a par to [local town] but now obviously they've rejuvenated it, and put a lot of money into it. So they've done all that stuff now but it did used to be like [local town], but there's been nothing put into [local town].

They keep talking about it.

They were supposed to be doing a big regeneration, knocking it all down and rebuilding it but that all fell through.

Well there's no money is there, the council has no money.

But if you go to the local council offices, they're really plush nowadays.

Yeah they are.

Plus, the small business rates were phenomenal a few years ago, ridiculous money, and if you missed one payment they were threatening to close you down, so basically it doesn't make sense to start a small business.

The empty shops' rates are too high for small businesses.

In the local area you're looking at 20,000 plus per year just for the rates and that's for a small business, so all of them are going out of businesses because that plus everything else you have to pay just to open the doors each day.

Yes and you have to pay for parking as well, which is ridiculous now, at one point it used to be a pound to park, it's 1.80 for an hour now, so if you just want to go to [local town] and buy some bread it costs you £1.80.

I work in a local sewing shop and I was trying to talk the rest of the staff to take the rubbish, they say "why, why, we pay council tax" and I say yes but we also have to pay extra to have our rubbish collected because that doesn't come in council tax for local businesses. And they say why, and we can't make any money when we pay all these overheads.

And all this council tax going on that bloody big roundabout in [local small town].

I find traffic very poor, [nearby motorway] is bad, roads are very poor, there aren't enough speed bumps around, crime, serious crime has been bad, there was a decapitation in [local town] recently, we had a murder on the road recently, we had the lad under the bridge this week.

Yes there's been a couple more as well.

There have been two shootings with guns recently, haven't been as many as these for a while.

In [local small town] they did have kids grouping together but that seems to have phased out now.

They have quite a lot of the, what are they called, fight clubs.

On their bikes aren't they?

When they came from [local small town], that's the problem, they can get on that road link and whizz up to [local small town] in about 5 minutes and be away very quickly as well.

Didn't some young girl come out of a pub and have her throat slit?

**Do you get the feeling these issues are similar to what you'd see elsewhere in the country or are the particular in some ways to a locality?**

They are typical; it's quite an affluent area isn't it.

When it all comes down there are so many people that have lived on benefits for so long that it's a normal thing for children, and grandchildren, and it perpetuates behaviour so these people think they deserve something for nothing. I work in a local shop and I see it all the time, kids lifting things, never had a job in their life, what's going to happen to them?

Nothing.

My mum works in a school and she gets kids who she'll say to "you can't do that because when you get to high school you won't get away with that" and the kids will say back to her "I won't stay at high school" and she'll say "you won't get a job" and they say they don't want a job. It's like kids being raised by kids, and they get everything given to them and there's not ever any consequences to anything so they will do what they want. They know they'll get looked after wherever they go, if they get knocked up they'll get a house, there's no consequences.

The problem is in areas like that they haven't got positive role models have they.

That will perpetuate the issue, I had a typical example the other day – a kid that's not allowed in the shop and I'd said you're not allowed in please leave the shop and he f'd and blinded saying yes I can and I said no you can't please leave the shop. He eventually left and when I left to go past him he was blocking the doorway and I touched him, and he said "oh that's it you've assaulted me I'm going to have you done" and this is what you get all the time. This is their attitude, we can do what we want, you don't matter that you're paying your taxes to keep me in money to buy my scratch cards and my cigarettes and my booze, I can do what I want when I want because nothing happens.

I thought in the last election they were meant to get tough on crime and they're not. I don't care what anyone says, they're not. And this is I think the problem with [local town], they know they'll get away with stuff.

I do think people get away with stuff but I think there's not enough out there, they've cut everything so much so there aren't enough staff to man the crime.

It's the courts as well, we can't put him in prison because prisons are full but what else can you do with them really because nothing else seems to work, community sentences etc.

Chain them together?

I think education, I think a lot of it stems from the attitudes of the parents, so if you nail that one down.

You need to educate the parents too though, as well as educating the children.

Again on TV last night they were saying about, the type of headships who are really sort of go getting types of people that can make a difference to these communities, to these schools.

But it's upsetting the community, I've got experience of being in a very disadvantaged school in [local town] and we do the best for the children but we have to educate the parents, if the parents don't engage with you which they won't do because they have better things to do during the day and you've hit a stumbling block there.

My son's a teacher and he's experiences that.

When they do try to do something about the crime, and the riots are the perfect example, they say right we've got you on CCTV you're going down for x, but you can't do that say the do-gooders.

That's what I said before, there's no punishment.

I agree there's nowhere to put them, there's nothing to do, and I agree prison isn't the answer for all these people but you know. In one breath they're saying let's get tough on crime and they're trying to do it and then someone's saying to them you can't do that. So they can't win.

**So who is it you think that stops them from getting tough? When you say do-gooders, who do you mean?**

Well there's all sorts of different people. Nick Clegg's particularly one who doesn't want anyone to have their 'human rights' violated.

I think you're restricted in this because of the legislation in the European community, and other things as well but to get youngsters or whatever custodial sentences I don't think are the way forward personally. Because what I think tends to happen with kids like that is they go into prison environments and they come out well educated in the ways of prison and skills, other skills you don't really want them to have.

Years ago they had what was it called when they had to be...young lads into the army, not proper army but...

National Service.

We've gone downhill since national service.

Yeah if we had it back we'd give these kids something to do.

There are some kids that would be ideal; I wouldn't throw it out to anybody, but to put people on the straight and narrow and to give them other skills and confidence.

Education is crucial for people.

But the crucial thing is some youngsters thrive on education and do very well and are academic but others are not like that and maybe some of these opportunities you're saying would be a good idea. Look back on what was available a few years ago, apprenticeships are available, no jobs are available and that's key to all these problems.

But then we're letting a lot of people come over to this country, and we haven't got jobs for them and it's going to snowball. A lot have decided they want to go back home again.

*Unclear noise*

One thing I don't understand is the government has set rules but don't police it. A 30mile an hour limit but everyone goes above it, you see people using their



phones and incidents where things are done but not policed. There are these rules but they're easily broken.

But do you not think they've had any deterrent taken away from them, when I was a kid when I saw a policeman, even though I'd done nothing wrong I'd be like oooh (scared noise). And even now if I'm driving down a road and I see a police car behind me and I know I'm driving under the limit and I know I'm doing nothing wrong I still think ooh there's a copper behind me I must drive more carefully. But the kids just don't care.

**What else do you think isn't properly policed, insurance?**

Yes, loads of people are driving without.

That's why ours is so sky high.

I thought you'd be able to check if they're insured by the MOT.

They probably haven't got MOTs.

They've got quite strict on insurance, but they're not policing the immigrants.

There are loads of problems aren't there?

**One thing that came up earlier – you were talking about people just drinking and smoking all day long. The other day there was a thing on the telly about people being made to do work experience in Poundland and Tesco and things like that: what do people make of that?**

I think what people made of that is, they weren't paying them were they? They were asking them to do these experiences for free.

But they were still getting their benefits.

Well I don't believe in that, Tesco and the rest of them have got enough brass that if you are going to work for them then they should pay you.

They only did a two week stint.

It works out that there's a chance they'll keep their job, I did a YTS when I left school and we didn't keep our benefits we got paid something like £17 a week.

I think it was the types of jobs though, that they suggested, and the types of companies, all in supermarkets where its unpaid and low skilled jobs, same with Burger land and MacDonal'd's, they're all those and you're right it's good to have proper experiences but not.

Do you not think that they're trying to encourage other companies but they're not doing it because people are calling it slave labour so they say oh I won't do that?

A good reason why they should say let's get these people working in the voluntary sector, because there's so many areas now, with your organisation you're obviously involved in there must be, its charities like that that need additional help and support and in the same breath they can obviously give out experience to the person.

The country has absolutely no money, we have people sat on their bottoms drinking, smoking, spending their benefits on whatever the hell they want. Get them sweeping the streets – the streets are disgusting, get them out there doing something, clear the parks.

But if I've just left university and I've got a degree and there's no jobs out there for me, there's nothing, the government can't do anything to help me, why should I do anything like sweep the streets for anyone? I'm from a poor family

but can't get a job, so what should I do, just become slave labour for somebody? So where's the cut off point?

I see your point of view but on the other hand, you know, we're looking at this society we have where there are so many people on benefits of different sorts, and I see it day after day after day and as I say, it's all the way down. They're never going to change their lifestyle.

Should there be a cut off, where after x amount of years or months they say right OK, you've got to give something back. When they say have you seeked work this week when they're going to get the dole, here's a business card from an employment agency they'll get paid the stuff. I used to work in recruitment and you used to get people.

They do stop it after 6 months though,

But they'll get incapacity benefit won't they, with phantom back pains that they can't prove, that's why they're all doing that now aren't they?

They used to come in and they used to make a point of asking for a business card and I'd ask loads of questions and I could pinpoint the ones who would never come back and I'd ring the jobcentre and because they took my card to the job centre in order to get on their benefits – they'd say I've made an appointment with this girl at a recruitment agency blablablah and they'll get the benefits like that. And it was that easy for them to claim because they were 'seeking employment' so they should have to prove it or physically give something back because they might then have a sense of worth in their life that they've actually done something.

It doesn't have to be sweeping the streets, there has to be something that people, even graduates can do,

Like they should do some office experience or, because it is a vicious circle, no one will give them work experience and then they go for a job and they've got no experience. It's a catch 22.

### **What about Tesco in that instance?**

Tesco is a massive company, why can't they have them in head office doing some paperwork or get them doing some actual proper stuff.

To get a job at Tesco if you've got no computer at home you won't get a job because you've got to go online. If you don't go online, I was out of work for 8 months and I tried my hardest and I got a job in a hotel washing pots, that's how I got in there. I washed pots for 3 months and then the night porter had an argument with the managers and I covered him for one shift and they offered me the job. So I got in washing pots and then.

So you got in using your initiative in that respect, you've not said oh no I won't wash pots for a living, there's that many people out there who would say oh no I'm not doing that.

If you get paid the same to sit watching Jeremy Kyle as washing pots you'd sit on your arse and not doing anything aren't you?

Its whether you want to work, you'd accept the first job.

The chief of Marks and Spencer's has come out in defence of this scheme, and said I started sweeping the floors in the stockroom and I'm at the top now.

Yes, but I think nowadays people expect to get somewhere too quickly as opposed to starting at the bottom or just having the pride of having a job, I used to ring people up and offer a job and they'd say oh only 6pounds an hour? No

I'm alright, and it wasn't worth them coming off the benefits because they'd only be £20 better off a week which I can understand but then again you know you're back in work, you're back in the flow, and the working environment and it could lead to something else. They haven't got the initiative or the drive to do it.

Or the vision that they might actually improve their lives by earning more money.

I think that's because they're being given too much to begin with, if they were on ration books they'd definitely take the job wouldn't they?

But if they don't get given that amount of money to keep them in the lifestyle they're in then are they turn to crime like drugs or stealing.

Do you not think they do that anyway?

Well yes I do, but they're going to need to get that deficit from somewhere...

There was a young lad on the telly who applied for like 15,000 jobs in [local town] and didn't get one reply. He did it all online. It's the same I'm a fully qualified upholsterer but we've lost all that from cheap imports from China. I can't cover someone's suite for less than 1,000 pounds and you can buy a new one for 500. So that put me out of work so I went for jobs that's less than what I'm qualified like deliveries and that, and people kept saying no you're overqualified.

That's what happened to me when I lost my job, I had a really good job at British Gas and at 45 I was out of work and I had to look around for a job and I took a part-time job as a postman for 4 months which was a cultural shock, I think I'd have been better in prison in all honesty! I put in 200 applications out, in October and because I had money aside so I couldn't have any benefits and I preserved and in the January I got a job and spent 7 years there going all over the place and then I'm just here working now, but you've just got to apply yourself – not say I'm not going to get off my arse and do something. My philosophy was, if I'm out of a job, then when I go for a job I'm actually doing something and people said I'm too qualified, and I said what do you mean I'm too qualified? I'm a postman, and he said I never thought of that, and that's how I got my current job.

**Okay I'm just going to move it on to a couple of other issues - then we can come back to the political parties you enjoyed so much. Energy bills – is that a big issue for you at the moment or less so?**

Yes.

In my new house it's pretty cheap for some reason so I'll sit this one out!

We've taken advantage of deals of fixed rates and things so we're okay. But what I do get fed up with is people calling with all their different rates every two minutes.

For me the issue is you want to keep your bills as low as possible but the different rates the different companies come up with is complicated, so you're very confused really and it's not clear cut as to which is the best deal and I'm not sure if you actually benefit that much or if it's just kiddology.

The politicians are changing it to make it easier because only a guy with a PhD could work out the builds.

In all honest I was freaking out because I fixed 3 years ago or something, but nothing's really happened, it's gone up by maybe a fiver a month, it's nothing to write home about, but I think, I try not to have it on when I'm not there and

I think as long as you don't walk around like Blackpool illuminations you'll be alright.

You see I'm the coldest person in the history of the world ever and when we had the really cold winter my heating went on 24 hours a day but I kept it on a low heat and at the end of the year the gas company owes me 250 quid.

Unclear noise

I'm thinking of going on a solar power for my roof, my back garden has a bit of a slope so it gets quite muddy and I went out the other day and thought what is going on and - they had two huge panels as big as the roof here so whether you can get a grant for that.

But they've just pulled the grants on them

Oh have they?

They pulled them but then they brought them back again.

Has anyone been past any of the social housing in [local small town] lately? It's all got solar panels on.

But that's meant to be feeding money back into the gas and electricity.

But how does it create enough energy, because I heard someone on the telly saying that as long as it's sunny you can get hot water, free hot water, but not all the time, it depends on how much sun's shining.

That's correct, however if the sun shines all morning you'll have hot water then but if you go on holiday for 2 weeks that energy gets bought back into the national grid and they buy it back from you, they originally said they were going to buy it back at x pence or whatever it is but they've just pulled it all.

So they seep energy out of solar panel and take it back to them?

It's all stored in batteries, and then is sent off to wherever you use your share. With the council though, it's not benefiting their householders at all, the council take it and sell it all back.

### **What do you think of going green generally?**

I think it's a good idea to be honest, I've got grandchildren and I don't want them when they're older to face like world war one and things going for them, and at one point I used to just throw everything into one bin and now we've got 4 bins which I don't think is brilliant, we're going to get another bin apparently....

It's horrendous.

... But now I'm sorting cardboard, plastic, cans.

I hate it.

But when you've got grandchildren you do it for them.

But the only reason your saving there is landfill, there's nowhere to put it. Going green, talking about the global warming effect, if we're having that much of an effect on the earth can someone please explain the ice age to me?

Well no, we're not. Its insignificant the amount because of what other major countries are doing like China and India and even America.

The Ice Age happened before any there were any people.

I think the concept of a green environment is good but particularly with fuel situation with the gases eventually will go and we're reliant on Norway and on Russia for supplies and it may well be that looking at alternatives is a good idea. But I don't think it'll make a ha'p'orth of difference to global warming.

But only because we're going to run out of some things that we've got limited resources we're using.

Yes but [local town] council have spent more money on bins than anyone.

But they won't come and collect them though!

On a Friday morning they come and collect 3 different bins, and there are 4 bins out there and the black bin is 2 weekly and household rubbish should go in, and the cardboard and cans might not be that full depending on how much you drink, and that's what really annoys me. If they spent more money on getting people jobs than on collecting bins.

Half of them collect the green bins for me, I haven't got one and most houses haven't because no gardens and I don't know about you but I don't do much gardening in the winter. So why collect it every week?

I can't understand why they do that, it's bizarre during the winter.

I've only got a tiny green bin.

I think it's great, I see global warming going on, I do a lot of green things.

I'm not against it; I just don't understand how much money they're wasting on this particular bin when there's not much in it.

They should be collecting the black one every week.

### **Are any of the parties green, apart from the Green Party?**

The Lib Dems.

### **In a productive way? Are their ideas the right ones?**

I think so, [local town] is a prime example because it is a Lib Dem council and they probably do a lot more than most really.

Hence the solar panels.

The lib Dems will be gone soon.

The councillor here in [local small town] has been Lib Dem forever but now we have Conservative.

I think it will change people, you feel as if you're contributing something, I know we laugh about these bins but I actually feel like I'm contributing to making it a better place.

I moved house in the summer and when I moved I obviously had loads of stuff to get rid of and I made so many trips to the tip and I'd get there and they'd say 'oh, the cardboard bin's gone - just shove it in the mixed one.' But hang on, why have I spent so much time separating them all up if they're just going to put them in the same place? And that's what happens at the tip, I went the other day and he said 'that one's closed, you can't put it in there, just go and put it in the cardboard one or the burnable stuff.' So I said, I don't think it is all burnable. 'Oh just put it in anyway'

You're lucky, you've got a tip, our tip has gone.

### **I can see we could go on for quite some time...**

[laughter]

You've opened a can of worms.

### **But now tax – VAT, council tax...?**

Council tax is ridiculous.

Especially for single people living on their own.

We've got such a high rate in [local town], one of the highest in the country's.

I quite agree but then again we are one of those that get the smallest amount simply because we're more careful whereas other areas where they've got bigger issues but created by themselves get the bigger shares of the subsidies.

#### **As in within this area?**

No, because all [local town] would be the same, but compare with Manchester or Liverpool or other areas. We've got good schools etc.

It's the same with the education budget, we get less than other areas.

The one issue I'm against at the moment is VAT at 20%. I think that's absolutely ridiculous. If you buy materials you then have to pass on the cost to your customer if you're self employed so there's no wonder small businesses aren't doing anything in [local town] not only have they got stupid business rates to pay, they've then also got to pay 20% VAT. I know they can claim it back but you have to turnover a lot to be registered. My friend has a shop in [local small town] and he said to me there's no way he'd turn over 70,000 and he's VAT registered and he was wondering if he can deregister, and I think that's a problem, VAT needs to come down. You pay it on fuel, and gas and electricity bills and you just don't notice it do you. 20% is a lot.

Is kids clothing still exempt?

Yes.

Food you don't pay on, although cakes are a luxury.

If we're not careful they'll put it up again in the coming years.

It's a stealth tax.

I think the council tax is a financial burden, it's too much and we don't see anything, if I go to the hospital I'm not happy with what I see there, you take my bins which I appreciate but I don't see much else.

