



Second prime ministerial debate  
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Transcript

ADAM BOULTON: Good evening from the Arnolfini in Bristol and welcome to the Sky News leaders' debate, round two of the first ever televised prime ministerial debates in the UK. The three men who want to run the country after May 6th are here and raring to go, so please welcome David Cameron, Nick Clegg and Gordon Brown. APPLAUSE

ADAM BOULTON: The agreed theme for the first half of this debate is international affairs. Each leader will make a short opening statement before taking questions from the audience. In the second half tonight, we'll move on to general issues. Lots have been drawn to decide who goes first. We begin with the current Prime Minister and leader of the Labour Party, Gordon Brown. Mr Brown.

GORDON BROWN: This may have the feel of a TV popularity contest, but in truth, this is an election about Britain's future, a fight for your future, and for your jobs. If it's all about style and PR, count me out. If it's about the big decisions, if it's about judgment, it's delivering a better future for this country, I'm your man. Ahead are huge challenges, delivering the economic recovery in jobs, bringing our brave troops safely home from Afghanistan, keeping our streets free of terrorism, building alliances in Europe against nuclear weapons, against climate change, against poverty and to deal with our banks. Now, not everyone has the answers, but I say get the big decisions wrong and Britain's security and jobs are at risk. Get the big decisions right, and we can have a prosperous, fairer, greener and better Britain. Like me or not, I can deliver that plan. The way to do it is with a majority Labour government.

ADAM BOULTON: Thank you, Mr Brown. Next, the leader of the Conservative Party, David Cameron.

DAVID CAMERON: Thank you. It's clear from last week's debate that the country wants change. But the question is, what sort of change and who's best placed to lead that change? If you vote Conservative, you will get a new team running the country from May 7th. And you won't be stuck with what you've got now. But real change comes from your values, and there, there are big differences between us. I believe that we need to do more to help families. They are the absolute bedrock of a strong society. I want government to be accountable. I want less waste, less bureaucracy. Stopping the jobs tax, but making sure we have good public services that you get good value for money for. As we're going to discuss tonight, I want us to keep our defences strong, I want to keep our borders secure and our country safe. But real change, real change comes not just from politicians, but from when we all recognise that we have responsibilities. We're all in this together, and that's how we will build the big and strong society I believe we need in our country.

ADAM BOULTON: Thank you, Mr Cameron. And finally in this round, Nick Clegg, the leader of the Liberal Democrats.

NICK CLEGG: I am so proud of the values that have made our country so great. Democracy, human rights, the rule of law. But the sad truth is that in recent years, our governments under the old parties have let those values down. We shouldn't have sent soldiers into battle without the right equipment. We shouldn't be facing allegations of complicity in torture, we shouldn't have invaded Iraq. So I want us to lead in the world. I want us to lead in Europe, not complain from the sidelines. I want us to lead in creating a world free of nuclear weapons. And I want us to lead on the biggest challenge of all, climate change. My family knows what British values really mean. My mother was freed by British troops from a prisoner of war camp. And I think, if we do things differently, we can be proud, once again, of the role we can play as a force for good in the world.

ADAM BOULTON: Thank you, Mr Clegg. Those are tonight's opening statements. Now it's time for the questions from the audience. The audience here is made up mainly of local voters from the south-west, some with allegiances, others yet to be persuaded. There will also be some questions in person from Sky News viewers who e-mailed us. Each leader has a uninterrupted minute to answer each question, followed by a second minute to deal with what their rivals have said. Then it's free debate time with no guaranteed time at the microphone. Now, our first question comes from Christopher Nelms, who's from Saltford, near Bristol. Mr Nelms.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Hello, I'm Chris Nelms, I work in the building trade. I can't see any advantage of us being in Europe. I think there's far too much interference politically and legally, and I just wonder what you intend to do to stop it?

ADAM BOULTON: How are you going to tackle Europe, David Cameron?

DAVID CAMERON: Very directly, Christopher, I think we should be in Europe, because we're a trading nation, we're part of Europe, we want to co-operate and work with our allies in Europe to get things done. But I do agree with you that we have let too many powers go from Westminster to Brussels, we've passed too much power over and we should take some of those powers back. I want us to be in Europe but not run by Europe. There will... you'll hear big differences between me and the other two parties. I don't want us to join the euro, I want I want us to keep the pound as our currency. I don't want us to give up the British rebate. I want to make sure we get value for money for what we put into Europe. I want to cut some of the bureaucracy, some of the rules, some of the regulations that I think drive business so mad. That's the agenda you'd get from a Conservative government in Europe. To those who say somehow this would be isolation, I say nonsense. President Sarkozy of France, he stands up for France in Europe. Angela Merkel in Germany, she stands up for Germany in Europe. I would do exactly the same for Europe.

ADAM BOULTON: Thank you. Nick Clegg?

NICK CLEGG: I actually worked for the man who was sent by Margaret Thatcher, would you believe it, to bat for Britain in Brussels. What I learned when I was there was this: the European Union is not perfect - of course not. This is a club that took 15 years to define "chocolate" in a chocolate directive. Anything that takes 15 years to define chocolate is not a model of democratic efficiency. What I also learned was this, that there are a whole load of things, whether we like it or not, whatever your views on Europe and the European Union, which we simply can't do on our own. We can't deal with international crime that touches and affects every single community in this country on our own. We can't deal with climate change on our own. The weather doesn't stop at the cliffs of Dover. We can't regulate these wretched banks that got us into so much in the first place which now sprawl across countries. I don't think the European Union is perfect. I want it reformed, that's why I want to lead in the European Union. But we're stronger together and we're weaker apart.

ADAM BOULTON: Mr Brown?

GORDON BROWN: You know, there's three million reasons why we need to be part of the European Union, and they're called jobs. Three million jobs depend on our membership of the European Union. Half our trade is with the European Union. 750,000 businesses - I'm sorry it's not your business, raising the question about the building trade - but 750,000 businesses trade with Europe. The idea that we should again be isolated and on the margins and not in the mainstream of Europe would be a terrible, terrible mistake. Now, I worked with the European leaders through the global financial crisis. I had to persuade them that we had to restructure our banks and they had to restructure their banks. I had to persuade them they had to work with America in the G20, but when Europe and America works together, we are so much stronger. Stronger to deal with climate change, which is one of my priorities, stronger to deal with the economy, stronger to deal with international crime, stronger to deal with terrorism, let us never again be an empty chair in Europe. My fear is that David's policy would put us in that position.

ADAM BOULTON: Thank you. David Cameron?

DAVID CAMERON: I understand why people like Christopher are frustrated about the European Union and some of the things that have happened. I think one of the reasons that people are so angry is that politicians at Westminster have given away powers to Brussels without asking us, the people, first. I think people felt particularly cheated when the European constitution came forward and we were told we were going to get a referendum and Gordon Brown and Labour stopped that from happening and Nick Clegg and the Liberal Democrats didn't vote with us to get that referendum. We should have had one. People feel cheated by that. As a result, one of the things I would do if I was your Prime Minister is straightaway pass a law through parliament that says if ever there's a future occasion when laws are being proposed to pass power from Westminster to Brussels, there will be a guarantee of a referendum held in our country. You send us to parliament to make decisions, make laws, discuss the issues, yes. You don't send us there to give away powers that belong to you. There should be a referendum guarantee if ever this happens again.

ADAM BOULTON:

Thank you. Mr Clegg.

NICK CLEGG:

David Cameron talks about a guarantee. It was the Conservative Party that gave a cast iron guarantee to have a referendum on the Lisbon Treaty which it promptly dropped. Look, we do need to have a referendum the next time there's a big transfer of powers to the European Union but it needs to be on the fundamental issue: do we stay in or do we go out? You have a right to make that choice in a referendum. I would argue we should stay in, not because it's perfect but because it's in our interests to do so. Let me give you, Christopher, a very concrete example. There was some time ago a operation by European police authorities which broke open a paedophile ring. They arrested 100 sex offenders, many of them in this country. And they released 20 young women from unimaginable abuse and servitude. something called Operation Koala. ou can Google it and look it up. Guess what? Conservative MEPs, UK Independence Party MEPs voted against the measures which made that possible. That is putting dogma above the safety of children. We are safer together, we're weaker apart.

ADAM BOULTON:

Gordon Brown.

GORDON BROWN:

Imagine a European Council meeting if David Cameron was in in charge two months from now. He'd have to go along as he said and say he wanted to repatriate the social chapter. That's what gives us paid holidays. He'd have to break up the European Union meeting and say, "Look, 26 of you are against this, I'm the only one who's standign for this". And what would happen? We are trying to get an economic recovery. That depends on economic recovery, depending on Germany, France and other countries growing as well. Taking our exports. We have to get an agreement on climate change because of what happened at Copenhagen. Again, that would be postponed because we would be having a big argument as we did in the past with a Conservative government about repatriating powers in Britain. We've got other props we've got to deal with and these include security and terrorism. These are the issues. Let's look to the future. Let's not have a Britain-only solution and let's not go back to the days when we were fighting with the rest of Europe in the past.

