

**1. "May I ask why only 20 people debated the Digital Economy Bill in the Commons despite a lot of opposition? May I also ask why then 200 MP's from Labour and Conservative rammed the Bill through despite opposition from normal people with normal lives?"**

**Dave, Coventry**

**Brown:**

I think there's got to be a lot more debate about the digital policies of the future and I agree that more Parliamentarians have really got to debate all the issues. I know there are big issues about the sharing of data and there are also big issues about access to information so I'm determined that when we are re-elected, we will make sure that there is proper debate on all these issues to ensure that people's voices are heard.

**Cameron:**

Well the Bill was rushed through Parliament too quickly and the Government...the Labour Government delayed the Bill for much too long. They should have got on with it earlier and debated it earlier. But we had a decision at the end of Parliament should we try and stop this Bill altogether or should we allow it to go through and there were important things in that Bill for a really important industry in Britain, which is music and film, and television, radio, and so we thought it was important to let the good bits of that Bill through. So that's exactly what we did.

**Clegg:**

The way that the Digital Economy Bill was rammed through Parliament at the last minute, no scrutiny, no line by line debates on really, really controversial provisions was a classic example of what's wrong with Westminster. It was rammed through after the Election was called and the last you know dying days of the Parliament in something called "wash up". It wasn't a wash up it was a stitch up. A stitch up between Labour and Conservative MPs who decided that you didn't deserve to have your representatives in Parliament properly looking at a Bill which might have very, very serious impact on the way that you use the internet, the way that you have freedom to work on the internet. That's why we said it should have been scrutinised properly, it shouldn't have been rushed through in that way in the first place at all.

**2. "The flaws in our financial system that led to the crisis remain unresolved. The city still recklessly speculates with borrowed money. What reforms will you introduce to ensure taxpayers never again bail out banks because they are too big to fail?"**

**Charlie Kechman, London**

**Brown:**

You can be pretty sure that I am taking the action that is necessary and I will do so. First of all we've got to make sure that the banks pay back the money that they've lent from the government and they will. Then we'll make sure that this can never happen again, so we're going to build in requirements on the banking system about how much capital they hold, what their liquidity ratios are and how we will supervise them in the future, so that these big global institutions that cross between different countries are not just supervised in one country, they're supervised by all the countries in which they operate across the world and that's going to be very important. But we've also got to do something about the

contribution that banks make to society so I proposed a global financial levy on the banks and that makes sense because it would mean that one bank couldn't undercut another in another country, and we're now getting close to some agreement between some of the biggest countries in what we can do so that banks can make their fair contribution to society

Cameron:

Well it has been appalling what has happened in our financial system and here in the UK we had some of the biggest bank bail outs in the whole world. So what are we going to do to make sure it never happens again? Well first of all we need a bank levy, we're going to put a tax on banks to build up a bank of money to help us if ever we get into this situation in the future. Second, we're going to regulate the banks properly, we're going to hand over to the Bank of England one organisation with the authority and the ability to regulate banks properly. The next thing we're going to do is make sure the banks can't take part in the most risky activities. Those banks that take retail deposits, money from me or you, or deposits from small businesses, those so called clearing banks, they shouldn't be involved in the really risky activity like large scale proprietary trading. That's what President Obama suggested, we think it's right and we would do that here as well.

Clegg:

Do you know one of the things that I probably get more frustrated about more than anything else is that despite this huge implosion in our banking system, which has left our economy, the British economy, really, really vulnerable to the liabilities of the banking system...the liabilities of the banking system, the British banking system are now four and a half times the size of the whole British economy. Despite all of that...despite...despite the huge risk to...to the very fundamentals of our British economy still the Conservative and Labour parties don't want introduce the major reforms, the surgery which other people including the Liberal Democrats feel is necessary to make our economy safe. If you don't believe me...if you don't believe me, believe the Government of the Bank of...of England. He has said that very clearly that what is now required is a split between high risk investment banking and low risk high street retail banking. These two need to be separated so that casino banking can never again hold your every day savings to hostage.