The council offices are really plush, they've just been done up. Lots of seats.

Have you seen [local small town] – they've redone the flagstones many times now, so they do get benefits.

That's because they're Liberal Democrat councillors.

But it's a waste.

Like when they paved [local town], but they didn't do it properly and people fall over and threaten to sue the council.

There's a census now, there were so many potholes and those are the things, I don't know whether that's council or road tax.

When I drive from A to B I think a lot of places look scruffy, that's where I don't see anything. I see smashed windows and they do tend to deal with smashed bus stops but they don't deal with pot holes and I don't see enough.

I think the empty shops make it look like a ghost town, not just [local town], but [local small town]– when I grew up it was really nice all local you'd have a bakers, butchers, everything and now you struggle to buy a fresh sandwich.

It's all Indian, Chinese, kebab houses, all takeaways now.

I think if the council made it easier for local businesses to stay alive, and make a profit then bakers and butchers can remain open.

There are two butchers in the village, well established.

**Where's all the money going then from council tax? You've mentioned the office being plush but what are they spending the money on, it can't all go on the offices surely?**

The roundabout.

They were in debt, and they owed money.

Fire services, police services and all that sort of thing.

You don't mind paying for that do you?

But you don't see police walking down the street, we pay more money but see less.

They cut back on the police haven't they?

Yeah massive cutbacks, there's going to be more this year as well.

The inquiry centres are closing, they're closing [local town] police station.

So what are they planning on doing with it?

I don't know, they might sell it off, build flats?

Plus there's the post office and the sorting office, and that's all gone. My next door neighbour but one's a postman, and has to go to [local town] in the morning.

**You were saying – I can't remember which of you – about how it was kind of unfair because the money gets moved around the area and poorer areas get more, so on the one hand you might think they need it more, but then again someone said they cause the problems themselves?**

Sometimes when they pump this money into areas that require it, because of the mentality of the people there, it's back to square one in few weeks later, and in the same condition again. They're putting money into places and then it deteriorates in a matter of a few more weeks.

A typical example round here is [local town] and [local town]– they both have community centres, where's our community centre? Where's [their local small town]? The poorer areas get money pumped in.

But they still look rough, [local small town] has obviously had, I've had to visit children in nasty areas I didn't know exist like back end of [local small town] and it was like Beirut and you just can't think why can't they put a bit more money in – maybe it'll get vandalised, but you see [local small town] and they've done the pavements and roundabout and why is it? Is it because of the right councillors and the fingers in the right pies?

The community centre in [local small town] is quite posh.

They cleaned [local small town] up, got rid of the [local] Pub, the corporation properties because of the image arriving into [local town] and seeing all the washing out.

I've had to rent a house, I looked at houses and one was very nice, 4 beds 2 baths, but barbed wire outside! I had a niece that lived in social housing but they worked, and they had their phone line cut because they worked.

It's a different world.

Having looked at all sorts of properties in and around the area, it shocked me.

Don't you think it's scary that it's just ten minutes down the road from where you live? I was heartbroken because I went to see this child in this house and I couldn't believe it was only 10 minutes from my work, it's was like *Shameless*.

But why do they want to live like that? They don't know any different do they?

Well that's a good example of what [local town]'s getting like – *Shameless*.

Do you think so or is it just certain areas.

Yeah, certain areas.

Yes, but it's spreading, definitely spreading.

It's a that kind of programme where them type of people think it's great, it's like normal life

**Moving on, just to ask if you think Britain on a whole is a fair country?**

No.

No.

I think it used to be, I think it's fair in a lot of respects it's absolutely fantastic but it can be fair in the wrong ways. We're too fair, we shoot ourselves in the foot. We should be fair but there's a point where people should help themselves and be responsible for themselves and not rely on the state.

I also think we have to be prouder to be English...

I do.

... or British, and actually sing the National Anthem in schools and things like that

We'll do it for the Jubilee but we used to have to do it every morning.

I agree but with more of the children coming in from different countries.

If I go to live in Saudi Arabia I have to live by their rules.

Correct. And if you go to other places, but if they come over here and they can still live by their own rules. I think we're too fair. Too fair.

We need to be tougher!

We've spent so long saying

We've become insignificant in our outlook. We've spend so long saying yeah yeah, OK, we'll be the underdogs, now we've become the underdogs... rather than saying 'yes fine, come and live over here, do whatever you want, in your house live by your rules, but if you're outside, you do it our way.

But this is that the politicians are saying is good about Britain, is that it's multi this and multi that.

There's nothing wrong with that, but there has to be one set of rules, there has to be a line drawn and those rules have to be British rules.

That's where there's frustration. I'm feeling very similar to you but I can see the point that, I think isn't London the multicultural capital of the world? So there are other people who see it differently, we're in the suburbs, I'm frustrated by that.

They reckon in about 50 years time if you come out you wouldn't know where you were. You wouldn't know what country it is.

But that's wrong.

It feels wrong to a lot of people.

We're all saying these sort of things but the politicians put another hat on it, and they see this as having major benefits of bringing skills into the country.

Which makes you wonder, are they listening to the right people? Which goes back to what we said at the start, that they're out of touch.

If you got politicians in here now, they'd say that the conversations we're having, that we're out of touch.

Although, are they not in too deep so they put another hat onto it because they don't really know what to do about the situation because it's got a bit beyond their control?



It's a hot potato, and they want to just leave it out of the frame completely.

I think there's nothing wrong with being multicultural but at the end of the day there has to be a set of rules that everybody has to adhere to.

I've been to the Middle East and what have you, and I doubt very much you'd be able to put a Catholic Church up there. And yet over here you can do these things. Now is that a good or a bad thing? What is that?

I have no problem with people worshipping a different religion but they can't have their own laws. You cannot bring sharia law into this country and say we're going to live by this now. No, I'm sorry, this is England!

I have no argument about the religions or anything but like Britain some of these mosques... look totally out of... they don't look right with the environment. You know you've got terraced houses and the next minute you've got a gold and yellow building in the middle of it.

The big issue is to have this multicultural society like we've got, ends up, we've been talking about where our money goes, and unfortunately they present bigger problems to us and are more dependent on financial support for the issues they bring with them. And that is where a lot of our money is going. Our money can't go on the traditional things you would like to see, like cutting the grass and simple things, we're now having to spend more and more money on dealing with children who can't speak so we've got to get them English support in schools which in the past never existed because it didn't happen. I think that is one of the big problems we've got, that financially, they're... it's a big burden.

This is one of those things we were promised, that it was going to be 'you have to pass this test before you can be British'. You have to be able to speak this, you have to be able to do this... What happened to it?

It's like 5 questions long, because I filled in the one to go to Australia and it took me like 24 weeks to do it, and out of interest I did the one online for to get over here, and it was like, 'tick this, here you go'. [Laughs] Congratulations! Well done! The Australian one is just horrendous. Oh my gosh you have got to learn about literature and recite this that and the other and there's a points system on education and salary and what you know about their country.

You've got to offer their country something to be there. You can't just turn up.

It doesn't feel like that but I'm sure there are strict controls to get over here.

There's a certain amount of money you've got to have to get to Australia, is it £200,000?

That's another thing – how much English history's taught in schools here now. Even my kids – I've got a 21 and 24 year old and I'll say something about something that happened a long time ago and they'll go "what", and it drives me mad.

Well we never celebrate St George's day do we? That sums up England for you. We celebrate St Patrick's day, what is it, Ramadan, but we don't have St George's day do we?

**Just going to round up with a little bit of politics now. When you think of people who become conservative MPs what type of people do you think of?**

Public school background.

Educated.

Someone with family money. Maybe some business orientated person.

Sometimes if the seats in the family, was held by the grandfather so it's part of what you are.

**Do you reckon that's a good thing?**

I think potentially. There's elements of good in that.

If you get in potential traditionalists that's good.

But if it's not materialised just rolling along as we've been talking about for the last hour or so then maybe not... put some new blood into it

It's not necessarily good if they've been brought up with money all the time.

Yeah, have a look and see what real life's all about.

Very true

And go out and see what you see. Yeah.

You don't see any of that now.

Blair used to go out, I know was all for publicity, but he did do it.

Unclear noise

Who was the one that used to like a few pints? The MP? He'd go and have about three or four pints in the pub and that's the kind of guy I like.

Harold Wilson used to be a bit like that.

**Would it be good if Conservative MPs were different? What could be better?**

A lot of it is the stereotype really.

They're supposed to be tough on law and order and I'd like them to be tougher. If that's what they put themselves forward as.

**But nothing inherent in the people, more about what they do, you don't seem too annoyed at the public school or whatever?**

No. Because a lot of them, whatever party it is, they're all from the same ilk.

For me, it doesn't matter, they should just go out and see the people in poor areas and go to schools and rum down areas.

What I don't like is when they parachute people into areas, to become MPs, that have got no idea of the area they're wanting to represent.

When they say 'you'd be good there because you've got a good profile'

But sometimes it's better the devil you know, because you get the guy who's come up from the sticks, who comes through and makes the money, he could be more of a bugger than the fellow that's already had the money in the first place.

If they did go into these poor areas they'd have a culture shock.

**And Labour MPs? What are they like?**

I think they're very similar. Years ago you would have got the trade unionists coming up the ranks...

Like Arthur Scargill

... Yeah and Bevan and people like that, but now - education again - they're very, very similar to the Conservatives. They're not a great deal different. They've both got money. Blair comes from a wealthy background, as do a lot of others as well. I think they're very, very similar.

Then you look at some that aren't, like Prescott and some of the antics he got up to!

He's come up through the ranks but he's full of bullshit that's the fact isn't it.

The problem is, going back years ago people used to vote all the time for the same people, but now people change their minds all the time, because they're not being brought up by families any more to understand you know there dad was a staunch Labour man, or their uncle might have been a staunch Conservative, where you lived was how you voted and you put your flags in your window, not that doesn't happen any more.

Is this not to do with education, you don't automatically follow you make your own mind up?

Normal people don't have the backing now do they?

There's certain families that I grew up with where if you changed your party you were like a scab. And we seemed to be better off then.

I still think there are certain areas you can predict how they're going to vote every year, and it's just the marginals that make the difference. And that's where one party gets in or the other party.

### **Would you know how your parents voted?**

Yes.

Yes.

Yes.

Yes.

Yes.

### **And does it feel natural to do what they did?**

No – I'll do what suits me, not that suits anybody else.

### **And some do say I've heard people say their dad would turn in his grave if I didn't vote Labour but you haven't felt this?**

No, its for me.

Whoever picked up my dad first to take him to the polls he'd choose them.

[laughter]

For my mum it's to do with the paper.

It's no longer a trait that has to be followed. Unlike football teams which have to stay with the family.

### **A few people have said there seem to be less differences now between the parties than used to be. If you think back to Mrs Thatcher what do you think of her now?**

I wish she was back in power.

She was as hard as nails. She wouldn't let anyone tell her what to do.

She was brilliant.

I disagree with her being brilliant. I think she was a dictator and didn't allow government to govern as she did it all for them.

She would not have let any of the European countries dictate to us how we should run our lives.

All the utility companies which were companies that were owned by ourselves, she sold all that. So now we're being run by Gaz de France and all that. Tell me if you could go and buy shares in Gaz de France? And the answer to that question

would be no. What has she done? She's wrecked opportunities right left and centre for youngsters in all honesty, there's no industry, it's a service industry country that's geared up with high finance. And that's how this country makes its money. There's nothing else, she blew the lot.

I'd agree with that.

She made a choice few, with the Ferraris, making a fast buck very quickly... I'm just upset I didn't make it at the time they did.

Do you not think she came across and stood for British values?

I think initially she was a good woman, with good values and I think she went bonkers in the position, given too much rope and hung herself with it. Everyone was scared to death of her. From when Heath let her have the reigns.

But didn't she give the green light to small businesses setting up? There was more set up under her than any other. They've gone since but when she was in...

I think she was geared up to big business personally.

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## Focus Group 2

### **Let's drive straight in, if I mention David Cameron which words spring to mind, just off the cuff?**

Tory Boy.  
Eton toff.  
Posh.  
Trying his best.  
Lots of promises.  
He's got an impossible job.  
Not a lot.  
A fraud.  
Not unique.  
Doesn't bring much to mind to be honest.

### **Its interesting, is he a fraud?**

No more than Ed Miliband or any of the other leaders, all seem a bit false and change their minds all the time and don't listen to the party.

### **Anyone think that's harsh?**

No.  
Pre-election promises and then going back.

I think anyone who gets into power and you realise what you have to do to satisfy everyone and what you have to do to get over the present hurdles, not even to look into the distance you find you have to economise on your promises and change your mind and that goes for everyone. That's the problem with politicians nowadays, they can only see the finishing line which is the next election, the minute they get in they're trying to get re-elected, no one's interested in being a statesman anymore.

It's easy to throw stones from the sidelines, same isn't it with 'the boss is rubbish', but when you have to make decisions. The boss is a lonely ship.

### **Do we all agree he's trying his best?**

It would appear so, there have been plenty of cuts. That's what he said he would do.

Isn't that the problem though, that's what they're saying. We only ever get told what the media and spin doctors try to tell us.

It's hard to get a job at the moment whatever they tell us.

### **If he was a car, what car would he be?**

Jag.  
No, they're quite reliable aren't they.  
Ford mondeo? Inoffensive.  
Breaks down a lot.  
The second seat must be for Clegg then.  
Okay, what about Nick Clegg, what comes to mind when you think about it?  
Puppet.

I see them all as puppets. Anyone who leads anything in politics because they've got all those people behind them. I really do believe they're being puppeted, I don't know who's behind it, but they don't make the decisions.

Again, he has an impossible job.

They all have, no matter who gets in it's impossible to get this country put right, I don't think this country can be put right. And I think it's a shame for our children's children, it's hard enough to get a job now, my daughters training to be a teacher and she's going to come out of university with £30,000 in debt for a four year degree, trying to make something of herself. But it's not David Cameron's fault, it's just the way this country is at the minute.

Everything's just so expensive, the price of living, you can never make ends meet.

What you were saying about the university fees, they're going up so much, as is everything else, so not being able to get a job and being in a massive amount of debt.

Fewer might go to University because of the fees.

**At the risk of being frivolous in the light of what you've just said, if Nick Clegg was a car which would he be?**

He'd have to be the sidecar on the motorbike.

I don't know he seems to do quite a lot, for the education, I've read about him.

He's in a great position in terms of the Lib Dems as they're in a position of power which they've never been into before so he's got to make the most of it.

But he's got no real mandate there and no one really wants what he's doing.

He's between a rock and a hard place.

He'd be a Marina car. Everyone seemed to have one, but no one would admit to buying one.

**Brilliant, then just one more, what comes to mind when you think about Ed Miliband?**

He always looks frightened.

He looks and sounds out of his depth.

No doubt he's highly intelligent but seems like something out Wallace and Gromit.

Possibly that's just how they are. [You wonder] Why are you saying that, what are you trying to achieve?

**If Ed Miliband were a car?**

A Lada.

Electric. Everyone says they want one but no one has one. Totally impractical and cost you a fortune.

**We're going to start by talking about the local area, what you regard as local to where you live – what would that be? Thinking about day to day life issues. Do you think of [Local Area] or [Nearby City] What are the main issues?**

Quite a few schools are down, and where my daughter goes is quite overpopulated now. they closed others so they took most of [local] high school in. My daughter isn't complaining but the classes are huge.

The school closed because it wasn't economically viable, there weren't enough pupils to populate the school, there will be in about four years time when the demographics change.

So what will happen then?

In the short time they've asked [another school] to take on more pupils and to expand into 90 per year not 70 per year at junior level.

So where will they then feed?

Mostly into [local school].

But that's the way it's going to go, I don't think they're building more schools.

[The local] College annoys me, they poured money into it and then when the quango pulled out they just stopped building work.

It's a shame that.

They were nearly finished it seems to me stupid.

Same with the link road – have a good idea, put a lot of money in then never finish it. Was going to link [local road] to the airport – but nothing got done.

Lots of traffic delays, and always doing building on the main roads.

They cobbled all the streets and did two roundabouts and it's carnage.

It does look nice but I don't see why they spent all the money. While they messed around with it businesses lost business.

By the Waitrose and Costa coffee and the decision for two roundabouts will create masses of accidents.

Complete waste of money.

I work in [the local] primary school and it was chaos.

It takes my husband 45 minutes to do a 20 minute journey due to constant roadworks.

### **Do you think in general that politicians are sensitive to the issues that touch your everyday lives?**

Local councillors are, no one here has mentioned pot holes and dog mess but they focus on that.

When I swerve over the potholes on [the main] Road I'm sure everyone thinks I'm a drunk driver until they reach it, it's been there for ages.

I've been canvassed by Lib Dems and Tories asking what I want to happen and that's good.

When they get a bee in their bonnet, like 3G phone masts, they get militant.

I got canvassed by BNP, and I found that offensive, and them being on my property possibly devalues my property.

There's been a lot of job cuts in the council haven't there.

Yes, council workers have been cut back.

I'd say they've done a good job ruining [our town] between them. I'm not the world's greatest shopper but I made a visit at Christmas and I couldn't believe how many closed shops there were.

They're talking about redeveloping.

They have a brand new building and it's empty still. So they've done something that looks nice but has no use.

To be fair to them, they've spent a lot of money on [the] Theatre and that does look nice.

That was lottery money.

The town centre is a ghost town, betting shops and cashing shops.

It's a ghost town really.

And I think it's awful the amount of shops open like payday loans. They're awful, the amount of interest, they're taking advantage.

It creates a vicious circle.

They're legal loan sharks.

I bet there are about 12 in [the town] now.

Yes, as well as the pawnbrokers.

**Is there something they could be doing to reverse the decline?**

I think they should be capping the interest those places are charging.

If you walk around in the daytime in the week, you see lots of young people walking around aimlessly because they have nothing to do. They're not working, so they walk around there. That's a big problem is a lot of unemployment.

I can't understand why the government are saying go on the equivalent of YTS and why aren't they promoting to start making things – cars, clothes, everything's abroad.

We're too expensive, we can't get the raw materials and the labour to compete with India.

It worries me, are we going to be a 3rd world country? We have nothing to offer anymore, we're not Great Britain.