ADAM BOULTON:

David, it's over to you now for a free debate.

DAVID CAMERON:

What I would say is what you're hearing from the other two is frankly don't trust the people, don't ask them when you pass powers from Westminster to Brussels, just give in to everything that comes out of Brussels and don't stand up for your country. That to me is the same old politics. Let me just ask this important point: this idea that somehow an in-out referendum is what the public wants I don't think is right, it's a con. What people want when a new treaty comes along, when a constitution comes along, is to have that choice to vote on that constitution.

NICK CLEGG: No, no. Let's be clear. What would have been a con would be to have a referendum on one individual treaty, which, even if we'd had the referendum, and then we'd rejected the treaty, would have allowed, Christopher, the European Union to carry on exactly as before. Let's have the fundamental debate. I worked in my previous life before going into politics for a while as a negotiator on behalf of all of us, on behalf of Britain and the European Union, negotiating trade deals with the Chinese government, the Russian government and others. What I noticed there was that the Chinese and the Russians, they only listened to what we were saying because I was representing the largest single market in the world of 475 million consumers. Now, of course there are daft rules, of course it does daft things, but it seems to me that we punch above our weight when we stand together in Europe in a world, frankly, where you've got a lot of superpowers bumping up against each other and where, to coin a phrase, size does matter.

GORDON BROWN: You see, David wants a referendum if there's any future change; Nick wants a referendum now on the European Union. I think what people want is us to solve the employment problem, the economic problem and get on with the job. I need to work with these other countries in Europe - President Sarkozy, Chancellor Merkel. David's walked away from the European People's Party, which is an alliance of the centre, progressive parties in Europe, and gone in with a group of right-wing extremists. I want to work with the sensible people in Europe to get jobs for our British economy. If we don't trade with Europe, we lose jobs, we lose businesses, we lose growth. Let's make sure our priority trading with Europe, sorting out the problems of the European Union, yes, but let's make sure we get a recovery that's stronger than ever.

ADAM BOULTON: Mr Cameron.

DAVID CAMERON: You can hear there is a difference, there's a real difference between us. The reason about this European party is I just think it's the hypocrisy that people are fed up with, of British politicians standing here in Bristol saying, "I'm going to stand up for us in Europe and we shouldn't give away all these powers and we should fight for British interest," and then over they go to Brussels and they do exactly the opposite. I want to make sure we say the same thing when we're in Bristol, about wanting to be in Europe but not run by Europe, wanting to have a single market that's good for our country, wanting to trade with Europe, but not go over to Brussels and say something different. It's that, the same old politics...

NICK CLEGG: How on earth does it help anyone in Bristol or anyone else in the country for that matter, David Cameron, to join together in the European Union with a bunch of nutters, anti-Semites, people who deny climate change exists, homophobes. That doesn't help Britain. Of course we need to change the European Union, but you change clubs of which you're a member by getting stuck in, not standing on the side-lines and complaining about things.

DAVID CAMERON: What the Liberal Democrats have actually done...

ADAM BOULTON: I think Gordon Brown wants to come in first.

GORDON BROWN: You know who these two guys remind me? They remind me of my two young boys squabbling at bath time. And the squabbling about...

NICK CLEGG: That's a good line in rehearsal.

ADAM BOULTON: I think we're past bath time now!

GORDON BROWN: Squabbling about whether to have referendums on the European Union. What we need is jobs, and growth, and economic recovery. We work with our partners to get that. The sooner Nick realised also we had to work with America and Europe to get economic growth in the future, the better. I'm afraid David is anti-European, Nick is anti-American, and both of them are out of touch with reality.

DAVID CAMERON: It's not a question of... It's a question of wanting to get things in Europe for your country and standing up for your country. One of the things the Liberal Democrats would want to do is actually take away Britain's seat on the United Nations Security Council and replace it with a European one. That's one of the things that actually gives us the ability to punch above our weight in the world. It gives us influence in the world...

GORDON BROWN: David, David, you're running up the wrong line.

ADAM BOULTON: A final quick word from first of all Gordon Brown, then Nick Clegg.

GORDON BROWN: There is no chance of Britain giving up its seat on the United Nations Security Council. We are stronger, we've just been chairman of the G20 as a result of the efforts we made in the economy. We're leading the negotiations on climate change and we're leading on nuclear non-proliferation.

ADAM BOULTON: Nick Clegg, final word. Anti-American?

NICK CLEGG: I'd simply say don't let people create scare stories to frighten you into thinking that we can't change Europe. Of course we can change Europe. I, unlike David Cameron and Gordon Brown, have been in there, have sought changes. We can do it if we leave and don't complain on the side-lines.

ADAM BOULTON: We're going to have to move on now. Now, question B comes from Stuart Wolvin from Horfield in Bristol. Stuart.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Thank you. Given our involvement in Afghanistan, if there is another multinational operation to remove Al-Qaeda or another terrorist group from a failed state, would the UK participate?

ADAM BOULTON: So, will the UK take part in future multinational operations against terrorists abroad? Nick Clegg.

NICK CLEGG: Clearly, the principle of the reason why we went into Afghanistan, why I supported our mission in Afghanistan, unlike the illegal invasion in Iraq, is to keep us safe. Not to parachute democracy into Afghanistan, it's because we believe that if you allow Afghanistan to be a haven of extremism and terrorism, there will be more terrorist attacks here in Britain. So, from that principle, if we need to do that again, we should. The problem, of course, is we have done it in a manner where I don't think we've pursued the right strategy, we haven't given the right equipment to our troops. We haven't had proper international co-ordination on the ground in Afghanistan, we haven't worked properly with other countries in the region to do so. I think if you put soldiers into harm's way, you either do the job properly or you don't do it at all. If we ever take that decision again, let's make sure we've got the right equipment, the right strategy, so they can come back having done the job we've asked them to do, with their heads held high, knowing they have done the job well.

ADAM BOULTON: Thank you. Gordon Brown.

GORDON BROWN: I want to answer the question directly. Let's be honest, and Nick didn't say this, we've already got Al-Qaeda in Somalia, we've already got problems with Al-Qaeda in Yemen. We are having to take action with our multilateral partners to deal with these problems, and will continue to have to do so. Why are we in Afghanistan, and why we have we got to be vigilant all the time? The reason is, there is a chain of terror that links these Al-Qaeda groups in different parts of the world to action that could happen in the United Kingdom. Every week I get a report, sometimes every day, of terrorist plots, most of which arise in the Afghanistan/Pakistan area, and we have got to deal with. To keep the streets safe in Britain, we have to take on Al-Qaeda wherever it is. I also have to say about Afghanistan that this is a mission that can work. The reason is, we are training up the Afghan soldiers and the Afghan police. So whenever we are in a mission abroad, we have to make sure that we have a means by which, in that country, they can build up their own security staff, so we can bring our troops home. That is my mission, that is my aim.

ADAM BOULTON: Thank you. David Cameron.

DAVID CAMERON: Stuart asked, would we participate. If I was your Prime Minister, I would want to think very carefully what's in the national interest, what will make us safer here in the United Kingdom? I think we need to end the division between foreign policy and security policy and Home Office policy. Bring it all together and think about our national security. I would also say this. If you look at future operations like that, we have to learn from the mistakes of the past. We have to make sure we plan properly, we've got to make sure we never send our troops into battle again without the proper equipment, without the proper helicopters. We have to think through not just what we are doing militarily, but actually is the aid there, are we helping these people? Do we have a political strategy for how we are going to get out of that country once we have tried to make it safe with our allies? In the case of Afghanistan, far too many of those questions weren't answered. And even now, while I support what we are doing and I want it to work, I still worry we are not doing enough to get the political situation right in Afghanistan.

ADAM BOULTON: Mr Clegg.

NICK CLEGG: I think everyone is agreed that if we were to do this again, which is Stuart's question, we need to make sure that we've got the right equipment, the right resources. That's why I think it is essential that after the next election, whoever wins, there is a full defence review, so we have a real good look at where we are spending money, whether we are spending it wisely and whether we are providing the troops on the frontline with the resources they need. I personally think that we're not spending money on some of the right things. I wouldn't carry on spending money on the Eurofighter Typhoon, the third tranche of that Eurofighter project, consuming billions of pounds. I don't think it's right to do what both David Cameron and Gordon Brown want, which is now to commit, before we need to make a decision, to spend up to £100 billion renewing, exactly in the same old way, the Cold War Trident nuclear missile system. If you take decisions like that, then maybe you can equip our troops so they don't get so terribly overstretched, as they were in fighting two wars on two fronts in Iraq and in Afghanistan.

ADAM BOULTON: Gordon Brown.

GORDON BROWN: My first thoughts will always be for our troops, for our dedicated forces, our professional forces. Every day I meet people who have got people serving in Afghanistan or have served in other parts of the world. We have got to do everything we can to support them, yes there will be a defence review in the next parliament, so we can do our best by our forces. Look, what happened on Christmas Eve was a bomber who would have been in Detroit and bombing that plane, came from Somalia. That was really where he was given his orders from. So we have got to deal with Al-Qaeda in Somalia and Yemen, as well as in Pakistan. We've got to be clear, that we cannot allow terrorists to have territory in the world that then they use as a base for attacking the United Kingdom. I will do everything in my power to protect people, but we rely on the most brilliant, the most dedicated, the great forces that I want to pay tribute to this evening.