**3. "Using the extradition laws as an example, Would it be fair to say the "special relationship" we have with the USA isn't as beneficial to the UK as it is to the USA?"**

**Andrew, East Grinstead**

Brown:

Well, I think you're got to look at the extradition laws and know that we can extradite to America and American can extradite to us. Although there are not exact similarities in our justice system we try to make sure that extradition happens both ways. I think the basic question about our relationship with America is 'can America and Europe together, and that's really where it counts, work together for a better world?' Working together with America and Europe we can deal with the environment and climate change. Working together we can work deal with the international nuclear and security issues and working together we can deal with terrorism but also deal with the economic problems we have faced so I want America and Europe to work together and I think that's the key thing for the future.

Cameron:

Well I think the special relationship is special and it is a two way street. We get help from America, they get help from us, for instance, when it comes to sharing intelligence on terrorism we do actually genuinely benefit from this relationship and I think we can see through our history how America and Britain have worked together. Now on the issue of extradition I agree the treaty is not working properly. We think it needs to be reviewed, we think it needs to be more balanced. I think the case of Gary McKinnon that has caused great concern in the UK just proved at that point and so we do need to look again at this Extradition Treaty. But should we be able to extradite criminals from America to Britain, yes, and should it happen vice versa, yes, but it needs to be fairly balanced between the two countries.

Clegg:

Look I studied and lived in America for a while. I think the relationship we've got with America is a great one obviously. There's bonds of affinity, language history. It is a special relationship but it shouldn't be a one way street. We shouldn't just automatically do what the White House tells us to do and actually when I was Home Affairs spokesperson for the Liberal Democrats I forced a debate in the House of Commons precisely on this issue, the Extradition Treaty because I couldn't understand, I still can't understand how the Government could have entered in secret into this lopsided treaty where there are fewer legal protections to extradite British people to America than there are extradite people from America to...to Britain. It was a treaty of course supported by the Conservatives, only the Liberal Democrats said no, this is an example of where the special relationship is becoming a one way street. I want to have a relationship where we act in our own interests, where we have more balance in this most important relationship of all.

**4. "Many people in the country have fears over immigration which extremist political parties try to exploit. What is your party going to do about immigration which might alleviate these fears?"**

**donniedarko**

Brown:

To manage and control immigration we have introduced what is called the Australian style points system and that means that you can't come into the country unless you've got a skill to offer. And that means that for those people outside the EU no unskilled workers now come and we're cutting back and we're cutting back on the occupations that are eligible for entry into the United Kingdom. Where a job is advertised by a company, it's got to be advertised in the local Job Centre for 4 weeks before you can consider taking on someone from outside the country so, we're trying to make sure we have the skills in Britain to meet the needs of our economy. But, of course, we're also a tolerant and diverse country and we do accept that the contribution that people have made to our country by people who have come from abroad, is something which is very big and is much welcomed from those people who have settled in our country and are very much part of our country and make a huge contribution to our lives.

Cameron:

Well what we need to do when it comes to immigration is control it properly and actually reduce the level of immigration. It's too high in recent years and that's why it's become such a political issue. I remember

back in the 1980s and 90s...early 90s it wasn't an issue at all. It's only now when you knock on doors or walk down streets that people raise it with you all the time and that's because it's been too high. So we say we need to bring it down. I'd like to see net migration, that's the difference between people going to live overseas and people coming to live here. I'd like to see that in the tens of thousands rather than the hundreds of thousands. How would we do that? Well we would have a cap on immigration from outside the EU, people coming here for economic reasons and we'd also have tighter controls in terms of student visas and rules around marriage bringing in brides from abroad. Those things together would make a difference and would give us I think low levels of migration, but let's not forget that immigration is good for a country like ours, but not at the level it's been recently.

Clegg:

We've got to have an immigration system which works. That's the most important thing of all. I think what has really hammered public trust and have given extremists and xenophobes such a...such a great sort of opportunity to exploit people's fears is because the actual system itself has been an administrative chaos. So I want to see three big steps now introduced to make our immigration system fair and workable. Firstly, make sure that we have proper border controls, reintroduce the exit controls that Conservative and Labour Governments removed, introduce a border police force so we know who's coming in and who's going out. Secondly, introduce a regional point system as they have in other parts of the world, as they tried in...in Scotland successful a while back so that people when they come to live and work here they work in those places where there are jobs for them to do - and thirdly, on a one-off basis deal with this one-off problem of the legacy of many people who come here under the chaos of the old immigration system to settle here long term illegally.