If you look at what the youngsters are studying, some are still studying vocational things like engineering but how many are coming out with sociology and media studies thinking I have a degree so I should have a job and I'm too well qualified to do that job. We're doing them a disservice.

When I finished, law and criminology and I came out thinking great what can I do with this – nothing without doing a post grad course and that seemed silly.

I think it's sad when you've worked so hard to aim at a career and it's cost such a lot of money to get there.

But are there people at uni because it was Blair's idea to get them in there. So we get higher up the list than other countries at education. Then it's someone else's problem when they're unemployed.

**Do you think that the issues around here are the same as around the country or are there divides? Is there a north-south divide? Or do you feel everyone faces the same issues?**

Pay difference.

I find a lot of employees now are getting rid of staff that have been there for years and taking on new people and then realising that they just can't fill the gap. My boss has been down the same route. I feel that the older people, over 50, are struggling to get jobs and the really young people. We've taken on apprentices and they don't turn up to work on time and they just can't be bothered to be honest. But maybe this is the way it's going, it's a shame they're not motivated.

Is that because they have too many benefits?

I have an 18 year old niece whose just had a baby with her boyfriend, he doesn't work because he's on disability benefit, she doesn't work because she has a baby and they've just got a 2 bedroom flat and they're having everything paid for. She has nicer clothes than me; she sits and plays with her wii all the time.



I have this argument with my daughter all the time, a lot of her friends are the same and she says to me 'who's the fool Mum, you go out to work and they sit at home all day'. And I said I enjoy working.

But if you have a situation where you have young people whose parents have never worked and whose grandparents have never worked then there's no work ethic, there's no one to look up to for getting up in the morning or being well presented.

Especially at the age of about 18, you think why would I go to work when I can stay at home and watch Jeremy Kyle.

But they'll get bored of that.

But they don't though, they live that life forever.

I have a friend who's never worked, her husband hasn't worked, she goes abroad about 3 times a year and she has a brand new car. She is ill now, and God works in mysterious ways... she's someone I knew when we were growing up, but her 3 children do all work so fair play to them. My mum never worked but me and my siblings all work but my mum never did.

Because there's a lack of jobs, not that they're necessarily all trying.

I think you can get a job it's a question of whether you're prepared to do it.

It's what you're prepared to do; you need to sweep a floor.

People complain about foreigners taking jobs but they're jobs that they're willing to take.

I'm not a racist but I can't think what attracts them here. There's nothing here for people anymore – they've got sunshine over there and probably more jobs.

### **Is immigration an issue here?**

No, not in [the local area]. Maybe more in [the nearby town].

There are quite a few political refugees there as well.

I can't understand why we give them free housing. I know you should help people but they get money for doing nothing. If we went to another country and asked, we'd get laughed at.

Talking about economic or political refugees?

Just the flock of foreigners who come, with no way of supporting themselves.

Yes but I think quite a few are taking advantage.

How do you tell the difference, hold them here, send them back or detention centre or give them a flat?

We can't say that can we, we don't know if they were under a threat because we've never lived that life.

But if you had to leave this country and went to France and asked and they said okay fine we'll just check, but you stay in this detention centre.

But we don't, we just let them wander about in the country, I've watched a programme on it.

So you'd be happy to be kept as a political refugee.

No I'm not, but there must be another way of dealing with it.

### **Is Britain fair do you think overall in the grand scheme of things?**

If you play by the rules.

What I don't understand about political refugees is that the first country you arrive in won't have them so they send them to Britain.

That's why there's nothing left in this country.

If you went to Australia you have to have money and points.

If you want to stay in Australia you have to do 3 months community service, so what my son had to do, he went into the outback and worked on a farm. We should have a similar system, maybe work in a care home and help the community.

**So how have we ended up in this situation? Did we vote for it?**

We have no say in it do we.

They aren't going to ask our opinions are they.

**Are politicians out of touch?**

I think they're out of control, because we play by the rules and listen to Europe we end up with all the problems and the French just go (makes exploding noises of things being blown up).

**And what's the way back from that?**

That's difficult, once you've let things go.

Where do you draw the line and say no you can't come in?

They've tried to raise the threshold of certain economic migrants, and limit those coming on specific skills that we are missing in the country. But then why don't train our own?

There are enough universities.

**A couple of other issues, energy bills – is that a big issue?**

They've gone through the roof.

It's unbelievably high, god knows why.

I live in a 2 up 2 down, and I think I must be heating the national grid!

They're very good at putting prices up but not bringing them back down.

Yes, it's like petrol isn't it.

I don't know much about my prices, I'm still at home.

Stay there!

Electric is £150 a month.

**Any idea why more expensive?**

Because 'privatise it, you'll save money,' but we haven't.

**Is there anything that could be done?**

Bring candles back.

I see the need for it but the green tax element is a laudable prospect but put your own house in order first. And when they're opening coal fireplaces in China every week what use is us.

The solar panel incentives are interesting.

They don't tell you about the upkeep costs, I see them all the time in my job because I'm up on roofs, people seem to put them on roofs that will leak.

It's not local authorities or councils, I've seen some on councils. Where's that money coming from? Vast amount going into buying peoples electricity.

Tax reduction on actual fuel would be good, obviously they have a deficit to pay for but you can't use a different form of transport like a train because it would

cost £250 to get to London tomorrow. So you may as well drive, stay in a hotel and it will still cost less. [Transport] here is better but still doesn't cover it all so you still need a car.

And the parking.

It's not just private cars; fuel duty is on everything on a road which puts prices of things in shops up.

### **So do you get the sense that politicians are conscious of this issue?**

No, they get expenses.

That's what gets me, when I get petrol they ask me if I need a receipt to claim it back on expenses and I think I wish. Its people with masses of money who can claim it back.

They're not the ones who need to worry about it!

But at the end of the day where's the government going to get its money?

But you're already paying your income tax and VAT on everything else.

But they have a massive deficit to recover, and whichever party got into power would have had it, and the money has to come from somewhere. At least they're trying to do it, reducing benefits, putting up duty of fuel, to try and close the gap. What's the alternative – end up like Greece! That's the problem none of us like it.

But our wages aren't coming up to meet these prices.

Because there isn't enough money!

My income doesn't allow... you know, you go shopping and you're trying to cut your costs but your ends don't meet anymore. I've found over the last 12-18 months I'm increasing my overdraft to make ends meet. When's it going to stop, I can't keep doing this. And I won't have a credit card. I'm trying to get out everything.

That's where those payday loans come in.

But isn't that on a small scale exactly what the government's doing? Aren't they robbing Peter to pay Paul?

Like childcare costs- they're constantly increasing so less people will be able to go back to work – it's not worth going. But then they can't afford to live. Where's it all going to end?

This morning on the news they said the fuel is 60% taxed, that's not fair. There's got to be a better way.

Them government officials are still not going to pay the same amount of tax.

But have you been to hospital in Spain? We've got the NHS, which is massively underfunded, but it might be underfunded but it's funded by the government – do we want to cut down on that? Do we want to cut our education? We could cut taxes.

Well maybe the fat cats right at the top should have a big cut of what the take.

How many fat cats are there?

A lot of fat cats in this country.

If there are a million fat cats out there, that's a million pounds cut, that's a drop in the ocean as far as the debt is concerned. And there aren't a million fat cats.

### **Who are the fat cats?**

The bankers.

The ones that can make all these rules and.

**Are any northern bankers fat cats?**

They're taking big profits, and you know a lot of the banks, we're funding the banks they'd have gone bankrupt. It's totally unfair, and the government let them walk all over them and don't do anything about them. Why don't they say, tell you what, you've not done well, we're gonna take that money to take the country. Why don't they say that? They've got the power to do it.

But all the staff will leave. Where will that staff go? Where would they go to earn the sort of money they're earning?

America.

Swiss banks.

**Its interesting, you talked about people on benefits but it's taken a long time to mention bankers – what's more frustrating?**

They're still getting bonuses, big bonuses.

I object to them getting bonuses for effectively doing their job. I object to anyone getting bonuses for doing their job because I don't get one. you get a salary and that's it, and people work on commission but that's their contract and if that's their contract we can't complain about. Either we allow people to do that or don't. Their argument is 'I'll just go somewhere else then', well can we afford that, well the service industry is the about the only industry in Britain that's actually making any money so do we want to lose them? I can't believe I just said that because I hate them all.

What we have to remember is we owe 68 billion pounds, which equates to four thousand, eight hundred pounds for every man woman and child in the country. Now if you're going to say stop paying bonuses and effectively nationalise it and have civil servants running it you'll never see that money again. So I mean you've got to strike the balance, you've got to have people of the calibre to run a national organisation but by the same token you can't just say oh stuff you I'm taking a hundred thousand pounds this year.

Could just reduce the bonuses.

If you and me had a hundred thousand pound a year to live on.

I wouldn't know where to start.

I'd get by!

That's on top of the wage again.

It's just ridiculous, argh.

You wouldn't be complaining if it was your wage or your bonus though would you?

I wouldn't know where to start.

I won the lottery yesterday, £57.

Unclear noise.

**Interesting you mentioned footballers and stuff, do you think footballers are paid too much?**

I do.

I think its ridiculous.

I don't know who they think they are, they're arrogant, all they do is kick a ball – I could do that.

Even with half their pay they'd have a massive amount of money.

I agree completely but what does that have to do with politics?

No it's not, but the money that they are getting, not saying they should put it into the country.

They earn that, they bring that much money in sponsorship and t-shirts and the god knows how much money being bet in Eastern Asia. They make that money 10 20 30 times over.

That's why people pay £45 to go and watch them on a Saturday. Or Sunday.

**Is there anyone else who is blatantly overpaid do you think?**

Not sure I want to say this – doctors. I admire what they do but a friend of mine is a GP, she works 2 days a week, and she earns about 50% more than I do. That's not right.

But I'd imagine it's not easy when training to be a doctor.

But doctors spent 5 years at university training to be a GP, I spent 4 years at University, she looks after people's health and I design buildings for them.

She kills them once, he kills them in hundreds! (joke)

I don't have a pension funded by the state but she does. It all just seems a bit much. I admire what they do, it's not a job I want to do myself but I'm sure lots do.

You can get struck off for anything you know.

I can get sued.

I'm not sure I can agree with that because I've just been ill and the doctor was really good and I went to hospital, and I've never had to be ill before and I thought they were quite good.

Oh no, I'm not saying they're not, I know exactly what they do but how someone can work 50 days a week and earn 50% more than I do working 45 hours a week isn't right.

No.

It doesn't seem fair.

Tube drivers.

Do you know, I think we're all going to end up being communists!

**I mean I suppose, for most people in Britain do you think that – for what they put in - they get back what they deserve?**

No.

Not at all.

**And why's that?**

Well nurses, you said you've been in hospital, nurses aren't paid well.

And what they put up with as well.

I sat in A&E on a Friday night, my niece split her knee, and they were all coming in drunk and swearing at them, it's absolutely awful.

Unclear noise

**Is this sense you're talking about something new?**

No.

I think it's, I say generational, everyone looks back with rose coloured glasses but you know, the society I grew up in as a teenager you didn't get that. A

Yorkshireman talking here! My peers who went into teaching in the late 1970s they couldn't believe the transformation in schools in the five years they'd been away, and no doubt it ten times worse now.

I do feel for the teachers, they've got no control, what can they do if a child's being abusive to them? what can they do about it? They can send them outside the class, but if one's been a bit off and been shouting it'll set the others off as well.

Is that all coming back down to a fundamental breakdown in society, coming back down to you've got generational institutional unemployment, breakdown in the fabric of society, you've got no respect for what you and I might call elders and betters and certainly authority – authority has totally lost its authority.

**And what do you think's caused that?**

Lack of uniforms.

To go back to when I was a lad, you got on a bus there was a bus conductor, you went to a park there was a park man.

And if you stepped out of line when you got home your parents would take the side of the authorities and you'd get a second clip around the other ear.

You can't do that now can you.

Can't even give them the first one can you!

There's also a lot more, I was saying to my young friend the other day, when I was her age (she's 18) I went out on a Friday night with enough to buy myself two martinis and a lemonade and the bus fare home, now they're going out with £50 £60 a night. This is why they're all binge drinking because they've got more disposable money. In fact when you look back on how we used to live 20 30 40 years ago, the disposable income now is enormous and the quality of our lifestyle is almost at a pinnacle. If you think about all the luxury stuff you've got – your plasma tv, your xbox, your mobile phones, your two cars in the drive, you know – my mum took a working party home one lunchtime to show everyone her new fridge she'd got because she was married, and you know that was bloody marvellous 50 years ago. And we're almost at the stage now when we've never had it so good, we might never get better – increasing fuel, decreasing fossil fuels, lack of money, low pensions, our lifestyle will go downhill.

You might be right, that's the sad thing, we might be at the top of it now.

Our children won't have the same lifestyle we had, no way.

Yeah they're not going to be going abroad once a year on a family holiday.

When I left university, I didn't come out with thirty thousand pounds of debt. I had an un-contributory pension, I bought my first house, and the state provided me with a 100% mortgage for goodness sake.

We'd probably need what you paid for your house as a deposit now.

Yes, it's 10 percent now is it?

I'll struggle to get on the property ladder, I'll have to rent for a while.

And take a pension out?

I can't take a pension out at the moment.

**Okay let's think about, if we may, more party politics. When you think about the sort of people who become Labour MPs – what sort of people do you think about?**

Oxbridge graduates.

But traditionally they weren't were they?

Used to be working people but now they're just full of talking aren't they?

**Is that sort of good or bad? Progress or not?**

Doesn't represent the people the party was set up to represent. But that's because if it was representing those people it would never get into office. Everyone's fighting for the middle ground so everyone's trying to appeal to the middle ground.

In my opinion you need some experience of life before you can go into politics.

Yeah, how old is Ed Miliband?

You spend your time at Oxford then spend time being a research assistant for someone in parliament.

It's all out of a book isn't it?

The lifestyle of these people who live in poverty, who they say they're fighting for, they've never been to these places, they've never even lived half of what other people have done. It's all out of a book. I suppose speaking to people, like you're doing now, you're taking information from us to take back to whoever's paying you aren't you?

**What about Conservative MPs?**

Eton.

The same as Labour ones.

**Good people? Well intentioned people? People on the make?**

Posh.

All politicians are career politicians, they went into it because they wanted to earn their money by going into politics rather than it being a vocation to help people. And there's nothing wrong with being an Oxbridge graduate and a Labour MP if you're helping the people you're meant to and with the aspirations that party wants to embrace, but I don't necessarily think that that's the case.

**Any other thoughts? Do you think that it is bad to have spent a lot of time working in politics? What would an ideal Conservative politician be like?**

I suppose go back to the days when all Labour politicians were union officials. And Conservatives were...local business men weren't they? Or land owners?

**Which would not be much better or?**

If you want my two-pennies-worth there should be a law that you can't become an MP until you're 40. So you have to experience life.

**Too much? Or not?**

No that's right really.

There's an age limit on the US president isn't there? Not that I'm sure it's helped.

**Is there a top or a bottom?**

Bottom, I think it's 35.

But even at 35 you haven't really experienced life have you?

You have to be an age to get a driving licence to drive a car so why should it be different for politics?

Some sort of testing.

Is the test not standing up and proving yourself at the hustings? This is what I think and this is what I'm going to do and I'm going to represent you and more fool the people who elect people.

There could be a junior MP type level and then progress on.

Isn't that how it works anyway?

I don't know.

They put them in jobs and they sort of work their way up.

You get where you are through the people that you know don't you?

Becomes a self-perpetuating elite doesn't it?

### **Do you think the politicians think independently?**

No.

They try and say what you want to hear but have no intention of carrying them out half the things, you know the general election they say they'll deal with better education and schools but none of that's happened and it's all cuts cuts cuts. Nothing good's happening at the moment and they're scaremongering at the moment, saying we'll go back into recession. And then employers, we don't know whether to take someone on or not, and the businesses they're just like oh let's wait a month or another three and see what happens. But nothing's changed in the last 18 months, that's my opinion.

It's very difficult not to toe the party line in this media savvy age. If you want to get on you do what your told.

Even as an independent MP, unless there's a totally split vote and you're the casting vote, you have to align yourself one way or the other and that happens at local politics level – you get elected on a particular ticket as a local councillor and the first thing they say is you can't be independent you have to align or no one will ever give you a platform to speak on. I'd imagine that's a similar thing with parliament.

### **And looking back, are there any politicians who really stand out as having a handle on real life and experience?**

Arthur Scargill.

I'm a fan of Tony Benn.

I'm not sure I agree, and I'm going to say Maggie Thatcher, just to upset everyone.

I liked her.

I didn't agree with her at the time but looking back she had a lot. She knew what she was talking about a long time ago didn't she.

### **What about someone generally regarded as being a bit different? What about someone like Boris Johnson?**

Bless him.

No.

Again it's not easy to see him as being in ministerial office could you?

I disagree, I think he got elected to mayor on the back of Have I Got News For You, and anything's better than Ken Livingstone and let's face it hearing Boris



Johnson talk about wiffwaff instead of table tennis was a bit of a hoot. But, he's got things done! London is a great place to be if you want to live in London and I think he's done a lot for London and he's a very intelligent bloke and I do think he's got a handle on things. I think it will be interesting to see now.

Why is London such a great place to live?

Right, well, first of all I don't

Unclear noise.

In terms of transport system and the building that's going on there. I agree there is no low cost housing but he's addressing that, that's all going to be part of his legacy.

But they've still got their issues like we've got, down there. They've still got high unemployment, high-rise flats.

You get on the train and in the centre it's all lovely and you've got a penthouse flat, 1.5 million pounds and a place in London Bridge and it's all lovely. Get on the train and you see it all boarded up, all those flats, where the real people live.

Isn't that the same in any big city? He is making an attempt to tackle the drugs and gangs and what have you.

It's the elite isn't it in the centre where it's all lovely where all the tourism and then you go a little bit out to Soho and around them areas and think ugh it's a bit skanky.

**I ought to bring it back now, let me show you some things people have said about each of the parties and I'm interested to see whether you think it's true. So – the Conservative Party looks after the interest of the rich not the poor people, that's a charge that's been made by some, what do you think to that? Is that true or unfair?**

As everything's squeezed into the centre.

I think it used to be true.