DAVID CAMERON: I completely agree with Gordon Brown about the bravery of our forces. I've been to Afghanistan four times. Every time you're just blown away by the professionalism of these people. I actually, to prepare for this debate, I went for a run this morning with someone who just got back from Afghanistan this morning, I couldn't keep up, he was someone who'd served for six months and had done an incredible job there. Just going back to the point about how we get these things right, one of the things that strikes you when you go to Afghanistan is that actually we are not getting things right politically. The south of the country is where Taliban grew, where they came from, that is the Pashtun part of the country. Yet when you see the Afghan National Army, it is dominated by people from the other parts of the country. There is a really big political issue there. We have to make sure the whole country in Afghanistan feels it's part of the Afghan Government. That's absolutely key for making sure we can bring our soldiers back home. Not just training the Afghan army and police, as Gordon said, vital though that is, we need a political settlement as well to help make sure we can come home.

- NICK CLEGG: I think Stuart's point, which he's pinpointing, even if you decide, even if we as a country decide to undertake a mission like that again, there is no point deciding you want to do it, unless you know how. Unless we can provide the necessary resources. I remember when I was in Helmand visiting the troops there, I talked to some mechanics, who look after the vehicles. They were telling me that they had been on a convoy previously which normally just takes one day to from one place to another, it took them a week, because every time the vehicle broke down in the sands there, they didn't have the necessary parts, they had to take parts from other vehicles. So, if we do this again, we cannot, cannot, cannot allow eight years to elapse, which is what's happened, until proper equipment is finally been provided to our very, very courageous servicemen and servicewomen.
- GORDON BROWN: Look, we've had to change our tactics all the time because of what the Taliban has been doing. Originally, they wanted to win a face-to-face war with us, fighting person-to-person. Now they use explosive devices, these explosive devices are designed to scare as well as to maim our own troops. We have had to change our tactics and therefore bring in the explosive experts, bring in the metal detectors, bring in the drones to survey the land, make sure we have the proper intelligence, go into Pakistan and deal with the making of bombs as well. All these things have had to happen and we've had to change our tactics again because we want to train up the Afghan police and army so we're partnering with the Afghan police. I'd like to say to our troops, come back into the barracks and you will be safe. But I can't say that, because our strategy in Afghanistan depends on contact with the local people, persuading them they are safe with us, and safe in an Afghanistan free of the Taliban. We have had to change, yes, but it's response to the tactics of our opponents.
- DAVID CAMERON: I'd just like to take up this point about Trident and about our independent nuclear deterrent. I think it would be completely wrong to try and trade-off equipping our forces properly today, which must be done, with securing our future for the future. I think it's one of the biggest decisions any prime minister would have to take. And we've got to get this right. And I profoundly believe that we are safer having an independent nuclear deterrent in an unsafe and uncertain world, a proper replacement to Trident, because we simply don't know what the world will look like in 40 years time. I think it's a real risk, as the Liberal Democrats say, first to be opposed to an independent nuclear deterrent, now to say they do want one, but it's not the same as Trident, but they can't tell us what it is. You can't take risks with this. It's really important you get it right.
- NICK CLEGG: If you don't believe me, then believe the several generals who wrote just this week in a newspaper saying precisely what I have been saying all along, why take a decision now to commit that amount of money on replacing Cold War nuclear missile system, when that system has still got several years to run, when those military people themselves say there are cheaper and better alternatives, and of course most importantly, when the world is changing. President Obama said last week, I think quite rightly, that now the greatest threat to us is not the Cold War threats of old, it's terrorists getting hold of dirty bombs, Trident isn't going to help you with that. Let's move with the times, take decisions when we need to take them, and at least have this review, which I talked about, after the election and consider everything that is possible.
- GORDON BROWN: I have to deal with these decisions every day, I say to you, Nick, get real, get real. Because Iran, you are saying, might be able to have a nuclear weapon, and you wouldn't take action against them, but you're saying we've got to give up our Trident submarines and our nuclear weapon now. Get real about the danger that we face, if we have North Korea, Iran and other countries with nuclear weapons....
- NICK CLEGG: This is extraordinary, to say get real, what is dangerous is to commit to spend a whole lot of money that we might not have on a system which almost certainly won't help, when the world is changing, when we're facing new threats, when now more and more military experts are saying that there are different alternatives. You want to hold a review, and you want to exclude the one big issue which should be at the heart of that review.
- DAVID CAMERON: I thought I would never utter these words, I agree with Gordon. You cannot put off this decision, General Mike Jackson said today we can't go on putting off decision. You have to make it early, you have to keep your country safe and secure. You cannot rustle up a nuclear deterrent at the last minute as the Liberal Democrat seem to think you can. And it's deeply



unsafe.

ADAM BOULTON: We're going to move on now to the next question, coming from Nicola Tanner from Horfield in Bristol.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Given that climate change is one of the biggest global threats we face, what have you personally done in the last six months to use more environmentally friendly and sustainable forms of transport, such as bikes and trains, rather than cars and planes.

ADAM BOULTON: So, what are you doing personally to tackle climate change? Gordon Brown.

GORDON BROWN: I've been on trains all the time. I don't think I have been on any more than one plane during this campaign time, I have been going around by trains. And I think actually our high-speed rail network will allow people to get off the roads and also to get off domestic air flights, and I think that's incredibly important. I would say the other thing I have done, and I'm very pleased we've managed to do this in our home in North Queensferry, we thought living on a hill with a huge amount of wind, not very good weather in Scotland, as you know, that a wind turbine would be the answer. In fact, we found, far better, even in this area where there's not much sun is a solar panel. I would recommend people if they can to use this form of energy because it allows us to heat our water in a way that is far more environmentally friendly. We've got the first Climate Change Act in the world, we are due to reduce emissions substantially by 2020 and 2030, there is a lot more to be done both individually and as a community. But we've also got to get a world agreement, we've got to work, David, with Europe to do so and work with the rest of the world, and that's the way to get environmental emissions down.

ADAM BOULTON: Thank you. David Cameron.

DAVID CAMERON: When I said to my party we had to get real about the environment, and we to be a party that was a blue-green party, not just a blue party. I did actually once get a letter from someone couldn't really agree with this and said, Mr Cameron, if you're so concerned about carbon emissions why don't you just stop breathing? That was the moment I realised I still have some persuasion to do. In terms of my own life, the biggest thing we've done is to have proper insulation in our house and actually really can cut your energy bill and make life cheaper as well as greener. But I would say in the last six months, the biggest change, or the last year, the biggest change that I've been able to make is actually coming out very strongly against the third runway at Heathrow. I think it is wrong to do that. I think we should be going for high-speed rail instead. We should have a high-speed rail hub at Heathrow. Trying to make sure all the flights people take where you could take a train, it is possible to do that. I think it would be a really big step forward.

ADAM BOULTON: Thank you. Nick Clegg.

NICK CLEGG: I suspect I'm like many people, I of course tried to change my behaviour, when I travel up to my constituency in Sheffield and back again every week, I almost always do that by train, unless there is so much clobber with the kids that I simply can't carry it on the train. But I don't do enough. I'm acutely aware I don't do enough, I'm like many, many people, I wish I could and would do more. Part of the problem, because you referred specifically, Nicola, to aeroplanes, and you're quite right that flights at least when they are able to fly, and there isn't too much volcanic ash around, do create a growing proportion of the CO2 emissions, so we need to tackle it. I think what is irrational is the moment you have a tax system which taxes passengers in aeroplanes, that means that planes with freight in them, for instance, aren't taxed, to reflect the pollution they cause. You've got lots of planes that are half empty or barely got any passengers at all. If you changed it to a plane tax, you would make a dramatic difference in cutting down on unnecessary aviation pollution.

ADAM BOULTON: Thank you. Gordon Brown.

GORDON BROWN: If we are going to make a real difference, we've GOT to change the energy balance in our country. We've got to remove this fixation about using oil, our addiction to oil, our dependence on oil. That is why our energy plan talks about how we can move with nuclear and renewables and oil and gas. We want 15% renewables by 2020, with the world's leading offshore wind power at the moment, and we want to do more in every area of renewables. The question I have to ask the two other parties is this, why, Nick, are you so against nuclear power, because it is the means to balance off our energy supply, without having the dependence on oil. And David, why don't you have a renewables target as we do, so that we can use wind power? Why are you so against the on-shore wind that power people are trying to develop? You seem to support it in principle but in every constituency where it happens, you seem to be against it. Let's get real also about getting this energy balance right.

ADAM BOULTON: David Cameron.