**5. "The police are increasingly using anti-terrorist powers against legitimate protesters, photographers and the general public. What are you going to do about this?"**

**Brock, London**

Brown:

I think we've got to get the right balance between liberty and security and I am one who says that the fundamental of our constitution, the fundamental tenet of our constitution is the civil liberties of the individual, the freedom for assembly, the freedom to demonstrate, the freedom to be without force barred by any authority and I think the most important thing, therefore, is getting the right balance between these liberties that I believe are important, including the freedom of the press and the need to protect the security of our country and we should be very careful that anti terrorist laws are only used for anti terrorist purposes.

Cameron:

Well this has got rather out of control. The police have been given some powers through terrorism legislation and they have been using them for non-terrorist activity. So you have seen stories in the papers and elsewhere about people stopped on towpaths, on canals or whatever under terrorism powers and that's not right. So we would change the guidance to the police so we would make sure this doesn't happen in future. We do need tough terrorism laws and we'd keep those and we do actually need tough

laws to allow the police to stop and search people. But it's not right using terrorism laws for things that really aren't anything to do with terrorism.

Clegg:

Well I think the police always need to be put under proper scrutiny when they use powers inappropriately. I still can't believe that in...in this day and age we've had people arrested for reading out the names of the war in Iraq, we've had people arrested because they've got you know...arrested by the police because they've got slogans on t-shirts which...which people don't like and offend the powers...the powers that be. We're going to introduce...the Liberal Democrats are going to introduce what we call a Freedom Bill which will be one piece of legislation which will simply remove from the statute book all those illiberal measures which the Labour Government has introduced over several years now which we don't think are justified and which upset the delicate balance between liberty on the one hand and security on the other. We should never as a society think that we're going to make ourselves safer by sacrificing our freedom.

**6. "Why am I not allowed to defend my own home from an intruder? If the intruder is set upon doing harm to my family and I stop it by attacking the trespasser, why am I the one who will be sent to prison? How is this justice?"**

**Alan, Ilford**

Brown:

I think that the law is being interpreted in a fairer way to the householder now and I think people understand both the difficulties faced by someone in their own homes trying to protect themselves and, of course, the necessity of making sure that we can uphold the existing law.

Cameron:

Well we want to change the rules on this and at the moment you are allowed to defend yourself against an intruder. You're allowed to use what's called reasonable force, but there is some doubt I think in people's minds and sometimes in the minds of a Court what reasonable force really means. So we'd like to raise the threshold. We're...we're looking at this idea of say that unless the force you use is grossly disproportionate then you should have no fear from the law. So basically my view is if the burglar crosses your threshold they leave their human rights at the door.

Clegg:

You should be allowed to take action to defend your property, your loved ones. If I...you know if I found someone who was in...intruding in my home in the middle of the night and my children were asleep...you know Miriam was asleep and I was worried for their safety I mean I...I wouldn't be able to predict how I would react and the law would protect me and indeed protect you to take action to protect your...your home and your family. The...the confusion I think comes when that then topples into you know vengeance if...if someone's taking vengeance if you know and that I think is where it is right that the law tries to take an even handed approach. But you're right the law should be on your side and frankly it is on your side to take any reasonable steps to defend yourself, your loved ones, your property.

**7. "Why did all parties pay more attention to The Sun and The Daily Mail about the supposed dangers of Mephedrone than the advice of their medical experts? Will the next prime minister be dictated their health policy by the front page of the tabloids?"**

**Tony, London**

Brown:

To be honest, I think mephedrone has been a problem. It's been very difficult to deal with some of the casualties as a result of mephedrone and I think that the advice we've been given and taken by Alan Johnson is the right advice. Now we've obviously got to go through the scientific inquiries but I think it is clear to me that mephedrone poses a difficulty when used in the way it was by young people.