**Interesting, so since when has it not been true?**

I suppose when the Labour party got in, a wakeup call I suppose.

**Anyone disagree with that? And think it's still the situation?**

Don't see why they look after the rich more than anyone else?

They used to.

But not now, they're all the same now.

More than other people.

What do you class as rich? Banker?

No, well living, high pay.

Over 150,000? But depends what you're talking about, the average person doesn't earn that.

I would have said all the parties are the same now.

They've got to keep everyone interested.

And actually by doing that they're making themselves bland.

Which is why there aren't big gaps any more between Conservative and Labour.

Nobody turns out to vote because they're all the same.

I struggle now, I never know where to put my vote now.

Just go for the one with the nice name, it work with the Grand National!

**It's interesting that, some of the first things you said were David Cameron being posh and Eton, and you don't take that to mean he favours the rich necessarily?**

David Cameron isn't any more posh than Ed Miliband. They're cut from the same cloth, with slightly different views and David Cameron to my mind presents himself a bit more than Ed Miliband.

He's older and wiser isn't he?

**Okay, "Liberal Democrats break their promises and will say anything to get elected."**

They haven't got any power to bring them into force have they.

I don't think they've had an opportunity to break any promises, they haven't been in a position to fulfil them or otherwise really.

Tuition fees?

But again they've not been in a position where they can do that, they're in a coalition and have got to come to a consensus in a coalition and presumably that's one of the things that had to go. And that's the problem with a coalition; you end up with two halves of a manifesto that the people didn't vote for. They may have voted for the other halves but you've had to meld them together to get a working agenda – something's got to give.

I don't think they lie any more than the other parties

**You mentioned tuition fees specifically?**

Well that was the crux – the time and effort invested, especially with the student educational lobby, more or less over my dead body.

But we don't know, because if they'd got in unopposed and been the majority party would that have happened or would tuition fees have been scrapped? We don't know do we.

They might have looked at the books and had to change their mind.

**One more – "the Labour Party waste your money and they can't be trusted with your money."**

Yes.

Yes.

But that doesn't mean much, you could substitute any of the others I would say.

**Who would say they think Labour more so?**

Yes, but only because it was in the forefront of your mind because they were the last party to lead.

You do wonder how long people's memories are going to last for this time. But as far as economic management and competence is concerned they seem to have lost it. It'll take a long time I think before they get back to the days of Blair.

**Was it okay when Tony was in charge?**

Well we had money coming in didn't we?

But where was it coming from? Brown sold all the gold didn't he? It's easy to make ends meet if you sell the family silver but what happens when you need it?

I don't know, my granddad said never vote Labour they'll run the country into the ground. He would never swear, he was lovely, until they came on the TV..

Since we had all the money from North Sea Oil and natural gas through those pipelines, which government party has prudently dealt with that money? None of them, they've all used them to pay off the debt that we've got and to be like 'ooh let's give everyone a treat and get re-elected'. No one put in a long term strategy for using that money. And that's going back to the sixties.

**Do you have a sense of how your parents vote/would have voted? Are you aware? How does that kind of, hard to know consciously, but has it shaped our own views to some extent?**

No, my dad's always voted labour because he thought he was working class and thought they were for the working class. My mother votes Conservative because she thinks she's middle class (she's not) and she thought they were the party for the middle class.

They work out whose best to vote for, for their finances.

Who is best to vote for financially?

Don't know.

**What do you think, do you do what your –parents did?**

No.

No, I don't think the young people today would. They make up their own mind don't they.

I don't vote how my mum or dad would, I don't really know.

**Do you think some people still do?**

I think round here particularly, especially local elections it's very close between Conservative and Labour and I think there's a lot of trying to pick and vote for the winner rather than try and pick the team, sorry the person who they think will be worse. The slogans round here are like Labour can't win Labour is a wasted vote, well sorry if you think Labour is the best party to vote for then vote for them.

**Yes, interesting, this tactical voting business – have you ever done this, to vote differently so you don't let the person you really hate get in?**

I did vote for Lib Dems because I was so fed up with Conservative and Labour.

That's how they got in.

Careful what you wish for.

That's why I think a lot of people don't vote now, they don't know where to, none of them are trustworthy or keep to their promises.

They're just trying to say we'll offer you this, then when it comes to it it's just not on the table.

Its scary. I don't know where to turn, I truly don't know who to believe and sometimes some of the policies are the same anyway aren't they, just what they choose to focus on.

Problem is they all have so many things they want to attract you with and every party's going to be a best fit for you, because you won't agree with every single policy. If you choose a best fit party and then when they get elected they choose to go with the ones you didn't agree with you'll be very disillusioned.

I voted when the candidate was my son's rugby coach.

I think that's why I voted Liberal Democrat last time, because I knew the guy. And he was well into green and recycling.

**If you think of different bits of the country which bits do you think are the most Labour bits and which are most Tory bits?**

I think it depends even within the area like where you are in [local area] is not the same as where you are in [a rougher nearby area].

Urban inner city is Labour, and the Shires are Tory.

North East – Labour.

South East, South West – Conservative.

**Do you get a sense that people in the North if you want to call it that, are any more or less reluctant to vote Conservative than in the past?**

You have to say yes given the election don't you.

**Do you think if the Conservative Party came up [in conversation] now as opposed to 10, 20 years ago do people feel differently? Or is it much the same do you think?**

I don't talk politics anything like as much as I used to – partly because I'm old and disillusioned but also because there is no interest there, there's no diversity or polarity and everyone's fighting over the middle ground with very little distinction. There's no characters, you have more fun talking about Margaret Thatcher and Boris Johnson than anyone else. Because they're characters and you can get enthused by, whether you agree them or not.

**Why do you think people in the urban areas still vote Labour and the shires still vote Tory?**

Money.

I think the statement about the Conservatives, whether it's true or not, is that they are for the rich and that Labour is for the poor.

I think that even in the areas around here.

I'd see it as more Conservative around here, towards [a local] village, and then as you come further out and around it becomes more Labour.

I see more Lib Dem than Labour.

Yes now it's Liberal Democrat, but when we grew up it was Labour

I think people on the South side of [a nearby big city] have the same view as those on the North side.

I'm not sure they do.

You jest don't you?

[A prosperous rural area] and the south [of the nearby city]

Are you saying they're the same or different?

Poles apart.

I thought you were saying the same, sorry.

25miles and it's a different world.

**What do you think about Scottish Independence?**

That was like Ghandi saying what do you think of Western Civilisation – he said I think it's an excellent idea!

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I think it's up to them to decide isn't it.

As long as we can keep the Queen. They can keep Chris Hoy and Andy Murray.  
And we'll have the BBC.

I think we'd be better off financially.

They'll want deals cut though. They're going to want so much money.

They don't charge university fees up there do they?

They'll have to pay for them themselves.

And for prescriptions. Pay for care homes.

Army.

### **Do you think people in Scotland pay more out than they get in or get more out?**

No one lives in Scotland though do they?

Percentage wise the landmass.

They get a lot more per head.

### **Compared to here do they get a better deal?**

Well as we said they don't pay for their kids to go to university, they don't pay for care homes, they don't pay for prescriptions.

They do have to live in Scotland though.

With the rain.

Hey it's hotter there, warmer than here.

If they're under the same government they should be the same as us really shouldn't they, if they do go their own way.

Everyone's been devolved except the English, where's the English government?

### **Where would you want it, a devolved parliament for England or [this city]**

Well if the Scots and the Welsh are going to make their own decision about their, I'll call it a country, I don't see why the only decisions made for England are made for the whole of the UK and made by Scottish and Welsh MPs as well. I can't make decisions about Scotland as an English MP. They make decisions with a Scottish Parliament, where's the English parliament? I get on my high horse about it.

I don't see the need for an English devolved Parliament, but I do see the need for large city mayors.

Like Boris Johnson.

Or [our own] equivalent.

### Focus Group 3

#### If I say to you “David Cameron” what comes to mind?

Posh.

#### Posh right?

Not in the real world.

Public school.

Spoilt rich kid.

Intelligent.

Ignorant.

Idealistic.

That’s about the only thing that’s a plus, I would’ve said.

#### Anything else?

He doesn’t listen.

He’s quite clean cut, isn’t he? He never looks untidy. He never looks like he’s just got out of bed. He’s well groomed.

He never looks tired or stressed. Tony Blair used to always look worn out.

He doesn’t have wrinkles as such, does he?

And he’s played every single level of Angry Birds, so where does he get the time to do that?

#### Idealistic....?

I think you could say any politician’s idealistic.

Just not in the real world. It’s lovely the things he’s wanting to do, but come and step into our lives.

I think they’re always over promising.

They’re like sales people aren’t they – they sell themselves, they have to.

And then panic.

#### You said idealistic – was there a positive aspect to that as well or....?

Not really. They see things through rose-tinted glasses. They’re not in the real world.

#### What is his vision, if he could do it? What do you think he’s trying to do or wants to do?

#### Mending “broken Britain”.

Trying to get rid of debt.

Reduce debt.

Reintroducing family values.

He said he’d sort the NHS out.

I think he’s trying to reform everything, but I think it’s a bigger obstacle than they realise, that’s the problem.

#### Would that be a good vision if only it did mesh a bit more with reality?

It’s a good vision, but is it achievable?

Not all at the same time. It’s hard to do everything at once.

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Although everybody wants things to happen, like you say, it's not in the real world that it can happen like that, not without everybody suffering terribly at the end of it.

It seems to be hard working, honest families are suffering and he's supposed to be mending us, getting us back to work. People on benefits are far better off than us, because their benefits haven't changed, whereas we're having pay cuts, we're losing jobs, we're losing benefits, losing child tax credit. People on benefit, their income is still exactly the same.

I think we're... I think middle Britain gets squeezed a lot more. The margins seem to be getting smaller and smaller. The most appalling thing is when you watch the news, read the papers and you find out all these hand outs and you can't grudge everybody because some people obviously need it.

He seems to be oblivious to what actually is happening. He's got this tunnel vision of what he wants to happen, and is oblivious to what's happening either side of it. But I think we don't know what he's inherited. Sort of going off the point slightly, I emailed [local MP], the last time they wanted to give money abroad, and I said, you know, 'I'm sorry but you know, I'm Roman Catholic and yes I do feel for these people but, you know, the state of the country, we can't afford to keep giving', and now we're giving more money to Somalia... and I got the most patronising letter back.

They pledged like £220 million to Somalia, didn't they?

Yeah!

Give it back, give us some jobs.

£220 million to Somalia and there was some money to the Indians, and the Indians said we don't want your money.

India and China don't need money.

And there are pensioners in this country, and they've given up everything for our generation

Immigration's a shambles. What you're hearing how the floodgates have been opened. The checks were nonexistent.

It's scary when you pick up the phone to companies and very rarely do you get an English accent on the other end of the phone and yet you hear about how many of us are out of work. It's scary and it's no wonder that people are turning against people on benefits. Like you say, you do tar them all with the same brush. You tar immigrants with the same brush. They might not be immigrants, their families might be, they might be third, fourth generation but you tar them with the same brush.

I think a lot of the money's sort of going out the country, it's being sort of earned here and then going..

There's people and they're claiming child benefits, there were two I think Romanian women and they defrauded the DSS of absolute thousands and they showed a picture of these palatial houses back in Romania and these women were told to pay something like £20, or less than £20 back. What's that all about?

Disgusting.

The judges aren't living in the real world.

They're out of touch.

### **Who's to blame?**

We can't not let them in.

There was something in the Sunday papers saying they'll only let them in if they're earning £35k.

What if they're already married?

This should have been done 15, 20 years ago.

### **Do any political parties bear more blame than others, do you feel?**

No I think it's a culture, that like you say, it's gone on for so long that it's just easier now, people are better off on benefits, then why are they going to try to get a job?

It's a culture.

People from Poland who work in our factory are claiming child benefit for their children back in Poland, which is wrong. Why would they want to go elsewhere and work? Why would they want to give up their jobs?

### **If David Cameron was a car what kind of car would he be?**

He'd have to have a blinged up posh one.

A pimp my ride.

He's a cyclist isn't he?

Rolls Royce with a Mini engine.

Volvo

Boring and plain.

He'd be a Rolls Royce with a chauffeur, which is probably exactly what he is.

### **Anyone else? This is the last chance to take a pop at David?**

Poor David.

He's not in the next room is he?

### **What comes to mind when you think of Ed Miliband?**

Floppy lips.

Old boys' network.

He can't pronounce his "r"s, it's quite annoying listening to him talk.

Slightly better than David Cameron, but only 'cos he's not as posh.

I still wouldn't buy a used car from him – he's almost "used car salesman"

He hasn't got any charisma has he.

Dull

Quite happy to jump on the bandwagon. He's always on Cameron's case isn't he, but I'm sure if he was in No 10, he'd be exactly the same.

Yeah, whenever something comes out, he's always there straight away, arguing something that's complete the opposite to what's been said.

It would be nice if one of them eventually, yeah I know there opposite parties, but you know, when you can blatantly see there's something wrong just agree with each other, for the sake of it, just because one's Conservative and one's Labour, it doesn't mean you always have to disagree.

If they spent all their time arguing doing what they should be doing...

It's like playground.



**Any positives?**

(Laughter)

No.

As I said he's the lesser of two evils.

**How does he compare to David Miliband?**

I think David's got more about him.

I've met David Miliband at a party,

He's got a brain in his head.

He's more down to earth. He's got a bit more charisma than his brother.

Mind you, he's earning himself a tidy little fortune at the moment.

**If Ed was a car what would he be?**

Noddy's car.

Skoda.

Bat mobile 'cos he likes to be flashy but he can't operate it.

**Nick Clegg, what comes to mind?**

Head boy.

Smarmy.

Like a puppet.

He just does as he's told.

He's always looks scared when Cameron's talking.

Timid.

I bet he was a mummy's boy.

He always looks unsure.

"Am I doing the right thing or not?"

He puts his tippy toes in. A lot of them just jump in, as we were saying, He tippy toes into things.

He's always eager to please.

**Is that what you would have expected, before the election?**

I think it's difficult anyway for them.

It was really good to have the debates before the election and he came across quite well initially.

**And if he was a car?**

More a caravan than a car.

**Do we know anything about Ed Miliband's life?**

Public school boy, isn't he? And his brother.

He went to the like posh Eton place.

It seems like an old boys' network. You scratch my back and I'll scratch yours.

**Has it always been like this?**

It's a culture. Like we said I don't think they're particularly in touch with what's going on.

It's not what you know, it's who know.

**Is this more so in Parliament than life in general?**

It's the same in life, but these guys are making decisions that influence our lives.

They're not necessarily the best people to make those decisions.

A lot of them are crooks aren't they, you know, the expenses scandal.

I haven't heard one of them say they're going to give up 10% of their salary, yet I know we've just reduced several staff in our office and none of us will get a pay rise this year.

**Is the expenses row now all sorted out?**

There's no trust.

I still don't trust them.

It's just been dusted away.

They've still got two houses, just don't talk about it.

**In the local area, what sorts of issues are there that you think politicians should tackle?**

Too many take-aways.

They're horrible.

Far too many.

The state of the roads. They're always filling in a hole, but this hole's always coming back and it's getting bigger and bigger and one day it's going to swallow a car, because it's just getting bigger and bigger and they just fill it in with a bit of tarmac. And the street lights in some places are horrendous. I know in our particular area, one council's been sending lots of letters out saying they're doing a campaign to sort out our streetlights because they're very old and they need replacing. Also crossing the road by us, there's a road near ours which is incredibly dangerous and nothing's been done about it. They're waiting for someone to get killed and then they'll do something.

We've got a sign that appeared on our main road saying "13 deaths and so many accidents", so stick a set of traffic lights up, I don't want your sign, put a set of traffic lights up. Silly little things like that.

The local councillors seem to understand that, but then it's like a major battle to get it there.

There's not enough for kids to do either.

They closed our library down as well in the centre of [local town]. There's a big hoo-ha over that. It's to do with asbestos and to pay for it there on about selling off a couple of the car parks in the centre of [local town]. Seems a bit extreme.

There's nothing for children. My 10 yr old is bored. When he's 13, 14 there's going to be nothing for him to do but hang around on the street, unless I have all the kids in my house. You moan about children hanging around and causing havoc: give them something to do.

Youth clubs have died because they haven't got funding for them.

It would be nice for them to have somewhere to go because we all say "oh we've got hoodies on the corner, but..."

What else is there for them to do?

They've opened a massive BMX track down by the [local] Stadium – it's £5 to go round three times on your bike. What child, what parent has got that in this

day and age? And so the kids, they're gathering outside the track in gangs on their bikes in gangs, by a big main road, that's not a very nice area.

We've got the [local] Park, I wish more was utilised there, if you had something in there at various points in the park. It would be easy to set things up.

Like a nature centre.

We've got the leisure centre.

That's just costs thousands and thousands to put back, because of the asbestos in there. It's not much better than it was before the refurb to be honest. There's still holes and chunks missing out the side of the pool.

That's not free, you have to pay, you know to park in there in the summer.

You have to pay to go to the [local] Park.

You have to pay to go into the park.

Some years ago there was an outside pool and it was there for years and years and years and then they just closed it down. The fun we used to have in the Summer!

It's just grass now.

We're on about getting them back to work and getting Britain back working, there's no motivation to do anything or get involved with anything or get a hobby or get a life skill, they just hang around.

### **Are there any politicians who seem to be more into the issues you have around here?**

It takes thinks like the Princess Trust to make stuff happen. It is sort of an independent thing.

There's only so much they can do. There are only so many things they can fund.

### **So they have funded things around here?**

It's a shame because you think, we're talking about this now, my little girls 4, what's going to happen in 8 years time? More should be done.

My 10 yr old, he's a break-dancer and he's high level in the UK, but there is nowhere to take him. I have to drive to London or Manchester for him to go to a decent class, to a decent club/ And yes, I'd love to apply for a Prince's Trust fund, but actually I work full time and can't give up my job to open something like this. There's just constant battles.

### **How about the issues in Birmingham?**

We are a boiling pot, we always have been, whatever people believe whether we're multi cultural or not, we are a boiling pot.

You know, riots for god's sake.

That was awful.

And it's not the first ones that we've had in Birmingham. Before any of these political riots people were rioting and fighting each other before that.