DAVID CAMERON: Of course we need an energy balance, and we need nuclear, we need renewables, we need the full range. It's a great opportunity for our country to do these things. I think one of the biggest opportunities we've got is actually with our own homes. We have a proposal called The Green Deal. We want to say to everyone in this country, that you can spend up to £6,500 on your home to insulate it and better protect it, and then you can see your energy bills come down. And we will have companies, Marks & Spencers and others have expressed an interest, to come and carry out that work and pay for it and share with you the reduction in the bills. I think that would show people that going green actually can save you money. It can actually get Britain working again, it can cut carbon emissions, it can cut fuel poverty. For all those reasons, I'd want it to be a really big part of the first Queen's Speech, if I'm elected as your Prime Minister.

GORDON BROWN: The only problem, David, is we're doing it already.

ADAM BOULTON: Mr Brown, you're going to get your turn in a moment. For now, it's Nick Clegg.

NICK CLEGG: Hold your horses. You've asked... Gordon Brown asked me about nuclear power. I don't have a theological opposition to nuclear power. I just think it's extraordinarily expensive, very, very expensive indeed. There are some calculations that it would lead to average energy bills increasing in this country rather than decreasing. It takes a long, long, long time to build these nuclear plants. All the experts agree that it would take well into the next decade to create new nuclear energy, which would be too late to deal with the energy problems we have now. For a fraction of the money that I think both David Cameron and Gordon Brown want to spend on subsidising the nuclear industry, we could develop mass insulation programmes of our homes, our schools and our hospitals. Remember, 27% of all carbon dioxide emissions in this country go straight out of your window, through the roof of your house. If we only used energy more efficiently and also, of course, invested some of the money which would be wasted on big nuclear projects on wind energy and other renewable energies, I think that is the way towards a sustainable future.

GORDON BROWN: You can't have a balanced energy policy in the modern world, as almost every country is now finding in the advanced world, without using nuclear power. I do say the schemes we've introduced... I met some young guys yesterday, and girls, who've been working on an energy project in Wales. They'd been taken on as a result of our future jobs fund. They're in the business of helping insulation and giving people advice about the use of energy. So we're trying to do this at the moment and we will do more in future years. Yes, we've got to insulate our houses, yes, we've got to have carbon-free homes where possible, yes, we've got to have the electric car, we're investing in that, the hybrid car, and yes, we've got to develop offshore wind power. But the energy balance has got to be fair. Any party that is now excluding nuclear power, which is already a substantial part of our country, is not really thinking about the needs of a future where we cannot be dependent on these high oil prices forever.

DAVID CAMERON: Actually, the situation is worse than Gordon Brown describes, because actually, according to the government's own figures, we are potentially heading for power cuts in 2017. And actually, nuclear power stations won't really come on stream by then, so we have a greater emergency and we do need to look at the level of gas storage we have in this country which is much lower than France or Germany. They have up to a hundred days and we have a little over two weeks. We also need to make sure that we get the renewables and maybe even extra gas capacity on stream faster, otherwise we could see the lights go out. That's because we have had over the past 13 years so many different strategies and so little action.

ADAM BOULTON: This is not the bit for speeches. Trying to get everyone in an exchange. Mr Clegg.

NICK CLEGG: The one thing which hasn't been mentioned at all which is absolutely crucial to dealing with a global problem is acting globally. I remember seeing the television pictures of Gordon Brown sitting, I have to say, slightly on the side-lines in the summit in Copenhagen while America and China basically cut everybody else out. I think if you're going to lead on this, of course you have to lead at home, but you also have to lead in Europe. There's no point clubbing together as David Cameron has done with people who even deny the existence of climate change in Europe. You've got to create strength in numbers in Europe so that we can really lead in the world, because this is a global problem which requires a global response.

GORDON BROWN: But, Nick, you're right, there is no British-only solution and David has to face up to that. You've also got to face up to the fact that the co-operation we've achieved, 100 countries have now signed carbon emission reduction plans. We're trying to persuade China and America to do so. We need America on our side. Your anti-Americanism will not help us. We need to work with all the different continents to get a climate change agreement.

DAVID CAMERON: Just one point on the European issue. There is a bit of a con going on here as well. The Lisbon Treaty has just about seven words on climate change. You don't need another treaty for politicians to get together in different countries, you need political will, you need action. That is what is required. Instead, what we keep getting from the other two parties is more institutions, more regulation, more new agreements. That's not what's required. It's action at the European level and that requires political will.

NICK CLEGG: Of course you don't need a new treaty, but you do need to at least work with people in Europe who believe climate change exists. That would be a helpful start. On the point that Gordon Brown keeps saying, anti-Americanism. I have a simple attitude towards our relationship with America. It is an immensely important, special relationship, but it shouldn't be a one-way street. We shouldn't always automatically do what our American friends tell us to do. We've got to make sure we act on the world stage in our interests, not simply at the beck and call of anybody else.

GORDON BROWN: And I persuaded the Americans to be part of a G20 that dealt with the banking crisis and I'm still pushing the Americans to take action on climate change as well. But, David, I mean, your anti-Europeanism becomes more and more obvious as this debate goes on. It is the big society at home, but it's the little Britain abroad. I think you've got to rethink your policies.

DAVID CAMERON: I just think they're just trying to frighten you, the other two parties, because they don't want actually a Britain that stands up for itself in Europe. They keep going on about these alliances. One of our main allies is the party of the Polish president who tragically died in that accident, who both the politicians standing next to me praised as a great patriot and a great statesman. I think we can hear no more of that. The fact is, you can co-operate and work with your European partners without signing a new treaty, without giving away so many new powers.

ADAM BOULTON: That is going to be the last word on Europe for now. I suspect it will come up later on. Let's move on now and a question from Michael Jeans who is from central Bristol.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Good evening. The Pope has accepted an invitation to make an official state visit to Britain in September at a cost of millions of pounds to tax-payers. If you win the election, will you disassociate your party from the Pope's protection over many years of Catholic priests who were ultimately tried and convicted of child abuse, and from his fierce opposition to all contraception, embryonic stem cell research, treatment for childless couples, gay equality and the routine use of condoms when HIV is at an all-time high?

ADAM BOULTON: Thank you, Michael. So, do you back the Pope's visit, David Cameron?

DAVID CAMERON: I do think it's welcome that the Pope is coming to Britain, and I would, if I was your Prime Minister, I would want to support that visit and make sure I could do everything in my power to make it a success. There are millions of people in our country who will welcome that, who shares the Pope's Catholic faith and I think we should try and make a success of it. Do I agree with everything the Pope says? No, I don't agree with him about contraception. I don't agree with him about homosexuality, and I think the Catholic Church has got some very, very serious work to do to unearth and come to terms with some of the appalling things that have happened, and they need to do that. But I do think we should respect people of faith. I think faith is important in our country. I think faith-based organisations, whether they are Christian or Jewish, or Muslim, or Hindu, do amazing things in our country, whether it is working in our prisons or providing good schools or actually helping some of the most vulnerable people in our country. A country where faith is welcome, yes, a visit from the Pope, yes, but does that mean we have to agree with everything he says? No.

ADAM BOULTON: Nick Clegg.

NICK CLEGG: I'm not a man of faith, but my wife Miriam is Catholic, my children are being brought up in her faith, so I have a little bit of an insight into the immense feelings of anguish in the Catholic community here and elsewhere. And I think many Catholics themselves feel really extremely, extremely torn apart by what's happened. I think they do want to see the Catholic Church express greater openness and repentance. You can't keep a lid on sin, and of course you need to move with the times. I do welcome the Pope's visit, but I hope by the time he does visit, there is a greater recognition that there has been terrible, terrible suffering, there have been abusive relationships which have left immeasurable scars on individual people's lives and we need a process of openness and then healing. You can't undo the tragedies of the past, but you can be open about them so people can start to move on.

ADAM BOULTON: Gordon Brown.

GORDON BROWN: I've met some of the people who have rightly complained about the abuse that they were subject to when young, and it never leaves them. It is something that is with them always. And no matter what you can try to do to help, there is always this problem that they have to face up to every day, that they were abused, cruelly abused, by people in whom they placed their faith and trust. So the church has got to deal with these problems, and it's got to make sure that there is an open and clean confession about what has happened, and that we help those people who have been put into difficulty by this abuse. You know, I welcome the Pope's visit to Britain. And I want him to come to Britain for two reasons: one is the Catholic Church is a great part of our society, and we should recognise it as such, and I hope every British citizen wants to see this visit by the Pope take place. Secondly, we must break down the barriers of religion that exist in our world. The faiths must come together and recognise they have common values and common interests. They all believe that we should be good neighbours to each other. I'm from the Presbyterian religion, but I support the visit, but I not only support it, I want religious faiths to work more closely together.

ADAM BOULTON: Before we bring in David Cameron, I would remind you that Michael Jeans is also concerned about the attitude of the Catholic Church to science and also gender matters. David Cameron?

DAVID CAMERON: Again, I would say to Michael that, again, I would be agreeing with you, and against the Pope in terms of, for instance, the need to make advances in... er... in science. I don't think we should - obviously, you need proper protections and proper rules, and we debated them at great length in the House of Commons, but I do want to see that go ahead. Also, on the issue of abortion. There are lots of areas I don't agree. I don't think that means you should stop someone visiting our country or condemn them. We must try and build a open and tolerant country where we respect people for their different faiths, we bring faiths closer together with each other and we are prepared to have an open and frank discussion about these things. That's the only way to go. It's nice to hear that pretty much we all agree about that.