Cameron:

Well I don't accept that this drug isn't dangerous. We have seen cases where young people have actually died from it. I think what's important is yes of course you must have the advisory council on the misuse of drugs, the experts giving you the advice, but in the end ministers have to decide on the basis of harm to the public and on the basis of making a decision and then defending it in Parliament and I think that is the right way to do it.

Clegg:

Well judging by what The Sun or the Daily Mail have been throwing at me for the last week or two I can promise you I...I take what they say with a serious pinch of salt. But on the issue of drugs which is a really important issue we're losing the battle on drugs and one of the reasons is because drugs policy has been hijacked by scaremongering and is populism not just in the press but also from a succession of home secretaries who have felt that the...the way to get...to win the battle of...and the war on drugs is just to talk tough on them. Actually what you need is I think to make sure that the...the advisory panel or the misuse of drugs which is the expert panel, which is supposed to be providing advice to the Government on how to tackle drugs...to tackle drugs abuse should be put on an entirely independent statutory basis so that experts once again lead this debate, not populism, not scaremongering and not the...the whims and wishes of...of one Home Secretary after the next.

**8. "Students in higher education are currently crippled by high tuition fees, with a poorly administrated student finance system aggravating the problem. With universities demanding fee hikes, how will you protect low income students' higher education?"**

**Robbie, London**

Brown:

You know there are more people going to university than ever before in our history and there are more students with grants, so even although we have tuition fees there are more students getting grants, some of them full grants, some of them partial grants. As far as tuition fees are concerned, we've got to face up to the fact that we've got the to do is get the balance right between what the government can pay when you've got 40% or more of your young people going to university, what the parents can be expected to pay and what the students because they'll probably earn twice as much during their working life with their graduate degree, what they can contribute. Now we've made it easier for people to pay tuition fees,

differed payment, in some cases, err, where people are on low incomes, they don't pay until they've got higher incomes and equally at the same time the interest rate for repayment is relatively low. So, I'm trying my best to make sure that we can get as many people as possible going to university, while at the same time making sure that we can afford to do so.

Cameron:

Well I don't think we would protect low income students by abolishing the top up fees and the tuition fees. We've got to make sure that money is going into the universities and that we have good university education and I think the idea that you can get that without charging fees is wrong. So I'm afraid I have to give it to you bluntly that top up fees and tuition fees they're going to stay. But we do need to do more to make sure that people from low income backgrounds can go to university. So that means bursary schemes, it also means getting into those schools and actually explaining that university education is a good thing and people should have that aspiration. There's a review taking place at the moment and I think that's right and whatever comes out of that review is must make sure that children from low income backgrounds can go to the university of their choice.

Clegg:

First we would campaign any against any listing of the cap on tuition fees. Both the Labour and the Conservative parties are clear in tending to come together after this General Election and raise the cap from £3,000 to...to maybe several thousand more as demanded by a number of universities. We think that's wrong. Secondly, we want to see tuition fees removed. I wish we could do it overnight, it used to be our plan to do it overnight, now we're going to have to do it in incremental steps over a 6 year period because of course money is tight. That would mean for instance that if you were an undergraduate in your last year of your first degree, then your tuition fees would be removed for that last year of study and the next of a Liberal Democrat Government, we would remove the fees for penultimate...for your penultimate year of study and would start putting a cap on the fees on part-time students and so, until all fees are removed over 6 years. It's right, I don't think young people should be saddled with so much debt before they've even taken the first step in the adult world of work.

**9. "There has been a collapse in funding for young scientists in astronomy, space sciences and nuclear physics. How will you protect the UK's investment in these sciences, prevent a "brain drain" of talent and boost the UK's position as a science leader?"**

**Colin, Surrey**

Brown:

I don't want any loss of talent from our country, that's why we've doubled the science budget over the last few years and that's why we've ring fenced the science budget for the future and that's why we want to encourage people to do their work in the United Kingdom and we have developed a new set of scholarships for young people. We've announced that only a few weeks ago. We are developing a new set of encouragements for people to do the very subjects that you're talking about and I hope that you'll see that some of the changes that we're making to make sure that we are in the lead in some of these areas, that Britain, having invested in Science in the last ten years, will continue to do so in the next few years.