There's a lot of tension. Certainly in the UK.

There's a lot that's not reported, like the big police shoot outs.

Welcome to Birmingham!

We're doing a project through Aston Villa; we're just trying to keep kids off the streets. And they coming all the time saying "my brother's been shot" it's just crazy... They reckon gun crime's under control and it's just not.

There's lots of gang culture here as well. You've got the Johnsons and the Burger Boys and where I used to work, one couldn't come in to the centre, because there was another, and he said "oh they've seen me now, I'm going to be dead, they're going to be after me" so they they'd have to move into another centre.

They have post code register, and that's not reported and that's why we say to you: "they're not in the real world", that's what we mean. These people are not living amongst it, they're sitting, you know, nice house in the countryside and say "we are a multicultural society", yeah really? Come and live with the gangs who are fighting each other because one lives in [one postcode] and one lives in [another nearby postcode] and one are Muslims and the others aren't. Whatever – you're not living in it so you're not reporting the real.

### **And anyone in current politics who seems more in tune?**

No

No one wants to get their hands dirty.

No because all the politicians around that, the [nearby area] and the [other nearby area], they're all of Muslim cultures or they're, you know, of Asian descent. They're not going to say "stop fighting" because they're the same race as them.

You get branded "racist" if you say too much.

I almost feel quite embarrassed saying it in here, but you're asking us for what's genuinely happening and that's what's genuinely happening.

There's a lot of interesting emails going round.

Yeah we are a boiling pot.

There is an under current.

I read a report a couple of weeks ago saying that by 2050 white people will be the minority.

People will still refer to others as "ethnic minority". There are projects probably going on for the children in Birmingham but it would be for a specific post code areas so, yet again, the middle children, you know the working families: I can't go to that because I'm not in that post code, I'm not on benefits, so my child's missing out on the things that are happening.

And it's amazing, I work with unemployed people and the amount of people, if you need to see proof of their identity, and they've got a British passport, but they can't speak a bleeding word of English. They can't speak the language.

One of my brothers, he's been in Australia now for about 18 months, and he's a fully qualified electrician, but he has to transfer his qualifications to Australian criteria, to go into the country with money in the bank, he had to prove references, he had to get sponsors, he's had to jump through that many hoops to prove. That's what it should be like here.

My next door neighbour doesn't work. She owns a house in Pakistan, with 4 stables and servants, they spend 6 months a year over there, and 6 months a year over here and they don't have to pay tax because they do that while they're there, and they can claim our benefits. And you're sitting there thinking "I'm out at 8 o'clock every morning, I'm back in at 6 I'm only being paid 'til 4. "

You have to try hard not to be bitter.

That's what's wrong.

We're all being suppressed really aren't we, if you think about it. Quite scary

**Is anyone trying to solve this problem?**

I don't think anyone's really scratched the surface.

There are so many departments for everything to do with DWP. There's a department for wiping your nose. Nobody knows what the next ones doing.

Have you ever tried to report anyone for benefit fraud? Well unless you know their date of birth, their eye colour, their hair colour, whether they wear glasses or not, what their post code is, what exactly they're doing forget it.

And the thing they're doing about the unemployment thing, telling people to go to work for free, that's not working is it.

No.

There's loads and loads of backlash about that. It is a good idea, but I think that...well they're just all arguing about it aren't they.

They're just too damn lazy. Get off your back side. It's just to get them out of a rut as well.

It's just to get them into the idea of getting up and going to work.

They're getting up at 12, opening a can of lager, rolling a spliff and watching Jeremy Kyle.

Get them to give back.

All the businesses are pulling out now aren't they.

Yeah Tesco.

They don't want them there do they.

It's hard, and it's been a genuine thought that I've certainly had: could it be easier if I just gave up my job and claimed benefits? And I've worked since I was 16 years old. And it's sad. And the example that I would be giving my child. Fortunately for me, I'm not like that, and you can't do it anyway. If you're in the system working, you can't come out of it and suddenly claim.

If I'm genuinely made redundant tomorrow, I can't have my mortgage paid whereas if I have a rented property and I've never worked, my house is paid for all the time.

Hard.

**Are many people losing their jobs at the moment?**

It's been going on for a while I think, I know people who lost their jobs a while back, and a neighbour across the road from us, he's had to go back to work on a part time. He got 4 children. but he could not get a job. He had to choose a job that had a certain amount of money for him to earn, so he could claim enough benefits then to...they cleared all their bills. Because if he went for a job that was full time and he went over a certain amount of money he couldn't claim the rest in benefit. He could not live.

19 hours I think you've got to work under the threshold.

And it's sad because he loves to go to work but he had to... he was out of work for years. The poor thing. He was in a managerial job before. He couldn't get a managerial job that would pay enough money for him to be able to pay his bills.

I was made redundant a couple of years ago, I was out of work for a while, I couldn't claim anything, and had to take a job that was less well paid. Then recently I've had to take a 10% wage cut because of the state of the business, and the state of the economy. It's tight at the moment.

It's all the people who are unemployed who do claim housing benefit, when they retire they'll get pensions, we won't because we've got too much money, and we'll get put into a home, well "how much have you got", more of your savings, that get it all paid for, and you think, well what are we doing?

That's another topic, I come just under that bracket, you know you work 40 years, then they've just put my pension age up to 66, so there's that massive 6 years. And it all went to court and everyone was complaining, but it doesn't make any difference. Six years is a long time.

Everyone here works and it's really galling. You're taking a percentage of the people here, but this is how people feel all over the country.

They sit around a table, these people at the top, and someone has an idea: that's so dangerous, these people are so dangerous.

They're not living it are they. They're not living in a 9-5.

They get bonuses for these initiatives and I just think that's dangerous.

### **What would make a difference?**

There have got to be reforms from top to bottom. The police system, the NHS, the immigration.

Take a note from the Australian, she's brilliant, she's made some brilliant speeches.

But she's not afraid, we're so afraid.

### **Who's that?**

The Australian lady, I don't know her name. The Australians have just stopped boat loads coming in and changed all their immigration.

There's emails going around with her delivering her speeches and she's brilliant.

We're too frightened.

"If you don't want to live like Australians, go, if you don't want to dress like we dress, go".

I think that's what we used to be like, as a nation

We're so frightened.

The EU did a lot of damage – that opened the floodgates.

I think the prison system costs us far too much money as well.

Oh they love it in there don't they.

The other day, my uncle tows cars, and he towed a Porsche and scratched it. The guy goes "oh don't worry about it", outside his great big mansion, he says "how did you get into the business?", and he said "when I was in prison I did a degree, so I've come out and opened my own IT company" and he's now a multi millionaire. I can't give up my job to go to college to get a degree, so great I'm stuck in my 9-5 earning crap money.

That's the sort of thing where you sit here and go: "why, why are they allowed to get a degree and come out...

What's the punishment?

Prison doesn't reform people, it's a fact. It doesn't reform people. You should take it back to the days of Wormwood Scrubs.

But again, it's because we're too politically correct, we're frightened of being sued, we're frightened of being...

Human rights.

Get rid of that Act. It's cost us a hell of a lot of money.

**Could it be pulled round? Could it be sorted out?**

Not in our lifetime.

I think it would be messy.

It's got to get messy first.

It would have to be real drastic measures. None of this "we'll implement it over a number of years": it would have to be now.

No pussy footing around it, if you're going to do it, do it.

You'd have to probably bring the army in!

I am just frightened for the future and I hope it's not in my time.

If you want to make serious changes you'd have to go down those lines.

It is going to kick off.

**You're saying this, but you criticised David Cameron for trying to do it all at once.**

He's not doing the things that are needed. Ok, we'll lower the threshold for tax credits, so all you've done is cut the middle working people again, thanks. We'll lower the disability benefit threshold so again all you're doing is hitting... you're not hitting the actual problem. The problem is people are claiming stuff, they've got no work ethic, they are given houses, whether they're from his country or not from this country, that's irrelevant. They're given money, they're given houses, they're given benefits, whilst the rest of us are having money took off us, jobs lost.

If they had the same ideals as Australia had, it would be anybody who was living in this country who had only recently, you'd have to give a certain number of years or months, that they'd been here and hadn't got a job, and were claiming benefits, then they'd have to leave, it sounds awful but...

Why are we paying child benefit to polish people working in this country when their children aren't living in the UK? Why? It doesn't make sense.

And the winter fuel benefit to people who are living in Spain.

There's two easy ones that they could cut and they'd save a fortune.

They're trying to be nice aren't they? But there's being nice, and then there's cutting off your nose to spite your face.

I'm pleased to hear they're introducing apprentices, because I've been flying the flag for that for years, but is it really working, I don't know.

Yeah, but what we do at our place is employ an apprentice, when their apprenticeship finishes we say "sorry there's not a full time job for you, we've had you for 10 grand for two years, thank you very much"

So you take them on?

Yeah we take them on, but there's no job and then get another one for 10 grand. They're paying 20.

These school leavers are our future and all that money we're given to Somalia or wherever, why aren't we giving that to our kids.

It would be nice if David Cameron came out and said "look this country is in a bit of a mess". We haven't got the budget to be giving to India, China, who are up and coming nations. Somalia – forget it. Keep the money in house

Would you like us to start on Banks?

**Energy Bills – are they a big issue at the moment?**

Yeah. My husband turns the heating off constantly.

Yeah, I've got a wood burning stove, just because the heating is just going absolutely through the roof. I've always wanted one anyway but the heating was just too much.

**Have they got more expensive?**

Yeah.

Yeah, horrendous.

**And why is that?**

They'll justify it by saying they have to source energy in other ways and gas in different ways but it's not...

What you're looking at there is how much profit they've made.

Yeah how much profit, but we fixed ours, on line.

But if you look at what you're paying, the rise is hundreds, it's 1000% rise over like 10 years.

30 odd % in the space of like 4, 6 weeks or something, just before Christmas.

But the fact you could fix it, they don't broadcast that. That Martin Lewis' review, and I could've listened to what he was saying, because he talks a lot of sense.

You can't understand what kilowatts; you can't understand what he's saying.

My aunt and uncle have just come over here from Australia, well they've been here 12 months, they're looking after my uncle's mum, 'cos she's 96, so they're staying over here now to look after her and then going back afterwards. They've said they could not move back here because they just could not afford to live, because of things like energy bills, things like tax licences. They're just gobsmacked.

Petrol.

That's another hot topic.

And that's going in tax to the Government. It won't come down.

That's why I bought a diesel as well.

We bought a small car, because of the fuel.

**Is there something the government could do?**

There's talk of it coming down.

They're doing loft insulation aren't they, and wall cavity. I think there was a criteria there.

Solar panels.

But they're so expensive.

The government have stopped it now.

The solar panels are a good idea but they are horrendously expensive.

And they look horrific.

I don't care about what they look like....

If you're saving money.

Exactly, but you have to pay so much money for them – who has that much money?



Apparently they're putting them on council houses.  
 Oh so they'll get a nice low fuel bill as well!  
 They do work.

**If David Cameron woke up tomorrow morning, is there anything he could do to deal with that?**

Cap fuel(?) prices.

Say "you can't charge more than this if you're a.....".

Do something for the older people in the country.

We were better when it was one company, because then the Government could at least control it. All they're doing is they're all putting the prices up.

It wouldn't be so bad paying what you're paying if you knew that pensioners had it, like that at Christmas you said "right, three months, they don't have to pay it". I wouldn't mind then paying me more, it would still be upsetting but t least they'd be alright.

They're not learning from that are they because it's got really bad with the privatisation of things and they're trying to do the same thing to the NHS...

That's frightening.

...So they can create the same monster.

The NHS, the amount of times I've been on waiting lists, and ended up paying private, because I can't wait for what I needed to have done. And you think I'm paying my tax for the service and I'm having to pay again.

**How about crime and anti-social behaviour? Is it less of an issue than elsewhere?**

It's frightening. I've been in the [local] Park, this afternoon, with my dog and I see a police car, in this beautiful park, and I think "I wonder what he's doing there" and two hoodies came out of the bush, and I ran and that's terrible.

The chances are those hoody kids aren't going to do anything, but you're that frightened. It's what you read about.

Knife crime. You don't mind a few kids on the corner but if they pull a knife on you.

Once upon a time you were beaten up at school, now you're knifed. That's scary.

I have a ten year old boy – I half expect to come home one day and have a fight, but I fear is he won't be terrified that kids are carrying knives, guns, bottles.

Drugs is a big thing in schools as well. And the kids will say "yeah, we know where to get the drugs from".

On the other side of town in [local town], there's a massive waste area that the council own and the local councillors have said nothing's going to happen on it for 12 months, so part of premier league and sport London have said they want to build an Astroturf on there, just one football pitch, because there's loads of gangs that hang around there and he's said "let's do that, we'll put staff in, pay for them to get the kids off the street" and they said "well, you can do that but in 12 months time, it's probably going to be redeveloped as a council estate so you'll have to get rid of it then". And there's nothing we can do. And they're saying that they'll be houses and a park in the middle and the police are saying "you can't do that, it's just asking jobs to hang around".

There's no empathy, they try to look like they're empathetic, like "we're thinking about these people in society and blah blah blah", but they've got no idea what it's like. The street I live in is a nice street, and I hear these horrible stories about people living in fear in their homes, and have got cameras so they can video these people smashing their cars.

That's why you get vigilantes.

And then the people who do stick up for themselves get killed. And that petrifies me. Because i know if someone tried to break into my house, my husband, regardless of what he is, would stand up and go downstairs, and he'd try to do something. And I think to myself, I'm a bit scared.

Or he'd be arrested,

Yeah because he would go bonkers.

### **Has crime always been an issue? Has it got worse?**

I don't think people have got the same fear.

The police can't do anything.

It's not headlines anymore. It used to be headlines if someone was knifed.

It's matter-of-fact now.

It's old news as such.

When I was a kid I was scared of my teachers and my mum and dad. There's a different culture.

### **Is there anything that could be done?**

Bring back the cane.

Yeah.

National service.

Make prison something that people are actually frightened of rather than something that would actually benefit them.

The forces are recruiting at the moment aren't they?

I'm a mum of a 10 year old boy. Yes national service would be a good idea but it scares the crap out of me that he'd have to go through it.

They're recruiting now, and they're recruiting for one reason, and that's to send them out there.

What about things like youth offenders? Send them off boot camping, send them to national service: The children who aren't achieving anything in their lives. If you've been on benefits for 18 months, off you go, the army needs you.

I think a lot of people go into prison and come out and have got more contacts, and they've met more people and have got more skills.

Children don't fear their teachers, they don't fear the police, they don't fear prison.

They're a lot more savvy.

Someone will say "you don't want to do it this way, you want to do it this way and then you won't get caught", "oh yeah that's a good idea".

There are people who can't survive on the outside and they actually commit a crime to go back in because they're institutionalised.

It's like a trophy.

### **A couple more issues: income tax, VAT, council tax.**

We're getting a bit of tax relief in 2012 aren't we?

**Do any of those bite harder?**

Well the VAT was 15% wasn't it, they lowered it to 15% and it's now back up to 20%. Five per cent is a massive, massive impact for everyone, no matter what way you look at it.

Food, petrol,

Yeah your food bill is absolutely horrendous – we can't get our food bill down now under £100 it's just ridiculous.

**Which tax would you cut if you could?**

VAT.

**But presumably if you're working rather than on benefits, an income tax cut would be more beneficial?**

That 5% from 15% to 20%...

VAT affects everything that you do.

I get better income tax this year, however it's lowered the earning threshold for working tax credit to pay for my child care so I've lost £85 per month there, and I'm not gaining £85 per month in income tax.

There's only so much money in the purse so things go up and down.

When the elections come around, they all start "oh we're going to do this, and we're going to do that", yeah yeah yeah.

And then they wonder why people don't vote, because people are just disheartened and they don't believe anything anybody's saying.

They need to plug the money going out of the country, and then that can be spent here.

Aren't we helping Greece out again? Don't they retire at 50?

Wouldn't that be nice.

In the sun.

**Do you feel Britain is a fair country to live in?**

It is if you're foreign.

I think they're laughing at us.

Soft-touch.

Not if you're born and bred here, and you pay your taxes, and you're working full-time, you get the piss taken out of you.

We're a joke really. Other countries, when they look at why we rioted and they see people robbing TVs and trainers and hoodies: we should be rioting over bankers, over petrol prices, rioting over worth-while things. Not over that, that's a joke.

In 1974, this is because I'm a Granny, I went to Canada, and I can always remember the front page, and there was a photograph of the British Isles with a flag going under the water "Britain's sinking" – and that was in '74, and that's what Canada thought of us then and they couldn't believe the salary I was on compared to what they were earning then. This thing with Australia, that Australian programme, and the cost of living there is going [up] and the house prices.

**If we were sinking in '74, did we rise up and then sink again?**

It was a long time ago, but we've not stopped it, we've not changed the culture – we've let the culture carry on.

There were more riots in the 80s though weren't there.  
You think of the immigration and you've got the rest of the world, and they all want to be on our little island. Why?  
Because we're paying them.  
We'll pay their fuel, we'll educate them.  
But you can't blame them, because if I was them, I'd be the same.

**Do you feel like you're putting in more than you get out?**

Yeah.  
It's almost like surviving as opposed to living.  
If you're honest and hard working you do not get rewarded.  
I had someone at work the other day say "I've never encouraged my child to get a job, because it would actually be better if he never did". Which is true. When you sit and listen about that: it's true. She said "I will never encourage him, I will let him do what he wants to do and eventually he'll get a house and he'll be better off".  
You've got to wait 99 years now to get a council property.  
Yeah unless you've got 10 babies.  
How many babies do you need?  
Probably a dozen.

**What about the bankers?**

Why have they been rewarded for losing money?! This thing with the PPI – did heads roll over that? We don't hear anything do we? It's cost the banks a fortune, but I bet those people are still in jobs.

**This is PPI?**

Mis-sold and that's cost the banks a fortune and that's why they've got losses.  
People have jumped on that band wagon trying to claim money back.  
You get phone calls.