ADAM BOULTON: Mr Clegg?

NICK CLEGG: I think on this matter, we do. I don't agree, I've made it publicly clear in the past, that I don't agree with the formal doctrine on homosexuality of the Catholic Church, for instance. I don't agree with it at all. It doesn't mean I don't... I think there should be some, you know, uprising against the Pope's visit, quite the reverse. I would like to see the Pope here. I think the Catholic community in Britain wants to welcome him, but, as we've all acknowledged, that doesn't mean one has to subscribe to the every letter and every crossed T and dotted I of the thee theology and doctrine of that church.

GORDON BROWN: You know, on all these big issues, I think we're proving ourselves to be a tolerant and understanding nation. We introduced civil partnerships, and therefore we changed the laws on homosexuality and said to people, if you're gay or straight, you have a place in British society. I think for many people, that was a great liberation, and I'm pleased that it has happened in Britain in these last few years. On human embryology, I've disagreed with the Catholic Church because I believe if you can treat a disease by using embryos that are enabling us to make sure people can be free of some of the conditions that afflict their lives, we should do so under the right rules. I'm sorry that in principle there is a disagreement with the church on that. On the question of contraception, I think we know that in Africa, we know round the world, that it is important to give women access and choice so that they can make their own decisions, and I regret the fact that the Catholic Church does not do that. The Pope should come to Britain, we should have these debates and we should welcome all religions because bringing religions together is the key to making sure that we have a more peaceful world.

ADAM BOULTON: OK, thank you. Given the degree of agreement, we're going to move on now and take some more questions. That brings to an end the international affairs part of this debate, although we may well come back to it in subsequent questions, and in a moment we're going to move on to the open section. Before we do that, just a reminder that you can see the Sky News Scotland debate this Sunday. It'll feature senior politicians from three parties represented here, plus the First Minister of Scotland, the SNP's Alex Salmond. So, please join me live from Edinburgh at my next gig, this Sunday at 10.30. Let's move on now to the next question. This question comes from Mary Slattery from Montperlier here in Bristol.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Given the scandals of the last year, it is hard to find a person in my neighbourhood who believes in the power of their vote. How do you plan to restore faith in this political system?

ADAM BOULTON: Nick Clegg. Given the powers, given the scandals of the past year, how do you plan to restore faith in politics?

NICK CLEGG: Firstly, Mary, you need to be given the power to sack any politician who's proved to be corrupt. It's something I advocated in the past, it's something I put forward in Westminster, both David Cameron and Gordon Brown's party didn't support that. They now say, which is good, say they do welcome that. You're the boss, you're the boss. The other thing of course we need to do is clean up all the murky business of party funding. We've all had problems with party funding. Again, there was a deal, there was a deal on the table, we supported it, to clean up party funding. Yet again, the old parties said no. Gordon Brown wanted to protect his trade union pay masters, David Cameron wanted to protect his paymaster in Belize. I think we all agree on the rhetoric of cleaning up politics, but we actually have to act. I'd say one final thing: one of the reasons why your friends and your neighbours are perhaps right in saying they feel ignored is because we have this very odd electoral system which allows Gordon Brown the Prime Minister to be in power when only 22% of people voted for his party last time, many people are being ignored and we need to change that as well.

ADAM BOULTON: Gordon Brown?

GORDON BROWN: I think Mary is saying can a vote make a difference? I believe it can. Yes, we will give the right of recall, so if you don't like an MP for being corrupt and parliament doesn't take any action, then you can remove him. Yes, we will give you a right to put petitions to the House of Commons so they have to be debated if you put them in sufficient number to do so. Yes, we want a referendum on the future of the House of Commons and the House of Lords, and you, the people, should have a vote on a new voting system for the House of Commons, and ending the hereditary principle in the House of Lords, and making it for the first time elected and accountable. But you know your vote matters as well, because this is a big choice election. We've got to secure the recovery, and it's put at risk by Conservative policies. We've got to make sure we have decent public service, and that's put at risk by Conservative policies. We've got to build the jobs of the future, and that's put at risk actually by the policies of both parties here this evening. So your vote matters. Please use it. It is the most important and decisive election for years because our future depends on how you vote in the next few weeks.

ADAM BOULTON: Thank you. David Cameron.

DAVID CAMERON: Mary, I think the first thing people want to know is they're going to be voting for a cleaned-up parliament. Everywhere I go in this country during the election, it is simmering and bubbling below the surface. There is just anger about the expenses fiasco. People say, "I pay my taxes to have decent politics and yet the money's been spent on all these appalling things." They want to be to be absolutely sure this is never ever going to happen again. So strict limits on what can be spent, total transparency so you, the voters, can see every penny. That I think is the absolutely first thing that needs to be done. I would go on and say we also need to cut the cost of politics. Everyone else in this country has had to make economies and had to make their businesses work better. Why shouldn't politics be the same? I would do that. Then simple changes which would put back in control. I want to see more people involved in choosing candidates for the parties, holding open primaries. I agree we need we have a situation where you can sack your MP but please don't let's give up the way you can sack your government and throw them out. Let's not have permanent hung parliaments.

ADAM BOULTON: Mr Clegg, you're on the front pages... the front The Telegraph today?

NICK CLEGG: I am indeed for a complete nonsense story. But, anyway, let's put that aside. Complete rubbish. Mary, one of the most heartening things, back to your question about people sort of feeling disaffected, one of the most heartening things over the last week, and it is one of the great effects of the televised leaders' debates, is that more and more young people appear to be rushing to register to vote before it is too late. That is immensely exciting. There are lots of especially young people, I hope I'm not out of turn saying you look fairly young, who might be in your position, who feel.. who felt for so long completely turned off by the old Party Politics, and they are now excited, they're beginning to hope, they're beginning to think that we can do something different this time. that's what I think. I think we can do something different this time. But get stuck in, if you didn't vote before, if you didn't register, register. It's your country, it's your future, assert your right to vote, assert your right to shape your own future. I think then we could make this election one of the most exciting elections we have had in a very long time.

ADAM BOULTON: Mr Brown.

GORDON BROWN: Mary, let me just say, I was ashamed by the behaviour of some of the MPs in the House of Commons. What they did was completely unacceptable. And no punishment is too great for them, if they have to go before the courts and answer for their crimes. We have to be very clear, we want nobody standing at this election who is not transparent and open about what they are doing. Anyone who breaches the guidelines we've now laid down, the Independent Standards Authority, should be thrown out of the House of Commons and indeed out the House of Lords if they are member there as well. I was talking to young people only yesterday and talking about politics, if you ask the question, politics don't make a difference? People would probably say, yes. But if you then ask the question, ah, but my job may depend on decisions that are made by government, then people say, ah, I might be interested. People then say my health service may depend on how much resources Government is prepared to invest in the health service, then people say, yes, politics may make a difference. And then when you ask about crime And it depends on how many policemen are on the street, then it makes a difference. And if you ask about schools and what the standard of your schools are, and how you are investing for the future, that makes a difference, too.

ADAM BOULTON: Thank you. David Cameron.

GORDON BROWN: Politics can make a difference.

DAVID CAMERON: Politics can make a difference, Mary, but I would say the politicians in this country have been treating the people as mugs for far too long. They've been sort of saying, we can do everything, vote for us and we'll solve all your problems. Let us pass a few more laws, spend a bit more money, pass more regulation and all the trouble will be fixed. It is not really true, it is a big lie. The truth is, if you really want to change things, if you want safer streets, if yo want better schools, yes, the Government's got its role, but we've all got our responsibilities, too. We need to bring up our children properly, we've got to make sure we work with the school, we've got to make sure we help the police, we have to make sure there is discipline in schools, real solutions to the problems in a country I think come when we all say, I've got responsibilities as well that go beyond paying my taxes and obeying the law. It's my society, it's my country, I will elect some politicians, but I want to join with them to change the country and make it a better place. I think that's a much more honest answer for how we really get the change we need in the country.

GORDON BROWN: But David, I take responsibility for my decisions, and I ask people right throughout society to take responsibility. But you can't run the health service on a do-it-yourself principle, you have to finance it properly. And I just ask you, why you want to cut...

ADAM BOULTON: Nick Clegg.

NICK CLEGG: Can I go back to Mary's question, which is about people feeling switched off from politics. Something which neither of the other two old parties want to address is this. We have a culture of jobs for life in politics. You have hundreds and hundreds of MPs from the Conservative party and the Labour party, from the old parties, who basically know all they need to do every four or five years is get the vote of 20-30% of people in their community and then ignore everybody else all the rest of the time. Of course you then start getting trouble with expenses. Because of course if you give people jobs for life, these safe seats for life, no questions asked, then they start cutting corners. That's what we need to change, as well as all the other things to do with expenses...