Cameron:

This is a really important question because science should be a big part of our country's future. If we want to lead in high end manufacturing, in high end technology to make our way in the world we need really talented scientists coming through our schools and universities and into business, and industry, and research. It's absolutely vital. Now how do we do that? Well it does start back at school. We've got to teach the science subjects properly, we've got to make sure we have good science departments at our universities. I think we need to look at schemes and these are in our manifesto of saying that talented science and maths graduates should be able to go and teach at our schools and have their loans paid off by the State for doing so. I think all of that would make a difference – and we asked Sir James Dyson, the great British inventor and entrepreneur to do a report for us on this subject. It's available on the Internet and it has many ideas for how we get talented scientists through our system and making sure that we're the great inventors of the future.

Clegg:

Firstly, I want to see all research properly peer reviewed. I think far too much research money is now being allocated according to you know increasingly detail and...and controlling criteria set from Whitehall. We need to make sure that...that scientific research is driven the...the best standards and excellence within the scientific community. Not at the beck and call of the paymasters and the Treasury and Whitehall. Secondly, where money is allocated in comprehensive spending rounds to scientific research it should not be second guessed, or taken away, or cut after that allocation is made – and thirdly, we want to see a new approach to the bursary schemes in universities so that universities have bursary allowances which properly reflect the needs and the aspirations of those students who would benefit most from bursaries in different universities.

**10. "78% of the voting population didn't vote for the government in the 2005 election, yet the government won a majority of seats and a "mandate" to govern. What do you plan to do to change this unrepresentative system and restore trust in the process?"**

**ChuckE, Woking, Surrey**

Brown:

Well, I too am concerned about the bond of trust, I do want people to understand that if you're in politics, you're there for public service not for self service. You're not in it for what you can get for yourself, you're in it for what you can give and I don't want public servants or politicians who can't make that contribution in a selfless way to the public cause. To clean up the system we have to make a lot of changes, and I'm ashamed about what some MPs did. We've got a more transparent political system and that's true that every candidate will now have to declare what their position is and if they're a member of parliament all their expenses have got to be out there in the open and not concealed. But I'd also like to see a change in our constitution, I think there is a bond between the people and the people who they should be serving that has been broken as a result of the expenses crisis and so I'm proposing a referendum next year in October 2011 to decide on a new voting system for the House of Commons and a new system of electing and making accountable the House of Lords, without hereditary peers. I think that's the way forward, let the public choose, in a referendum, what system of democracy they want for the future and let us then, as

a result of that, restore the bond of trust that exists and should exist between politicians and the people they serve.

Cameron:

Well there's a big unfairness in our system at the moment which is not every constituency is the same size and so we want an immediate boundary review to make sure that every constituency across the country is the same size. But we would not change the overall system because I think it has two advantages. One is that each Member of Parliament represents one constituency and I think that link works very well and in some of the proportional systems you lose that link altogether. The second thing is that actually our system does enable you to have a decisive Election where you through a Government out of office and put a new Government in its place. I think too many of the other systems leave you with a hung Parliament, leave you with haggling coalitions where actually it's not the people choosing the Prime Minister and the Government, it's actually the politicians in a smoke-filled room after backroom deals. So I don't think replacing our system with a completely different system would be progress or would be more fair but we can make our system fairer by making all seats the same size.

Clegg:

We've got to have a new electoral system. We have an electoral system which is now so lopsided, so undemocratic, so unfair that it's draining the life blood out of our democracy and people are voting with their feet. More people didn't vote in the last two General Elections than voted for the winning party. If that doesn't set alarm bells ringing about the state of our democracy I don't know what does. We had...Gordon Brown has been Prime Minister even though less than 1 in 4 people voted for the Labour Party at the last Election. We have to have an electoral system which allows every single person to know that when they go to the ballot box and put their cross on the ballot paper they do so safe in the knowledge that their vote counts as much as anybody else's.