**Spontaneously, on the whole you've mentioned more people on benefits and people living in council houses rather than feeling so angry at bankers.**

They do create wealth for the country, but they're taking too much. RBS was bailed out and I think that cost us.  
But they're not sitting there doing nothing.  
They're being paid ridiculous and it's too much and yes that's gone too far, but they're not being paid for nothing.  
Isn't there arguments they have to pay that money to retain the skills?  
Well they're the best for the job.  
But they do create wealth for us, but they take too much.  
With that bonus thing, I was like, half and half about it to be honest, because at the end of the day, he signed a contract doing that job, knowing that that would be the case. And he obviously has reached whatever criteria he had to reach and if it was me and I'd signed a contract to say, I would want my bonus and I think, well yeah, he should have it because he's done what he's been asked to do, but then at the same time it's like everyone is crying out: they've got no money, there's people who can't pay their bills, who can't pay their mortgage, with children

being neglected and blah blah blah. And then someone's been paid that amount of money, and yes it was in shares, but hey ho, he's still going to get that money. The poor guy – it was really his fault; he had to stand there and almost apologise for doing his job. And it's just wrong, because he was only doing his job and i think well, I'm half and half with that one.

The person who was wrong there was writing in the million pound bonus in the first place.

Exactly, they shouldn't have put it in there should they? But then he hasn't got it anyway has he, the poor thing.

### **Back to political parties, when you think of the people who become Labour MPs, what sort of people do you think they are?**

They're more sort of sorting it out type thing.

They used to be.

They're leaning.

Tony Blair, Ed Miliband, we're getting more into the private school type – it's not so working class anymore.

Like John Prescott.

Yeah.

We have gone a bit more private school, Eton.

### **How does that change things?**

If people don't have an idea of what it's like to be in the real world how can they empathise enough to make things change? They don't know what it feels like, and they have never experienced, or their families have never experienced hardship. Some people might not have experienced it themselves, but they can hear about their Grandparents saying how terrible things were and blah blah blah and that might push them or spur them on but if they've never experienced it, it's not going to help.

I would like to see them do that programme, you know "Secret Millionaire" where they go out and live... Let's get Mr Cameron and Mr Miliband come and live in your council house in [local town] in Birmingham. What a shock, perhaps they might go: "actually we're looking at the wrong things here, we're squeezing the wrong people". At least you'd go "well he tried it".

### **How well do Labour MPs understand what it's really like?**

I think they've been left with a bit of a mess from the last lot: Tony Blair and Gordon Brown.

I don't think they've quite found their feet or recovered from it yet have they.

### **But do you feel like they understand what life is like for you?**

Not fully.

No.

They've got an idea in their own heads of what it's like, and that's just based on....

Or they go just in the opposite direction to the coalition...

Just because it's the opposite direction.

That's what it feels like sometimes.

“He said that, so I’m going to say this”.

Just because they want to be seen to be different.

**What would you change about Labour MPs? Their class? Their sex?**

I don’t think there’s anything like that; I don’t care as long as they’ve got an understanding of what’s going on.

If they haven’t got an understanding of the working class, the middle class, then they should have representation of it. If that was the only way for it, then that’s what they should do and then they would have an idea of what’s going on, and how people feel. And the local councillors are supposed to do that and I think they do listen to the people, and they put things forward and then their ideas are quashed: there’s no funding or, this has taken priority over that, so you can’t do that anymore. The people who are trying to stand up for the classes don’t always get what... they’re trying to help their communities, and they can’t always manage it. Then they’re seen as failures because they haven’t achieved what they’ve set out to do.

I’d hate to see them deliberately go out and get a working class, different race leader just because they think that’s what fits – that’s not what we’re asking for: we’re asking for you to...you can be whatever you want to be, but just understand real life.

How much are these people just a figure-head, and they’ve got this team around them haven’t they? How much impact does that one person have?

Mr Cameron looks like that, like you said before, he doesn’t look stressed, you know, all the others turn grey over night.

Delegate.

And I think genuinely, he is the puppet, that’s the impression I get.

I remember Tony Blair was always bugging off abroad, so who was running the country?!

**Back in the day, when he was winning elections, did Tony Blair understand how people felt?**

I think of him as just a great salesman.

You did buy into it.

Got us sucked in.

He conned everyone.

Yes, he knew what to say – he said what we wanted to hear.

His wife was very clever as well. I’ve seen her in action – she’s good.

**Was he a disappointment in the end?**

I think they all are.

They all leave scars behind, and there’s massive scars now isn’t there, massive ones and we’re all paying for it.

**What sort of people become Conservative MPs?**

Public school boys.

Eton boys, or Oxford, Cambridge.

Secret handshakes....masons.

Yeah, masons (laughter).

**Has it changed at all over the past few years?**

They've got more women in there haven't they?

**Is that good?**

Women in politics....I'll bite my tongue on that one.

Why not.

Women are supposed to be more empathetic, so go for it.

**If you could wave a wand over the Conservative benches, how would they change?**

Get some back bone. Grow some bollocks and just do it. I'd love it if one of them just stood up, and like you said, just said, no nonsense.

This is what's going to happen, and it's going to happen now.

Send them on a course to Australia for three weeks.

**It almost sounds like you want Maggie Thatcher back?!**

She didn't do everything right but at least when she made a decision she did it. You know, she didn't care who she was offending or upsetting and who was striking – she did it.

You know, sending in the SAS, not many politicians would've done that.

You think that's someone who's just said "right, no nonsense".

Let's do it.

And that's what needs to be done but they need to do it in the right places.

We're becoming a nanny state aren't we.

**So firm and action in the right area?**

And if they did that then most of our debt would disappear overnight. Literally. It's true.

It's called "get a grip".

**Why is their favouritism towards people on benefits?**

The people who are playing into the system are a lot more accepted. They've done what they've always done and they'll continue to do so, unless there was a mass exodus from the work places. I think we'll always continue to play into the system.

It reminds me a bit of you know [unclear] it's like we're put in the keep net, because we're safe and we won't say anything, we'll just plod on. They're trying to deliver to the people who aren't in the keep-net.

They'll make a bigger fuss than we will.

Yeah I think that's how it looks.

**"Some people say the Labour party wastes your money and they can't be trusted to run the economy". What's your reaction to that?**

Some truth to that.

Probably said by the Conservative Party.

It's no more than the Conservatives are doing to my taxpaying at the moment.

I think that's coming partly from the fact that there are so many debts left behind. So part of you thinks they obviously can't run the economy because it's in tatters.

### **Where did it go wrong?**

I think they went in with the best intentions, like we said with Tony Blair, but he went off getting involved with the Iraq War, Gordon Brown making bad decisions about gold reserves, just bad decisions all round, immigration and its cost us a hell of a lot of money and the consequences are being felt now.

They opened the gates didn't they, and the floods have just...

We're sinking.

We're full.

### **Was it incompetence? Naivety?**

It's pretty bad. I don't think they intended it.

It's just incompetence.

They thought it was a good idea, joining the EU, and then they said they were going to become the United States of Europe, which is all very worrying, and losing our identity – what happened to Great Britain?

They left the idea of us being individual aside and because they've opened up the gates to all the problems with immigration. They didn't think far enough ahead and also they didn't think to change any of the policy they made for that sort of thing and they've left it the same, and it's still the same now. Nobody's changed it.

We've just lost our identity I think. The last Government, with all the political correctness.

And all the hoo-ha with Scotland we're in as well, because I don't think that's a good idea – I think that's caused a lot of resentment between England and Scotland. I don't think it's a good idea that they should become independent.

It just makes us small, as a Nation.

I don't think they can afford it, can they. That seems to be one man [unclear]

But for the same reason though I think he wanted to do it because I think he has genuinely got the guts to say "right, enough, you're not coming in, I'm not doing this".

### **What do you think Labour could do to show this isn't the case?**

Grow a pair!

Say sorry.

Admit defeat.

"Sorry, we admit, we did this, this and this so we're going to change it"

As long as they can guarantee that they're going to change what they've messed up, not just talk about it.

### **"The Conservative party looks after the interests of the rich, not ordinary people"**

They've always said that...

They've always said that but they've got the benefit people as well.

It's the rich, and the very poor, but not the ones in the middle.

They've missed that off haven't they.

The rich and the scroungers sorry.

### **Has Ed Miliband talked about this at all, what you're describing?**

Don't think so.



They might have talked about it but they haven't said what they're going to do. It would be nice to see somebody stand up and say "we are going to stop x, y, z".

"This is this and this, and that's my policy".

He probably has talked about it because it would be the opposite of what's happening with the Coalition, so he would have said it because it's not what they're saying.

But you don't take any notice because it goes in here and out there.

If you look at local elections and the guys that come in and say we're going to do this, we're going to do that, whether they're BNP, Green party, they're the ones that get in because people go "actually, he's going to try and do something for us". They're not the ones going "well he said the sky's green, so we're going to say it's turquoise".

It would be nice to hear something direct and honest, like when they're on Question Time, if they're on there, when they get the question, answer the question, don't skirt around it. Say "this is my policy, this is what I'm sticking with." You've got to admire that. Rather than thinking give an answer.

People are scared to talk about the kinds of things we've talked about. They're scared to do it, and I think all the politicians are scared to do it, even if they're feared; they're scared to do it.

Nobody wants to be the next Enoch Powell.

If they put their mind to it and thought "this is what's needed", but they'd have to get a lot of support for it, but they would get a lot of support for it because that's what's needed to save the economy and to not make everybody else suffer in the long term.

### **Are the Conservatives more in favour of the rich compared to other parties?**

#### **Where do they stand?**

They all look after themselves don't they.

The rich get richer. There's going to be a massive divide the way it's going. Footballers, they've got a lot of money. It's crazy.

The bankers.

The divide is just...millions to them is like pocket money, and there's us.

### **If David Cameron was here now what would you say?**

Man up.

Grow a pair.

Get out you robin reliant.

Grow a pair Mr Cameron.

### **"Some people say the Lib Dems break their promises and will say anything to get elected"**

That's true.

They all do. Watching the Coalition and what they all do, he just goes "yes OK then" then all the others go "what are you doing?!"

They're just grateful to be there aren't they? "yes I'll do it".

All that happens is he says yes to something then all the people on the backbenches go crazy because he's gone against everything that they've ever worked for.

You could almost put Labour in that, they all do that.  
He's got splinters in his bum from sitting on the fence.

**If he was here now what would you say to Clegg?**

Get off the fence.  
Stand up for what you believe in. There's a gap for you.  
Stop following everyone else.

**What does he believe in?**

He doesn't have any confidence.  
I don't know anymore.  
All the things they said, like the University fees and then it was totally backtracked.  
They won all the students over by saying that.  
He should have said "no".  
I think they need to go to all the Labour talks and go to all the Conservative talks and look at what everyone's nodding at and just write notes and then make their own talk from it. It makes an easier life for him to agree  
He's like a torn man, it's a shame. He must be totally hounded.  
You almost want to pat him on the back.  
Then there's a gap for him: this is your chance!  
If he actually did stand up for something...  
I bet he's on anti-depressants.

**If you had to choose, which of the three of them do you think is the strongest?**

Winston Churchill.  
I think Cameron,  
He comes across the most assertive, just not enough.

**Who do you think has the nicest, or has the best intentions?**

Difficult one....  
Cameron.  
I think the same.

**Which understands normal people the best?**

Clegg's probably the closest to normal people. I don't consider him as much as the private school boy as the rest. But at the minute he's just so desperately trying to hang on to his coalition because they've never been that close to the top before.

I don't see him as upper class. He told us he was going to help the students and it was like "oh hang on there's somebody on our side who understands", but then he just never followed through,

He was being told off!

It was a good idea but, if we knew, he must've known as an economy we couldn't afford to do that, so why say it in the first place, is it just to get votes?

He treats us a bit stupid really. If you work the maths out, I know we're not privy to all the information, but it doesn't take a rocket scientist does it... they're just saying "oh really" flipping heck.

I mean, it must've been obvious we couldn't have done that and they made themselves look like fools. So I don't think they'd ever stand a chance on their own now – no one would trust what they say.

**Do you vote the way your parents voted? Is that something that still happens?**

I don't know how my parents voted.

My parents were Labour.

Mine were, I followed.

**Why?**

I just got brainwashed really.

My Dada always had that thing where they look after the rich not the working class, he always had that opinion and he used to sit and argue with my Nan. They'd have a huge row on a Sunday night after reading the papers and I just used to sit there watching and that's how I got my views, watching their very political arguments.

**Would you ever change?**

I would change if someone....

Yeah, I'm a floating voter.

I think I would have possibly last year, but it was more a case of "better the devil you know" It's a mess anyway.

I'm the same: was it a sheep in wolf's clothing – they say they're going to do something, but how realistically are they going to face it head to head.

How can they prove to us that they're going to?

Is it's like the job interview – you get the job and then you can't do it.

I think if they say they're going to do something and take action with it, they've got to explain how they're going to do it in a realistic way. I think they've really got to explain properly how they're going to do something in realistic terms that shows actually, yes, that is feasible, that can be done. Show they're working out, don't just give an answer, show your working out. They've got to tell us what they're actually doing.

## Focus Group 4

### **If I say to you “Ed Miliband” – what comes to mind?**

A little wimp.  
Strange  
I'd go with strange

### **Anything good?**

Well he's done nothing good as yet; we're waiting to see what he can do. He's all talk but I think he's a puppet

### **Of?**

Well the senior blokes in the party. They've tried it and failed, and they still want to stay there and if they can't do it, they get someone else to do it for them.

### **People like?**

You name them, they're all there. Shadow Cabinet aren't they, basically.

### **If he was a car what sort of car would he be?**

KA  
Citroen C5  
One that's been in a crash  
A Datsun cherry

### **David Miliband? Would he be better?**

You don't hear a lot from them really. All they do is criticise everybody else – they don't come out with their ideas. He hasn't said enough to convince me that he's got any [unclear]

### **Is there anything good that he's done?**

Not really

### **What do we know about him?**

Not a lot, apart from fighting his brother for jobs. Makes you wonder what the brother would think.

### **David Cameron – what comes to mind?**

Swear words  
Family man  
Patriotic  
Hoping he'd do a lot for the country, but haven't seen a lot yet  
He seems a bit, not wooden....but...

### **Is he a good man? Are his intensions good?**

I think his intensions are good  
I think he's trying too hard to please other countries to be honest. It annoys me that they're not concentrating more on the UK  
I'd agree with that

He comes out with a load of good ideas that have been fed to him by his advisors and then the next minute he finds out that they weren't right and he's apologising for them, that's the way I feel. One minute he's coming out with "I'm going to change this, and change that" and "won't these changes be wonderful for the country" and then somebody says "ah but what about something" and "oh hell I never thought about that" and they start apologising and backtracking. There's a lot of what they've brought out and said they're going to do, but what are they going to change? Because even the country doesn't like what they're talking about. They haven't looked at it properly

### **Does he do a lot of u-turns?**

I think so

They all do.

On immigration – big ones.

I'd agree with that as well. I think, unfortunately they have to try and seem politically correct for some reason, which is perhaps why they don't do it so much. I think most people in Britain would probably back them if they took a harder line on it.

### **Why don't they?**

Frightened of being criticised by other countries I should think.

They're destroying the country aren't they?

Destroying? God, I think they're already there.

I definitely think immigration is an issue. It's just an issue that's gradually got out of control. It's obviously at its worst point now, and he happens to be in power. It would be interesting to see what anybody would do in that situation.

I think Margaret Thatcher had the right idea.

Having worked in the Police, I've had to deal with all these sorts of things. I get the impression that this country has lost a lot of what it had. Starting with the Common Wealth's gone, the Empire's gone, all businesses are going because slave labour abroad will do it cheaper. We know we've got bugger all so now we have to make ourselves appear to be more wonderful people of the world, we're giving millions of pounds in aid, three years later, "we'll write off the debts, we can afford it" – we can't. We're trying to impress people and we've got nothing to impress them with – only words and money. This is why you allow them all in and give them everything.

They laugh about it – "go to England, they'll look after you"

We give them everything, and our own people can't get it...charity starts at home. We're not a benevolent society that we've got so much money we can give it all away which is what we're doing. They talk about, you know, everybody's struggling now, on the bread line, and all of the sudden they say "well we've got to cut this back, and save here, save there" then the following week they're giving billions of pounds to Somalia. It's not our fault there's not enough rain in Somalia. I'll send them a bottle of water. Charity starts at home. It's not our fault. What do all the other countries in the world do? Nothing. Well, a fraction of what we do. Why do we have to be the benevolent ones? Because we've got nothing else to play with. We haven't got enough room for starters. Our own people haven't got anywhere to live. All the garages in London have been converted into houses basically. We've got people

living on the streets. I think we've lost so much, they're desperate for people to like us. So they make all these deals and give all this stuff away. It's a joke.

Going back some years, I did a survey regarding the government and people coming into the country, and it was very embarrassing, because I was by some foreign people and you got to voice your opinion, and one of things was about people that were bringing relatives over into this country from other countries, having treatment in the hospitals, they've never contributed anything in National Insurance, and different things like that, and obviously they've got nowhere to live, they were always found somewhere to live. And we were asked our opinions on it, and one of the things, it was in some Green paper or something, and it was suggested that whenever anybody brought a relative over into this country for x amount of years, something like 8 or 10, they were responsible for that person. If they've got to have an operation, not the NHS paying for it, they pay for it. When they've been here x amount of years, probably about 10 years and proved their worth over in this country, they could probably get a reimbursement for that. It was the case that people who'd brought relatives over that they were responsible and they looked after them and paid for them and kept them while they were in this country. Everybody's different points...waste of time.

#### **If David Cameron was a car, what car would he be?**

Clapped out one.

He's a higher class man but I think a lot of it is they don't live in the real world. They're not real people. They have money. They live in big houses, they drive their flash cars.

The question I've always asked, whether it's a difficult topic for them to talk about, why do they go to a primary school? Because that's what they do: always standing in a school with their sleeves rolled up talking to a bunch of kids making all these wonderful announcements. They don't go to a factory, and they're the ones who've got to deal with it. It's always a primary school, always kids

#### **Chris, what car would you say David Cameron is?**

I'd say he is better than...as you say, you've got to prove your worth and at the moment I don't think he's proved his worth.

Nobody's had enough front to come and change the country so that we've seen, they're just not doing it are they?