ADAM BOULTON: You're welcome to come in on this.

NICK CLEGG: ..and House of Lords, and all the other areas that need to be reformed top to toe.

GORDON BROWN: All parties have had to take action. We have to clean up the politics for every single party. And anybody who commits an offence is out, they're suspended, out. They shouldn't be in politics at all. Public service is about serving the public, it's not about serving yourself.

DAVID CAMERON: I would like to respond to something Gordon Brown said, which is this issue of responsibility, saying he asked people to take responsibility. I think one of the problems in our country today is if you do the right thing, if you take responsibility, all too often you are punished rather than rewarded. If you work hard and save, actually you don't get the Government behind you, you get punished. If you do the right thing... Always in my constituency, you are meeting couples who say, we are trying to get everything together before we get married, before we have children, and they feel that people who don't do the right thing get pushed up the ladder ahead of them. I think there's a sense of unfairness in our country today which goes to the heart of some of the issues we have in our politics.

GORDON BROWN: But David, the biggest unfairness is that the biggest beneficiary from your manifesto is the 3,000 richest people in the country, who would get £200,000 each from an inheritance tax cut. if you want to be fair, you don't give people an inheritance tax and then cut child tax credits for middle-class families, you don't cut the child trust fund, you don't cut the schools budget, you don't have a do-it-yourself society...

ADAM BOULTON: The question was about trust.

NICK CLEGG: Poor Mary asked about politics, she's being told about tax credits. I mean, look...

GORDON BROWN: Well, you want to cut tax credits as well.

NICK CLEGG: David Cameron talked about responsibility. Absolutely. We need to make sure people are responsible where they have made big mistakes. It is a fact that there are a number of MPs in both the old parties, who flipped their home from one to the next, paying from your taxpayer-funded expenses buy properties, do them up, sell them, buy them up, do them up, sell them, then pocket the difference in personal profit, who still haven't been held to account. You can't move on unless the people who've done something seriously wrong are held to account.

ADAM BOULTON: OK. David Cameron. I'll come to you in a moment.

DAVID CAMERON: Along with... The expenses scandal made people incredibly angry. People also got angry by politicians saying, "I only obeyed the rules." I think they're now starting to get angry by some politicians saying, "Well, my party was much better than all the others." Frankly, Nick, we all had problems with this.

NICK CLEGG: Sure.

DAVID CAMERON: Whether it was moats, or whether it was politicians claiming on phantom mortgages, or whether it was kitchens and cake tins and the rest of it, don't anyone try and put themselves on a pedestal over this issue. Let's actually sort it out and clean it up and recognise we were all in this mess.



ADAM BOULTON: Gordon Brown.

GORDON BROWN: No-one should be standing at the election if they are not transparent and tell you everything about what they are doing with their finances. They shouldn't have second jobs either, and that's all too common in the House of Commons. They should be working full-time for their constituents' interests. They shouldn't be in a position where they're not telling you that they will come and report to you every month on what they are doing, holding local surgeries, being held to account. If they are not doing the right thing and are corrupt, you have the right to recall them. That's the most important thing that we can do now to clean up what has been a terrible scandal and something that I am ashamed of on behalf of all politicians.

NICK CLEGG: Of course no-one is blemish-free. Of course people aren't angels. But the point is this. If you are trying to persuade people to invest trust again, which was Mary's question, into politicians, then it's just not good enough to just talk the talk and not walk the walk. You can't say you want to clean up funding and then block deals to do precisely that.

ADAM BOULTON: OK. Time is up. We've got to retire on this. Time is most definitely up. We are now moving on to a question from Grace Lane, who's from Westbury-on-Trym here in Bristol. Grace.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Having brought up five children, worked most of my life, reached the age of 84, do all of you think that a state pension of £59 per week is a just reward?

ADAM BOULTON: Gordon Brown, is £59 a week...

GORDON BROWN: The answer is no, Grace. I'm sorry that that has happened, I hope you are getting the pension credit which is an attempt to make up the pension from what you've had as a result of your earnings being interrupted during the course of your life. What are we doing now? We're going to link pensions to earnings in 2012, so every pension will be linked to earnings and not just prices. Secondly, women, and you are one of them, who have not had the full state pension, we are making it possible for all women in future to have that full state pension. And thirdly, of course, we've got to deal with the poverty that people face as pensioners. That is why the pension credit, the winter fuel allowance, all these things have been introduced. The free concessionary travel as well, the free television licenses over 75, all of these have been introduced over the last few years, because the one thing that scandalises our society above all else is that we cannot give dignity and security to all pensioners in retirement. That's what I want to see and that's what I want to do.

ADAM BOULTON: David Cameron.

DAVID CAMERON: £59 is not enough. We have got to do better as a society giving people what we all want. Those that have done the right thing through their lives, we should be giving you dignity and security in old age. I agree we need to up-rate the pension in line with earnings rather than prices. The reason I feel I can give you that answer with total confidence, that we will really deliver this, is we have made a tough decision to go with it. Which is to say from 2016, we are going to ask, starting with men, to retire a year later. That means we can fund this pledge. Because we all know we have an enormous budget deficit, there isn't any money left in the kitty. So if we're going to make promises like that, and it's a big promise, an important promise, we have to say how we are going to pay for it. I want to make sure that when we see people going into old age that if you have worked hard, if you've saved, if you've put money aside, you are not punished. That is why we say as well, it is not right that you should have to pay for your residential care, and someone who didn't do the right thing gets the whole thing paid for free. That's not fair and we are going to change that.

ADAM BOULTON: Nick Clegg.

NICK CLEGG: Grace, the earnings link needs to be restored. It needs to be restored immediately, there is no doubt about that. It shouldn't have been broken in the first place, you have lost out for many years, it needs to be restored. Something which I'm sure you're familiar with, which is there are so many other costs which the elderly have to confront, which really do make it extremely difficult to make ends meet. Fuel costs. We have just had a very cold winter for example, it's a very good example. I got a letter a few months ago from an elderly couple, who said to me they now found it so difficult to heat their homes on cold winter days, that on those cold winter days, they get into a bus in their town and travel around the bus just to stay warm. That is wrong. It is wrong that energy companies charge you more for the first bits of energy that you use in your home than the later bits. That means someone who's heating a great big five-storey mansion is paying cheaper, paying less for their energy than someone who's just heating a one bedroom flat. That needs to change too, so we can give you the dignity you deserve.

ADAM BOULTON: Gordon Brown.

GORDON BROWN: I think Grace's issue is that every woman should have a full state pension. I think it's right that we say that that is what we're going to do as a result of our pension reforms. But it's also the case that everyone who works for an employer will now also have an occupational pension. That is another change we are making that is coming in the parliament to come. When we look at the needs of pensioners, it's absolutely true to say we need help with urgent needs social care in the home. That's what we're introducing over the next few months, so that people don't have to go into old people's homes. If they want to stay at home, they can get the home helps and the health visitors that are necessary for them so that they can have comfort in their own homes. But I've got one or two problems with the other two manifestos of the other parties. David doesn't seem to have mentioned free prescriptions for the elderly or free eye tests. And to be honest, Nick has a problem in his manifesto, because he seems to be cutting the budget of the winter fuel allowance this year. I would like them to explain to the pensioners of this country what in fact they propose to do.

ADAM BOULTON: David Cameron, your chance.

DAVID CAMERON: I just think it is disgraceful to try and frighten people in an election campaign, as Gordon Brown has just done, and as the Labour Party are doing up and down the country. I would like to take this opportunity to say very clearly to any pensioner in the audience, anyone listening at home, that we will keep the free television license, we will keep the pension credit, we'll keep the winter fuel allowance, we'll keep the free bus pass. Those leaflets you have been getting from Labour, the letters you have been getting from Labour are pure and simple lies. A politician shouldn't say lies very often, I say it because I have seen the leaflets and they make me really very, very angry. You should not be frightening people in an election campaign, it is just not right.

NICK CLEGG: Well, firstly, before I respond to Gordon Brown's invitation, I'm glad you have been reading our manifesto with such care.

GORDON BROWN: Absolutely.

NICK CLEGG: There are two-and-a-half million pensioners in poverty, so after 13 years and all Labour's promises about giving a fair deal to pensioners, two-and-a-half million pensioners in poverty. That's how bad it is. I think we need to, therefore, make sure that we use what little money we've got, money is tight at the moment, wisely. And what we are saying is this. The winter fuel payments, the age of eligibility is going to rise, this is a decision which Gordon Brown's Government has already taken, from 60 to 65 in the coming years. We're saying if you bring that forward you could use the money to actually extend the winter fuel payments to people who are terminally ill and disabled, who at the moment don't get access to the winter fuel payments. I think that is fair. One final thing. We talked about social care, we talked about this last week, I really cannot stress enough, I think that's one issue where we just have got to put people before politics for once. This is something which is such a big issue, we need to agree on a common approach, that is the only way to provide good social care.

ADAM BOULTON: Free debate, now. Gordon Brown.

GORDON BROWN: I do seem to be right. David did not mention free eye tests.

DAVID CAMERON: Well let me do it right now. We'll keep them. Let me challenge you. Will you now withdraw the leaflets... Will you withdraw the leaflets that are going out round the country saying that the Conservatives would take away things like the free bus pass? You know, you really should be ashamed of doing things like that.

GORDON BROWN: David, I have not authorised any leaflets like that. What I would ask to you say is why is it not in your manifesto that you're keeping free eye tests and free prescription charges. To Nick, I would say, if you're cutting the winter fuel allowance, that means that some people will suffer this year. We've already said that all pensioners over 60, all households, will get £250 as the winter fuel allowance and £400 if you're over 80. That's an innovation be brought in during the period of the Labour government. I would not like to see it cut in one of the most difficult years for pensioners when we're just coming out of recession, but you seem to be cutting in.

NICK CLEGG: I've explained before, I don't think there's much. Doing it again. We are actually extending the winter fuel payment to people who are terminally ill and disabled who presently don't get it. We're doing that by bringing forward a decision that Gordon Brown's government has made. But can I just say again before this completely collapses into a game of political ping-pong. There are big issues about how we look after the elderly which are huge. They are financially huge, they're socially huge. It's one of the biggest issues we face on how we provide social care. None of us...

ADAM BOULTON: The question's about pensions.

NICK CLEGG: Yes, but it's also related to it. It is about providing dignity to people in old age which is Grace's question. I don't think we're going to serve the elderly today or those in the future very well if we hijack everything with cheap political point scoring when we can work together on a solution that works for many years in the future.

DAVID CAMERON: I do think it is about dignity and security in old age to be able to say to elderly people that you should be able to if you've worked hard and save hard, you should be able to pass your home on to your children rather than have to use it to pay for your care. That's why we have this plan. If you put aside £8,000 when you become 65, you have the guarantee that your home there will be there for your children because you've done the right thing. That doesn't solve the whole problem. That does seem to me a very good start, ending the unfairness of all those thousands of people who have done the right thing, who've worked hard all their lives, who then get penalised and punished by the system.

GORDON BROWN: The first stage to doing that is making sure people can stay in their own homes. That's the urgent needs payment that should be available to all so that they can stay in their own homes without worrying about finance. The next thing we've got to do is make sure if people have to go into old people's homes, then there is a limit on the costs they have to bear, otherwise they will lose their homes and they'll have to choose between the care they need and the home they own. In the next parliament, what we're proposing to do is put a two-year limit on payments, so if you're, for example, suffering from Alzheimer's or other diseases and you have to be in an old people's home for a longer period of time, can't be in your own home, we will suspend any payments after two years for personal and medical care.

NICK CLEGG: Related to that, are those people who look after loved ones who are elderly and need help with cleaning, washing, getting dressed, getting fed. I do think in the past we've all agreed this is something we need to look at, is we need to provide more respite, more time off for people who care for their loved ones in that way. We have got a proposal which will take the money which the government has allocated to its rather flawed bill on social care and use it instead to say to those who provide a lot of care every week, here's money so you can take a week off, spend some time with yourself on holiday just getting a break. Because I think speaking to go any carers, that makes a huge, huge, dramatic difference to their lives.

ADAM BOULTON: Mr Cameron.

DAVID CAMERON: The point about helping carers is, I think, we need to help them go on doing what they're doing. Talk to any carer, they will say the one thing I need is a break. I don't think we do enough, put the budget in their hands and say, you decide how best to get that respite break, to get the extra help in your home. I remember trying to do this myself with the care for our son. It's incredibly complicated. This whole agenda should be about putting power and control in people's hands, letting them do more, because if Britain's armies of carers gave up, that would cost our country £50 billion and actually would lead heartbreak for many people. They're really heroes and heroines. We need to do more to help them.

ADAM BOULTON: We move on to the next question. And the next question comes from Frank Hemsworth from Whitney, in Oxfordshire.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Gentlemen, given the current financial difficulties facing the country, and now the possibility of a hung parliament, according to the polls, is it time to put aside political differences and form a government of the best talents from all the major parties?

ADAM BOULTON: Is a coalition government the best way forward, David Cameron?

DAVID CAMERON: I think we should try and work together where we can. I've always thought that's important in politics. I helped Tony Blair get his Education Bill through Parliament because I thought it was a good bill, even though a lot of Labour MPs weren't backing it, that helped it go through. On the issue of Trident, which we've covered already tonight, we put the possibility of defeating Labour aside, backed them to do the right thing. Obviously, if there is a hung parliament, we must be responsible, we must try and deliver the best government we can for this country. But I actually, if you want my frank and honest answer, I don't think a hung parliament will be good for Britain because I think we do need quite decisive government to take some of the difficult decisions for the long-term. We've set out some of the things that need to be done to get the debt and the deficit under control. I fear if we put them off, we could have a situation where we see interest rates rise, we see confidence taken out of our economy. I think we need change to get to top of the deficit, to start solving the problems so we get our economy moving.

ADAM BOULTON: Thank you. Nick Clegg.

NICK CLEGG: Well, I think, Frank, you're right on the simple assertion you're making that when the country's facing very big issues, we just talked about social care, but the one you're highlighting is of course the black hole in the public finances. It is better if politicians, I know it's an unfashionable thing to say, but it's better if politicians try and work together. That's why I proposed several weeks ago, that irrespective of the outcome of the next election, why don't we set up something which I call a council for financial stability, and you'd gather in that council for financial stability the Chancellor and the Shadow Chancellors, the Governor of the Bank of England, the Head of the Financial Services Authority to do one simple thing, which is to come clean with you about how big this black hole is because there's still dispute about exactly how bad it is and then have an agreement on roughly how long it will take to fill it. So that everybody in a sense is being open with you, which hasn't really happened until now, about how bad this situation is and how together we're going to get out of it. I do think there is potential for politicians to work with each other. Don't believe all these ludicrous scare stories about markets and political Armageddon if that is what happens.

ADAM BOULTON: Thank you. Gordon Brown.

GORDON BROWN: Nick, we already have what's called the business council for Britain and that brings together all the leading businessmen and women in our country with government ministers to look at what we can do. We have the tripartite committee for financial stability which brings together the Governor of the Bank of England and the head of the Financial Services Authority, and the Chancellor of the Exchequer. We already have these things. But the key thing is that we've got to have an agreed plan to reduce the deficit, protect our public services, and get growth in the economy. And I'm afraid that we don't have agreement on what needs to be done even this year to sort the economy out. I want to see our economy grow this year. I want to see unemployment come down. I want to see businesses thrive, and that means we've got to keep the government support in the economy for the time being, something the Conservatives don't want to do. But I also want to say we should never take the votes of people for granted. The public must decide, and again it's up to the politicians to do what the public wants them to do. It's for the voters to decide. You're the boss, it's your decisions that will count. You have the votes to make a difference.

ADAM BOULTON: Thank you. Before we go on to rebuttal round, I will remind you this is not a question about co-operation, it's about coalition, it's about people looking at where the opinion polls are, what might happen after the election and want to know your views. David Cameron?

DAVID CAMERON: Well, I said very frankly, if it is a hung parliament, we will do our best to make it work. If we win the election outright, I'd do everything I can to take the country with us on some of these difficult decisions and also try and take other politicians with us because there will be some hard times before we get out of this, actually get the deficit sorted. But there is a problem in that you do need to have agreement. There is a fundamental disagreement between me and the other two parties about what we do this year. I think we badly need to roll up our sleeves and make some savings this year so we can stop the jobs tax, the national National Insurance tax rise, that is coming down the road. When you've got an economy that is trying to recover, the worst thing you can do is put tax on every single job in our country. That's why it's over 1,100 business leaders have said don't do this. They've said very clearly the threat to our recovery is not cutting waste, the threat is the jobs tax. The others don't agree about that, but I badly think we really, really need to stop this tax that could kill our recovery and kill jobs.

ADAM BOULTON: Thank you. Nick Clegg.

NICK CLEGG: Back to Frank's question, in a sense what lurks behind your question is it a bad thing or not if politicians talk to each other? I don't think it is. In many other parts of the bog, it would seem to be a completely standard... I mean, Gordon Brown has talked about various bodies but none involving the different parties. David Cameron says he'll try and make a hung parliament work but spends all his time in the newspapers this week making those ludicrous claims about total meltdown as if the world will end. The world won't end and it will be your choice. If you decide that no-one here deserves an outright majority, then we'll need to be open about it and talk to each other, talk to each other to provide the good government, sound government that you deserve, because you deserve a government where we put your interests first and don't allow everything constantly to be hijacked by short-term political point-scoring.

GORDON BROWN: I want the parties to work together. When I became Prime Minister, I invited one or two Liberals to do things, like Shirley Williams, to do things for the government. I invited people who are businessmen and women to come into the government to work with us for national economic benefit. I will continue to ask people to give their talents to public service, and that is something that is really important to do. But there is this fundamental position about this year. I think we've got to resolve this. I have had to take the economy through the most global financial crisis. We made the right decisions to take ownership of the banks, and the right decisions to get the world together to deal with that recession. Every time, we've said we have to support the economy through difficult times. Now, what David is saying even when it is fragile, he wants, for ideological reasons I think, to take £6 billion out of the economy. That puts thousands of jobs, teachers, it puts policemen, it puts thousands of jobs at risk immediately, and that's why they're talking about an emergency budget in June. David, you're a risk to the economy. Nick's a risk to our security with his nuclear weapons policy, you're a risk to the economy.