Obviously things are getting harder, and things do have to get worse before they get better, but they could hit a lot of that on the head by stopping immigration, giving money out to other countries. And I'm not being horrible, OK India and African places like that, I know there's a lot of trauma and people are starving, but places like India there's a hell of a lot of wealth in that country. They've got a lot of their own people that's really well off. What are they doing about it? There's a lot of them over here that have got businesses, restaurants. How much money are they sending back to support their own country?

I think as well they ought to stop the girls being allowed to have babies. They should be stopped after a certain amount, two children, family allowance should have stopped. Not for normal people who work, but for young girls.

I think they should do that on a degrading scale – the more you have, the less you get.

If you can't afford the kids you shouldn't have them.

How can these girls have four kids and no husbands? They live on their own in a flat and all of a sudden they're pregnant again. How come they can do that? What about people who don't have kids? Someone I know, she's got no children. She's worked since she was 16 years old. She's paid tax – why doesn't she get a tax rebate for having no children? It doesn't work like that yet you can have 4 children and get whatever you want but people who don't have children don't get anything. It's all wrong. It's take, take, take.

I was made redundant in October of last year. I had my own flat. I went to the council to try and claim just while I was trying to find another job. I was basically told to live off my redundancy until it was gone. I'd been there for nine years but I only got the minimum pay out because the company went into liquidation. I kept going back to them, I had to give my flat up and move back with my parents, I had my car repossessed because I couldn't afford my car and I couldn't claim Job Seekers'.

All because you worked hard and paid tax

This is why the country is so...for the older people it's disgusting what they must....my mum, I can't even start her on politics, because the older people, it's just so wrong that they haven't done anything....you just give up hope with them.

#### **Are there any politicians who understand more?**

I think if any politician or anybody in the public eye speaks out against something like that they get absolutely slated.

They toe the party line if they're a politician

They have to be seen to be non-racist and politically correct. And they know that. I'm not saying they might actually want to do that

#### **What do think causes this climate of political correctness?**

It's the British way. It's always been that way. Making sure that we're seen by other countries in a certain light. I used to be a really patriotic person, and think I'd never leave this country, but the past five years – if I didn't have any family ties, I'd up-sticks and leave. I just think the situation has got terrible. And obviously now I've got a young daughter, it just doesn't feel like the sort of place I want to bring her up in. It doesn't feel safe anymore.

Surprising how many people never talk about anything, other than the violence, other than the BNP because their beliefs are that we should get the country back to ourselves. That's what they want. You don't say it in public just in case somebody comes round and smashes your fingers or whatever.

You see it was mentioned about the British Commonwealth. There are some people here who probably wouldn't remember how many people actually died going back many years ago, to actually retain the British Commonwealth. What was it for? What British Commonwealth? It's just been an absolute waste of life.

We gave it up for Brussels to tell us what to do. I thought we beat the crap out of the Germans in the War, but they're telling us what to do.

I'm just waiting for them to turn around and say "we'll end up with the Euro".

Oh God!

I can't see how they're going to sort this country out. I just cannot see a way out of it. Immigration is allowing in and allowing in. I just cannot see a way out of it.

I mean a lot of the people say “we’re seeking asylum”. How the hell can there be asylum seekers?

It’s linked isn’t it? You can’t get a part time job because people can come over and they’re getting jobs.

So immigration, they’ve got to start there, they’ve got to stop them coming in. The less jobs there are for our children, that impacts on crime and it’s an ever perpetuating circle.

I think we’re getting mixed up here with immigration. You’ve got the people from Europe, that are allowed in because we’re Europe, but you’ve got the other people from India, Africa, God knows where – Timbuktu – that are coming over as well. That’s where our argument sits.

I read of one girl every time she went back to India, she was only young, every year she went to India, and every year she came back pregnant. And the child was born over here.

They can’t afford them over there. But you can’t kick them out because Brussels will tell you, you can’t kick them out. But who are they to tell us who we can have and who we can’t.

I don’t agree with it.

If they weren’t getting paid for all these babies, they’d stop having them.

### **Is there anyone else who is taking advantage?**

We’re all getting an unfair deal but that’s where it starts. They’ve got to sort that out. That’s got to be the priority.

They’re not going to bother – look at politicians; they fiddle their expenses for Christ’s sake.

You’re one of the unfortunate ones because you’ve worked all your life. You’ve probably worked with some of them and I’ve seen through life, and they really know how to milk the thing and it’s annoying.

Especially when you’ve got a mortgage and you’ve got things like that, and there isn’t any help. If you’re renting then you can....

I’ve got a four month old daughter, my partner walked out on me about a month ago, and I’ve got a mortgage and he’s left. I’m still on maternity leave, that’s my situation at the moment. I can’t work, they won’t give me income support because I’m on maternity leave, they won’t support me with my mortgage, I can’t work because I’ve got such a young child at the moment. They won’t give me income support until I finish my maternity benefit and then they won’t support me with my mortgage until I’m in receipt of income support for 13 weeks. And it’s all very well having all these policies that target the majority, but there’s always going to be individual cases, like yours, like mine. And I’ve worked all my life, I had a good career at BT for about 15 years, I had my own business, I was working until I was 7 months pregnant. Nobody could have predicted my situation, certainly not me. And now I find myself in a situation where I’m thinking “how am I going to keep a roof over my daughter’s head?” I’m going to go further into debt, which is something I’ve never done in my life; I’ve always paid my bills. So that’s my situation and no matter what policies they put in place, there’s always going to be individual situations. Yeah, there’s going to be the ones that cream it and milk it, like the women who are having all these babies, and there’s always going to be the individuals that it impacts on them.



I feel like a bit of a victim at the moment and I'm turning to family for support because there is no other support out there for me. I've been through phone calls, and there's the Citizen's Advice Bureau and going for in-depth meetings: if I was on housing benefit, or paying rent, the council would have paid it straight away.

I'm being penalised because I'm a home owner.

They'll pay your interest though won't they?

Not until I'm in receipt of income support for 13 weeks, which doesn't kick in until my maternity benefit finishes, which isn't until April.

It was kind of similar with me. I was renting, and I couldn't sign on because I was on garden leave. But I couldn't get the home support because I hadn't been claiming for 13 weeks. So in the end I had to just go back to living at home and giving up my place. There's nothing you can do in that situation. I went to the Citizen's Advice Bureau, and different Solicitors. And it all comes down to there's nothing you can do until you start claiming.

Having said that, there are people who are on benefits and are getting everything paid for and that is their way of life. It's certainly not my way of life – I've never claimed anything off the state in my life, but it looks like I'm going to have to at the age of 38 for the first time in my life.

But why shouldn't you be able to, if you've paid into the system?

I will be able to, but there's going to be a gap of a few months, and my family's going to have to support me.

You just hit the nail on the head. There are foreign people coming into this country and they're staying in blinking hotels. It just doesn't make sense.

Or you read in the paper, it will say someone who's come over to this country, and he's got x amount in his own country and they put him in a house for £2000 a month in London. It's like when people do something wrong and they've been criminals all their lives and they've robbed or whatever, and they've got a stash of money and they go to jail. It's only now just come in that they're going to get their money taken off them.

### **Where's it gone wrong? Who's to blame?**

When they brought out no smacking children. That was just absolutely outrageous.

Kids speak to their teachers like they're dirt. You shouldn't be able to do that. We couldn't do that when we were little, we'd get a smack across our hand with ruler. Now you can't touch them.

With our country, we've got a habit of sticking our nose in when it comes to other countries. If we concentrated more on ourselves.

### **What are the big local issues?**

They're changing all the boundaries.

There are a few friends who aren't happy about that at all.

It was in the Observer recently.

I don't know what the impact is it's going to have on house prices for people who've saved and invested in their houses.

But I don't think it'll go ahead because there'll be too much uproar, they stopped it last time.

It was a talking point amongst my friends who all live in the [local area], most people who are in quite a nice well to do area are.

Why do they do that?

I don't really understand the reasoning behind it, I don't think anybody else knows.

Change the wards to keep it Tory or Labour, so there's less chance of losing it. I'm only guessing but. They don't announce why do they, they just do it.

**What are the councillors like? In this area, are they good at sorting things out?**

No, they're doing roads near us, widening roads, and it's gonna cost a fortune to have all these roads, where the shops are, make parking spaces slightly wider. You know, there's better things they can spend their money on.

Pot holes.

Exactly, they do spend money on absolute crap, excuse my expression.

I think that as well.

It's like right we've got a million, let's see what we can waste it on.

This time of the year, with coming to the new financial year they use up that money.

And where I am we've had potholes on our road for years, you know, and it's just...

I was going to say as you cross the traffic lights coming to [local road] on the drive there's a hell of a pot hole there but the comical point about it was they spent money on doing all the kerbside around the edge of the park. Ridiculous.

They just, well. Well like I say they live in their big posh houses don't they They don't ask the locals what they want.

And the only time you're likely to see a politician is when they're canvassing for your vote. You won't see them another time.

But they don't seem to come here and ask the people what they want. We want this, we want that, come and ask us what we want and we'll tell you what's needed.

And not just at elections.

Exactly, it's all very well saying we'll have surgeries once a week well my doctor holds a surgery every bloody day but I don't want to see him every day. When you've got something to put across, put it across and we'll have a listen.

I was saying about the tarmac in the roads, I find it strange sometimes they tarmac roads and there's nothing wrong with them and then you see other roads and they're like the Grand Canyon. Why don't they do that one instead?

Yeah.

**The previous group mentioned potholes as well.**

Who lives on that road? Who's got a house down there?

[local road] has holes down it for years.

Do you know I saw someone from the council the other day, this park had all green railings and he was standing there and he must have been there for hours just painting the top of each railing gold. There must have been about 300 of these and this poor bloke was just standing there painting them gold.

This is what we're spending our money on.

I think the problem is if you've got certain politicians in certain areas, I don't wanna sound to be racist or anything but if they're in an area where there are a lot of foreigners they tend to try and please the foreigners because they want to get in.

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**And what about Birmingham, zooming out a little bit, what are the issues?**

Obviously we had the riots.

What part of Birmingham, the Indian part, the Chinese part or the Croatian part? It's not Birmingham anymore. Where are the brummies in Birmingham? They're getting out, they're outside Birmingham now. Because there's no bloody room for them.

There's a part of Birmingham you aren't allowed to walk alone, [local road].

I was just going to say, when I was in the police force, I joined the police force in 1963 and my first beat was [previously mentioned local area], and they was all white people down there, every shop I could call in for a cup of tea, within two years nobody spoke to you. And that was only in two years and I was a police officer for goodness sake, but it got to the stage where at nights we went out in twos because you daren't go down there alone. Even if you're in a police uniform.

Can you imagine if we said that, it wouldn't be able to happen.

I spent the last 25 years of my police service as a dog handler, nobody bothered me then. Because my dog kept them at bay.

I was gonna say I've been to a lot of countries, and I mean a lot of countries, and there's not one that stands like this country stands. If you want to go to another country, and my granddaughter is over in Australia at the moment, but they really do vet you. Not like over here. It just annoys me. really annoys me.

I went to Canada once, and there was a Canadian family in front of me at passport control, and the questions they got asked and they live there, they got asked a lot of questions before they were let in but when you come back to England you flash your passport and you just walk in and that's it. It's a bit stricter now but at the time I thought that just sums it up, you can walk into our country and other countries are so strict about you getting in.

The first time I went to Africa, it was very belittling it really was, he must have been sitting 10 foot high, and you had to walk up to him, look up at him and answer all different questions as you get off the plane. We were only going on holiday. And then you get into Heathrow airport and see them with their washbaskets on their head into the country with all their stuff in it. It really does ugh.

Do you have anything to declare, Canada they're strict, New Zealand they're strict. Australia.

Africa even now, if you leave with more than 200 rand, if you have any more then you have to chuck it in the bin.

I saw a family get turned down from Australia because they have a disabled daughter, and it was who is going to care for her when the parents are gone, not for holiday but to emigrate. And that's how strict they are.

We couldn't say that.

We really do need to tighten up about it, forget this whole world of you can't say this you can't say that you can't do this you can't do that. You know everyone jumps on the bandwagon, you like it's like kids with this thing what's wrong with them, ADHD. Everyone's got it now, everyone's on the social, they all claim for it don't they. You know, there are normal cases of it but someone's got a child that's really naughty and oh that's what he's got, that's what the problem is. Not the fact their parents never discipline them.

**Do you know anybody who kind of feels the way you do in politics? Do you know people who are politically involved who feel similar things to you? And experience things like you do?**

People who go to meetings?

Yeah I know people who go to meetings, who've probably got the same views as what.

**What about people that are elected? Are there people who share a similar perspective?**

If they do they're afraid to say so because they have to toe the party line.

I was going to say my cousins done some stuff for the Liberal Party, over in [local town]. I don't really know what his feelings are because I haven't really spoken to him because he's over that way as well. He's a business man as well, so hmm you know. I don't know what his feelings are on that side.

**I'm curious, there's 8 of you here and you aren't the only 8 people in the country presumably to feel this way so it's interesting that it doesn't seem like you feel politicians have these concerns.**

They're afraid to open their mouth.

Politicians are to a degree brought in line by their party. If somebody perhaps did think that or wanted to be like that they might not actually get any position within that party because it's not what the party agrees to as a whole.

That's what the whips are for isn't it.

They should take a vote, go to the country. Say right how many of the people in [local area] hold a British passport for x amount of years could vote on whether they should do something stronger regarding immigration in the UK. And find out exactly what the people in the UK, the British citizens, not the ones that've just come in with their passports from wherever but that's held a British passport for many years, what their feeling is.

Bring back capital punishment as well.

And seeing as those that are trying to get into it, if they voted for no immigration they'd never get voted would they? Because there's that many of them, they're taking over.

It's a little like trying to lock the stable door after the horse has bolted isn't it.

Exactly.

And it shouldn't have come to this.

They're never going to be able to, they're too European now.

First of all they commit a crime in this country – I don't agree with having to keep these people in prison, sod them back off to their own bloody country.

What about the one they're just kept here and has cost us thousands of pounds.

Not that one with the funny hand?

The one with the terrorist.

I volunteered for but they wouldn't take me. I'll lock them up no bother.

Something with some batteries or something, and now he's got to go off to America? And he's honestly said he didn't believe.

This one's a terrorist and he's being released, they don't believe they can send him back to his country so he's staying here. He's dangerous.

That wraps it up what the government is like you've hit it on the nail;

They're spineless.

Got to protect his human rights, well what about the rights of the people he terrorised? I want to hang them all here. I wanna be the hangman.

If he was one that shot my family I'd go out with a gun and blow his bloomin' head off.

Anybody that's had someone that was killed by terrorists. There aren't many round here that wouldn't rebel themselves.

But that's what I'm saying, with these politicians, they're not ever going to vote this immigration because they won't get in. If you're a politician in, where's that place we just said? And you said we're going for no immigration no one would vote for you.

[local areas] would be the same, [local town]'s full of them.

Walking around with a shamrock in your turban.

Don't you think this is a problem politicians face for ages though. They'd have to do things what would get them votes rather than what's right?

It's too late now, I can't see there being a way out of this.

That's why they should go for a load of women, they wouldn't care

Women will get away with a lot more than men.

I definitely agree.

Regardless of whether you're a woman or a man, don't you think if you was the target person who was a politician you would want to keep your job? I'm not saying it was right.

So they've got no morals are you saying?

To a degree, I think people would rather look after themselves than everyone else.

You can only be in Parliament if you have a British passport and have lived here x amount of years, we shouldn't have Indian politicians, I'm sorry they shouldn't be allowed to be politicians because they haven't been here. It should be people who've held a British passport for ... 40 years?

Some of the politicians in the cabinet now, if they were not in the cabinet and wasn't politicians and was sitting in this room, they'd maybe more than likely agree with everything that you say but they can't do that in their position because ultimately they would lose their job.

So If you've got a politician whose come in the country, he's obviously never going to stop it is he because he's one of them whose got into the country isn't he. So if they said to be a politician you've got to have a British passport and have been holding it for 40 years unless you were obviously born in this country.

**Just to explore a little bit more, is it the case that on the whole that politicians understand the situation but are too weak to do anything or is it a problem of understanding?**

They do understand to a certain degree, but they don't know any of the consequences do they?

I think it's a bit of both, some of them don't live the lives that Joe Public live, therefore they can't really have our view so they're making decisions without any feel for what we're experiencing.

They're just trying to please all the people.

You do have a few politicians who have normal backgrounds, it's just a case of not losing the seat. Politicians are making decisions based on what's going to keep them in a job.

They're frightened of being out of work.

If you take a sort of Maggie Thatcher stance on it as it were as you said earlier, it's not going to work.

She foresaw all this coming, that's why she put the poll tax as per person, she could see it coming, she knew all that and now look at them, 15, 20 or them living in one house and laughing aren't they?

It's like Enoch Powell, if they'd listen to him believe you me.

The poll tax solved it, because they all had to pay didn't they?

We used to go to a house and say is Mr So-and-so here, wanna see his driving licence and there would be one driving licence and about 12 people using the same one.

They've even done that at [local school] haven't they? They sit an exam and the one that's sat the exam isn't necessarily the one that goes to the school!

You can cheat better when the girls wear burkas.

That should definitely be stopped. This rubbish, how do we know when people come in that it is a woman and not a fella? It could be a terrorist?

She's right, it's ridiculous.

The French don't.

You can't wear a balaclava.

*Unclear noise*

I had a funny situation, I was out riding my horse and a woman asked if she could touch my horse and I said no not with all that stuff over because he'll take off with me, because he'll take off with me, all he can see is moving sheets. It's true isn't it, my friend said oh you can't say that and I said oh but I can.

**Somebody mentioned that there are some normal politicians in parliament, who stands out as being properly in touch with the real world?**

Dennis Skinner.

Didn't Brown come from an ordinary background?

Our Dennis talks a lot of sense I've got a lot of time for him.

**Anyone else, any other normal people to use your phrase?**

I just get annoyed with them I really do.

A lot of them start off fine, then they just tow the party line because they've got to. But then look beyond the top echelon, who keep them in line, who are the whips that keep them in line? It's the civil servants. They're living in bloody great houses rolling in money and couldn't care less anyway.

It's never going to come to their doorstep. Do you notice when the riots started getting closer to these houses, they were very worried then.

We used to get called out to guard them, I've been through all this. They used us to look after us. Maggie Thatcher was a swiver though, the best thing she ever did for me was owe me a lot of overtime for the miners' strike. I got a lot of money, I was away for weeks on end all over the country guarding these pits. But to stand there I get spat at, stuff thrown at me, and I had to stand there and take it. No thank you. We earned all that overtime. We could sympathise with the miners but we had to stand there. But whilst we're doing that getting knocked to the floor and the hell kicked out of you the following day you get called to one of these miners' houses saying someone's nicked my car. I say I'm awfully sorry,

let me help you find it. Who gives a toss. And I got told off for saying that, the day before they were kicking shit at me.

**Do you think that the people who go into politics are different to the people in this room?**

Yes definitely.

They're privately educated, I think they haven't got a lot of common sense; they don't live in the real world.

No experience of life.

Educated but thick in others ways.

They've got no experience of normality life.

I'm trying to think what would drive you to a life in politics, to say I'll choose that. But surely it's not just a job is it. It's more of a vocation isn't it?

It's supposed to be.

You're supposed to believe in something, to want to change something if you're gonna go into politics but I think to make that decision now you'd have to be an extremely optimistic person wouldn't you? Because in reality there's no positive change going on for the British people that I can see.

The only thing I can see is every time you get a prime minister you look at him when he's first in power then look at him in five years and he looks about thirty years older.

If I was coming through University I don't know what would make me choose to go into politics, I just don't think it's something, I don't know what kind of person, unless it's someone really positive who thinks they can really really make a change.

But I don't think they can now even if they were.

No exactly.

Once you're into power they've obviously got to get the votes haven't they so really their power to change.

They're too scared to speak their mind in this country, that's the problem

To change anything you've got to have a 100% following behind you, government wise. Not just your party that thinks the same way you do, you've all got to be on the same wavelength.

I think you've got to have a really really positive attitude.

And ask the British people their feeling on things.

I think the politicians feel that because we vote, we vote the politicians in, then that's our say on the way the country's run but it's not is it?

Well they get in then the change the ballpark, the goalposts as it were. If someone does a U Turn or you know does something different, it's just ridiculous.

**Any other words you'd use to describe?**

No confidence.

**If you had to guess what sort of a person goes into politics, what would you say?**

Cambridge, Oxford.

I think when you come to vote as well, it's like we are, we should be able to vote now who as a person, as a homeowner, an adult who wants immigration.

Why can't that happen? Do you want it or don't you, why can't they set up these polling stations at every school and we'll all vote do you or don't you want immigration.

Because they know what the outcome would be.

Yes but that's nobody's fault then, we've voted it so they've got to kill us all.

If they decide to go into the euro, you won't get a say in it, it will be the government who'll decide.

We'll be in I reckon.

I think people feel quite strongly about that I reckon.

Well once it's done you won't get out.

The issue with that though is if you start that, and I'm not saying you're wrong because I agree with you, but if you start down that line you'll start getting people wanting referendums on ridiculous things, and then that will happen and then it gets out of control doesn't it, which is perhaps why they don't do it.

**And in terms of people who are getting more out than they put it, you talked about immigration, are there any others, people in society who are getting more than their fair share?**

The people who just spend their life on benefits and know how to work the system. Nothing to do with immigration now, but we all know there are people out there probably brought up by their mum and dad on benefits, gone and had having kids early, on benefits straight out of school for the kids and they're just working the system.

I think a lot of it as well, with girls who are having babies and that, they're quick enough to hand over the money, half the time these women who have babies and that, they smoke! I can't afford to smoke, how do they afford to smoke? So I think there should be something set up where they're not allowed to be just given £100 a week, they can have this for Asda food shopping, this for...

Not there you go bang there's your money.

Look at that case on these people who fiddle it. There was a woman who got a flat in London, she was pulling £900 out, she'd stuck someone in there, she lived in a great big massive house, they caught up with her in the end but she was pulling £900 off these people so she was quits in of £900 every month.

Wow.

If they'd have gone through the rigmarole of checking, they'd never have happened, but because they hand the money over. Milk tokens, Asda shopping, if they need a new bed or a cot for the baby or something then be given vouchers for the cot, not so they can buy their booze and fags on it.

**And so people on benefits, and anyone else getting more than their fair share?**

Yeah, when we have to keep people that's committed crime. ,my feeling is if somebody comes into this country and they commit a crime, they should be fined and sent straight back to where they came from, one way flight, tata, you're banned from coming into the country again. And if we did that we could knock into the country, and if they turned round and said if you bring any relatives into this country, and also vetting people who are marrying people to stop in the country, stricter on that as well. If they was to say to people if you bring in your relatives in this country you have got to keep them, you know you're not getting



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any hand outs for them, keep them while they're in this country. Say 10 or 15 years until they're proved themselves and become a benefit, a working benefit to this country.

If you go to Australia you've got to have x amount of money before they'll let you into the country.

You've got to have certain jobs, skills.

And New Zealand as well.

Why don't we do that?

And take a lengthy exam, and pay for the privilege of taking the exam.

But again, you can't do it for people from the EU.

They never have any problems in Australia. Do they, apart from the off bush fire?

But you don't hear about problems like that do you?

### **Anyone else who's getting more than their fair share in modern Britain?**

Professional footballers!

Definitely.

Bankers.

### **Ah, I was wondering if anyone was going to mention bankers. Is that right?**

And politicians actually.

Britain's debt does need to be sorted out, and you do need some pretty savvy people at the top to sort it out.

It does stink when there are so many on the breadline and you hearing about these millions of pounds of bonuses, I know a couple of them had to sort of be forced into handing the bonuses back haven't they?

Yeah, forced.

I can understand why it's an incentivised role, I mean it's a big problem to sort out isn't it, the debt. But it's kind of rubbing the general public up the wrong way, given that there's no jobs out there. People are living on the breadline.

They should stop this people having loans willy nilly as well, I get rung up all the time – ooh you can qualify for a loan or something.

Yeah, because they're just there aren't they, people who won't realise, they'll just go out and get themselves into debt.

And the people that ring up and text you, you've just had an accident and you think hang on what accident, it's stupid, these people.

And you haven't always got a case to sue for anyway because nothing's happened.

If you're not in debt they don't wanna know you.

Absolutely right that is.

I'm lucky, I've paid of my mortgage, my wife and I have a car each, day to day expenses. I don't owe anybody anything, I pay my bills on time, nobody wants to know me. They don't ring up and offer me loans, I don't need one. If you're in debt they're there, offering you money all the time.

They know you're good, they know you're alert.

The fact that I own my own house, and I'll be honest it's 4 bedroom house, it's worth I dunno about a quarter of a million at the moment, minimum. I've got a phenomenal asset there, we can give you as much as you like against your

house. Get stuffed I'm keeping my house, because I'd only lose it, I don't need the money. I'm lucky, I've got to admit I am lucky, then again I've worked hard for my police pension, and I've got my OAP next month and I'm looking forward to that, such as it is (sod all basically) I still have to send my wife out to work, keep me in the manner I've become accustomed to. I do a bit of work with my video business that's all.

That's what annoys me as well. This business of when, especially people my age, you've worked all your life, I've never ever signed on, and if I have to go into a home everything's going to be sold to keep me in that home and my kids will get nothing. And yet the government are hanging out all these freebies to other people. In this country you've got to earn absolutely nothing or be extremely rich. For the middle of the road person, the genuinely middle of the road person who's tried to keep their head above water, keep out of debt, keep out of trouble.

**If there were three things could a government do to deal with some of those things, perhaps other than immigration, I'm thinking the other issues, what could they do to start to deal with this?**

They've got to follow up with what they say. They come out and say we're going to do x y and z, they're got to do that.

They've got to be able to speak your mind, and get done what you want done, not be lose your job because you've spoke out of order or whatever.

Discuss it with the general public more. Find out what their feelings are.

Because most of them are, let's face it, in their posts under false pretences aren't they. Because you go in thinking they're going to do this that and the other.

What is it once a week surgery? Once they get posts cabinet-wise or whatever, they haven't got time, they send an assistant.

What would happen if we all said we're not going to vote, you're all a load of crap, what would happen then?

They'd bring in a load of foreigners to run the country.

You know what they need in this country?

A cull.

If they'd all got the bottle to do it, the Brits. A one day strike. Absolutely everything, and really show the government.

But they can probably hire someone for about 4 pound cheaper than we are.

Foreign.

Yeah exactly.

**Okay thank you for that that was very clear, let's just finish off, for the last 20 minutes then, we touched on it already but let's look at the parties a little more. Specifically the sort of people who become Labour MPs?**

Well educated.

They should be working class, but they're not.

Not worldly.

Old Labour used to be working class didn't they?

Yes, and that's why all the working class voted Labour because they were all on a par.

There's very little line now between Labour and Conservative.

Very blurred.

Why would you want to be Tory, they don't want you so you stand for Labour and if they don't want you you stand for UKIP. If you're really naughty you stand for BNP.

I'm going to go for the loony party next time.

### **So is there anything that distinguishes a Labour politician?**

I think Conservative are higher class, Labour are lower class.

He may well have been a shop steward, but will have moved on from there, so he's still got his grass roots in Labour. But once you get up there to the higher echelons it tends to fade away, because what happens is there's no contact with your constituents. The surgery once a week is a waste, they only do an hour, a complete and utter waste of time. Yeah okay we'll do that for you, then the party whip says no we can't do it.

They need to do that thing where, I can't remember which politician it was, went to live with a family for a week. With like four kids and living on benefits and whatever, that was quite interesting. They need to do that more often.

But then again they're happy in the knowledge they're going back to luxury again. It's a joke. Good for sixth months that would be alright. Kill them off.

You can't afford four kids.

I can't afford four kids and we both work.

Did you see that one programme, living with 15 kids? They're all on the state and they're just banging out kids.

As we said, one of the things they should turn around and do is the benefits.

Stop them.

For one kid, then two benefit, after that nothing. Years ago in the 40s you didn't get family allowance, and look at the baby boom after the war and people managed. Mind you they weren't paying out for all these.

It was the war.

Unclear noise

It's scary, a war now wouldn't be like it was in 30s or 40s.

### **At the risk of going over old ground what sort of a person become a Conservative MP?**

It must be somebody that must really believe they can put the country back on its feet. As you said it's got to be a certain sort of person.

I think so, I don't think saying they're in it for the money is enough anymore, because there are plenty of other jobs you can go for.

Who can put it back on their feet?

You can't.

You need somebody to strike out doesn't it?

They're not allowed to.

But that's what it would take to see any change I think.

So somebody with balls I guess.

I always thought a coalition would be a thing to work but now.

They've all got different ideas, they don't see in a straight line do they? They've proved that.

**I guess what I'm trying to get to is do you think it's who they are as people that means its going wrong or what they're not doing?**

It's what they're not doing because they're frightened of losing face.

They're not listening to the voters.

No I don't think it's that, they're frightened to death because they're either going to lose their job or.

They can't listen to the voters because the upper echelons are whips. They're saying you stick to the party line.

Do you remember when everyone striked, and he said on the tv they shouldn't strike – hospitals and that, they shouldn't do it. It's they're job. And look at him – he got in so much trouble for saying they shouldn't strike.

**Yes I'm just imagining, one of your ideas was having vouchers instead of money, for people on benefit, I mean if the Conservative government did that wouldn't everyone turn around and say you rich so-and-sos, you're just trying to grind the faces of the poor and that's inhumane.**

Any decision could be spun though.

But look at some of these children you see, the parents are walking around smoking and drinking and you see cases on the TV – why aren't these kids having the money spent on them because that's why they get money? They don't dress them right, I think that's what they should do.

Plus it makes the kids think that's what they can do later on in life.

That's why they have kids.

It's the benefit culture, they don't want a job.

Look at China, is it China you can only have one child?

Two.

One now I think.

You can have more if you work the land as a farmer.

So some couples have gone from China to Japan so they can have more children. And I know it would be harsh but going back to what we said about family allowance, that's another thing they could bring in, x mount of children unless you can prove you have enough money to look after them all.

You find nowadays a lot of working class people aren't having children; it's more the people who are on the social who are having the kids. A lot of working class or people with very good jobs aren't having children.

They can't afford to have children.

You've got to be earning some money to be able to afford childcare.

And to look after them properly.

Then you've got people who have kids who keep banging them out because it's a meal ticket isn't it.

That's our future generation then.

Exactly, exactly.

**Okay, let's finish off with some statements that some people say about each of the parties. "Labour Party wastes your money and they can't be trusted on the economy" Is that true?**

I'd say true.

I'd say it's true of all of them not just Labour.

It's been going on a while to be fair.

### **So the current government as well?**

Vote of no confidence.

### **More or less though? Because a lot of people say don't they oh the debt's got to be paid off because Labour left the country in a mess.**

That's easy to say.

Load of rubbish, They got it off the previous Conservative debt, it's just going on and on and on.

No, they did leave this country in a complete mess.

Where is he living now? Bloody Blair.

He scooted off the moment it all started going wrong didn't he?

Exactly.

Unclear noise

I think a lot of people would blow him away if they could get hold of him.

### **If Ed Miliband was here now what would you say to him?**

Give up and get a job.

A proper job.

Yeah, he hasn't got a clue what he's doing at the moment he's being led by other people. He doesn't even command respect that's what I'd say.

I think a lot of people can't take him very seriously. Even if a politician brings in policies, yeah okay that's got a lot to do with why people would vote for him but there's an element about the person that's fronting the party.

Like William Hague was when he came in, he was just a little boy, now because he was rubbish as the prime minister they bring him in as the foreign secretary. They keep sending him abroad now. He's a complete and utter waste of space, but he was a little Tory boy and he hasn't got a clue.

I think there's a lot of talk over, was it 2 jags, Prescott, that was the ex as well, that sums it up.

### **He was working class though wasn't he?**

Yeah but he was above it because of the money.

Don't you think most people would get greedy if they got that position?

I think most would.

If the system allows you to do it you play the system, everybody does. And that's what's going on. The expenses.

They're in it for the money, they won't speak their mind because they don't want to lose their jobs.

I think mostly that's what people go to work for isn't it.

You go to work to earn your money don't you.

Yeah but you expect something different from the politicians. But its running the country and your children's future.

But I don't think that many people could honestly say they'd be that much different, it's greed isn't it at the end of the day.

It depends if you're a person with morals at the end of the day.

Money has the habit of changing them.

Money is the route of all evil.

So cut their wages. Don't do it for the money if you want to be a politician.

Like with your footballers, cut their wages.

Oh yes.

Abolish football, ban it.

You know, give them a reasonable, I'm not being funny it's a responsible position so they should get responsible wage. But not OTT.

**What sort of money do you think? How many thousands of pounds a year.**

I'd say £50,000-£60,000.

I'd have said between £40,000 and £50,000.

I'd say about £50,000.

I'll give them £75,000, but I won't give them the two houses and all expensive and whatever.

Yeah that's what it is, if you earn £75,000 you shouldn't get given houses.

If you're in London the cost of living is a lot more.

Okay give them the wage to match that. But don't give them a house and the money and say ooh that is going to spend on whatever. We have to pay our bloody mortgages.

I agree.

**Okay, two more statements. "The Conservative Party looks after the interests of the rich not ordinary people".**

True.

Yep.

They don't come down and mix with the hoi polloi. They mix with the hoi polloi's children in the primary schools.

**More true of the Conservative Party than the others?**

Yes, they're the ones always in the primaries aren't they, talking to the kids but they won't talk to the parents, working class parents.

But it depends where you're looking at. What are we, we're normal we are, normal working class. Our discussions are they need to sort out not us, working class, the ones who are screwing the system. And Labour were more listening to those screwing the system and allowing them to. Because they were getting more votes.

Conservatives are the same at the minute they really are.

But they've had to. I think they've had to.

Don't forget you've got a lot of people. A lot of our foreign friends that's got businesses so they'll vote Conservatives anyway.

I don't have a problem with those at work. It's those that screw the system.

I think that's always been a general perception of the Conservative Party, and I think today it still is the perception, that they look after the interest of the rich not the poor.

Also years ago they've both just become very similar now. I think that's probably a bit outdated.

**Interesting, what makes you say that?**

That's always the perception I had as a girl.

You've grown up with Labour, but now as an adult they seem very similar.

I'd agree.

There's a fine line between the two.

Always brought up thinking Labour is it, you need to vote for Labour.

I mean they're in power now and I don't feel like I'm being looked after at all. I'm being left to flounder. It does feel like it's the have and the have nots. The rich are okay.

But you wouldn't have got anything even if Labour had been in, because you're a working person who has paid your tax. If you had been on benefits, all your life, with Labour or Conservative now you'd be looked after. Or if you had seven kids you'd be looked after.

In the 1960s my dad always voted Labour, strong Labour person, factory worker, he got lung cancer, the chap at the social, and I've never forgotten it, patted him on the back because he'd got a couple of hundred quid in the bank, we lived in a back house and he said the best advice I can give you is to get back to work as soon as possible. Two week after he was dead. And that's what's wrong. My dad worked all his life. And it does make you very very bitter, because as you say, if you work and you try hard you're penalised for it.

But that's whoever's in.

Exactly, that was when Labour was in.

Whoever started this system is to blame.

They should look at each individual person, how long have you been in this country, what have you contributed to this country, and if you haven't contributed anything you get bugger all, and if you have they'll look after you.

It's like old people if they need their teeth doing, do you know how much they have to pay? Yet if you've been on the dole all your bloody life it's free. Is that fair?

I needed a new tooth, 205 quid it were.

Same with spectacles.

And what you're forgetting is a lot of pensioners that are pensioners today possibly the 70odd plus are the people that were in war for this country years ago.

### **Oh, and finally, if Nick Clegg were a car?**

He'd be the side car!

The other one would be toad wouldn't he.

Sidecar on a motorbike, no power of his own.

### **Which brings me to our last statement actually – “The Liberal Democrats break their promises and will say anything to get elected?”**

Waste of space.

I can't approve that.

It's always been a two party country, and they try and reinvent themselves and change their name to try and get round it, it'll never change from a two party system. The nearest they'll get is a coalition so they've got no bite, no power of their own.

Like you're saying, unless they brought someone in with a bit of balls.

The only chance this country would have is if they didn't vote old whatshisname in the one that was against all this, oh, you'd know if you'd listen. Enoch Powell.

My hero.

He'd have sorted this, we wouldn't be in this mess we are now.