DAVID CAMERON: I just think it's another attempt to try and frighten people. After 13 years of failure, 13 years in which we now have a budget deficit the same size as Greece. Don't take it from me, take it from the 1,100 business leaders, people who run Sainsbury's, Mothercare, Next, Marks & Spencer's, these great British businesses who are going to help us out of recession, saying cut the waste this year, stop the jobs tax next year. To go back to Frank's question, I do have one specific proposal where we really think we should come together much more effectively. That is, I want to see the National Security Council sitting as a war cabinet from day one if I become Prime Minister. Because, day one, Afghanistan is the top priority, getting it right. I would invite, as Prime Minister, the leaders of the other two main parties to come to that meeting several times a year to make sure they were really seeing the advice we were getting from the security services, from the generals, from the Chiefs of Staff. I think in matters of peace and war, you've got to bring people together better than we do now.

GORDON BROWN: It's difficult to bring...

NICK CLEGG: The only thing I would add to this discussion in response to Frank is that if politicians are going to talk to each other, then I think what we need to do is be upfront about what our priorities are. We need to be upfront about what we would seek in any discussion with other parties. I've been very upfront, dealing obviously with the fiscal deficit, we've been much more open about how we would do that than the other two parties. But also tax reform, educational reform, political reform. Those are our priorities, that's what we would fight for in whatever situation arises after the election.

GORDON BROWN: The priority at the moment is making sure we have an economic recovery, making sure we don't have higher unemployment. Unemployment in America is a lot higher than Britain. Unemployment in Europe is a lot higher. I want to keep people in their jobs. But take £6,000 million out of the economy, and you lose a lot of jobs and you put businesses at risk. David hasn't thought through his policy and neither is Nick if he's going to argue against this because it's the right thing to do.

NICK CLEGG: No, Gordon Brown, what I'm saying is, if you care so much about making sure that out of the rubble of this recession we create a new economy, why won't you, and indeed why won't David Cameron, take the radical steps needed to reform our banking system? Nothing has happened which will prevent a disaster in the banking system because of the greed in the banking system from occurring all over again. We're the only party saying split them up, make sure that they lend to viable British businesses, here in Bristol and elsewhere. That's the way to get the recovery going.

DAVID CAMERON: You can see one of the problems with hung parliament and coalition forming is there's quite a lot of bickering going on already. There is a difference here, there really is a difference about what we believe particularly on the jobs tax. I think trying to stop this is vital. What Nick and the Liberal Democrats are saying is first of all when we announced let's stop the jobs tax, they said it was nauseating, and in their manifesto, they've now said that actually it's their aspiration. It's the first time in politics I can remember someone coming up with a nauseating aspiration that they want to fulfill. But it is a difference between us. We want to stop this job tax to keep the economy going. The other two parties are not going to do that.

ADAM BOULTON: Mr Brown.

GORDON BROWN: You see, David, I see you haven't denied you're taking £6,000 million out of the economy in an emergency budget if you're elected. I would be very very worried indeed. It seems a return to the old Conservative Party. Nick, on this question of banks, you don't solve the problem by making all your banks smaller. Northern Rock was a small bank and it went completely under. What you've got to do is have proper capital controls. What you've got to do is have a global financial supervision system. Alistair Darling, our Chancellor, is now in Washington...

NICK CLEGG: Gordon Brown, the governor of the Bank of England...

GORDON BROWN: ..negotiating a global financial tax. That is the right thing to do.

NICK CLEGG: The governor of the Bank of England has quite clearly said that unless you split high-risk casino investment banking from low-risk high street banking, the banks that you and I depend on, you're always going to get this risk that risks will be taken with your everyday savings. That's what you've got to stop. It's what they did in the 1930s in the Depression in the United States. I think we need to do something similar. It's what President Obama is doing, something similar, in the United States. And yet neither of the old parties want to even contemplate the major reforms needed to our banks. I think we owe it to future generations to make sure that the implosion in our banking system, never, ever, ever, can happen again.

ADAM BOULTON: I think we're going to have to leave this question there. We're going to move on now to a question now from Bethlehem Negessi who is from Bristol.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I'm an immigrant, and I have been in the UK for 13 years. I recognise that immigration is becoming a problem in the country. What new measures would you introduce in order to make the system more fair?

ADAM BOULTON: How would you make immigration fairer, Nick Clegg?

NICK CLEGG: Firstly, you need to tighten the borders, Bethlehem, so that we know who is coming in and who is going out. Previous Labour and Conservative governments removed the exit controls, so we didn't know who had to leave. I would want to see those reinstated immediately. I want to see a border police force, we have every right to police our borders. Secondly, I would make sure we direct people who come and live and work in the country, to the areas in the country where, of course, they have a job and they've got someone who can vouch for them, but also where there is space for them to live, where there isn't unreasonable strain placed on public services. And thirdly, we have to do something about the legacy about the problem created by the chaos which Labour and Conservative governments created in our immigration system. That was lots of people coming here illegally, who are now still living, years and years and years, in the shadows of our economy. I'd rather get them out of the hands of criminal gangs, so we can go after the criminal gangs, into the hands of the taxman, if they want to play by the rules, pay their taxes, speak English. That is a smart, fair, effective way of dealing with immigration.

ADAM BOULTON: Thank you. Gordon Brown.

GORDON BROWN: When we talked about it last week, Nick didn't tell us he wants an amnesty for illegal immigrants. I think that would be a wrong policy for this reason. It would encourage people to come to this country, thinking that at some point we would legalise their presence. I think that would be not a deterrent on people coming to our country illegally, it would mean that more and more people would come into our country. Our policy is to control and manage immigration. We have a points system to do so. No unskilled worker from outside Europe can now come into our country. If you have a skill, then we will get a British person to do that job advertised in a Jobcentre if the skill is available in Britain. We are gradually reducing the number of skills we need to come from abroad. So cooks and care assistants in future, they will come from abroad, they're trained up in Britain. Gradually, we'll go through the skills list and make sure those people who get jobs in Britain are skilled in Britain to do the jobs here.

ADAM BOULTON: Thank you. David Cameron.

DAVID CAMERON: Thank you. Well, the first thing to say to Bethlehem is that we have benefited from immigration. And people who come here legally and come and live here legally, we should be incredibly warm and welcoming and hospitable and build a strong and integrated country, where actually we build a strong society together. I think that's really important to say that, first up. I do believe that immigration in recent years has just simply been too high. We do need to bring the level down. That is the first bit of fairness that needs to be sorted out. People do want this addressed. The other two parties are not actually really addressing this issue. We believe you do need to have a cap on people coming from outside the European Union, for economic reasons. That would help to bring it down. Added to that, is new European countries, when they join the EU, we say there should be transitional controls. We were told there would only be 13,000 people coming from Poland, in the end there were hundreds of thousands. That is absolutely vital, we are the only ones saying, let's grip this, let's have a cap, let's bring it down

radically. Then it won't be a political issue. It wasn't in the past, and I'd dearly love it not to be an issue again.

ADAM BOULTON: OK, thank you. Nick Clegg.

NICK CLEGG: I think I want I guess you want, Bethlehem, what everyone wants, which is just an immigration system which works. We've had an immigration system which has been absolutely shambolic. No idea who is coming in or going out, no idea who's been living here for many years. Gordon Brown talks about an amnesty, the only person actually in British politics advocating a blanket amnesty, I'm not, it's Boris Johnson, the Conservative mayor for London. What I'm saying is you can't live in denial of a problem which has been created by the chaos of the immigration system in the past. You can wish away, if either of you wish, that there are people who have been living here for a long time in the shadows of our economy. I want to go after the criminal gangs who are exploiting those people. If there are those people who've lived here for ten years, speak English, want to play by the rules, want to pay their taxes, why don't we say to them, OK, you come out of the shadows, pay your taxes, do some community service to make up for the fact that you came here illegally, and then we can free up resources to go after the criminal gangs. I think that is the right balance between fairness but also making sure we have a system which works.

ADAM BOULTON: Gordon Brown.

GORDON BROWN: I think in the last two years we have seen the introduction, since I became Prime Minister, of foreign national ID cards. So anybody who comes into the country now will have to have an identity card. We're also introducing, from the end of the year, a control so that everybody is counted in and everybody is counted out. It was got rid of in the past, it should not have been got rid of. We are bringing that back. Biometric visas mean that we can stop people at airports even before they come into the country if they've not got the right identification. So we're tightening up on that. But the big key to the future is the points system. If you don't have the points to come into this country, in other words if you don't have a skill we need, don't come to the country. But I must say, I'm very worried about Nick's policy, because it sends a message to people all around the world, if you come to Britain there'll be some sort of amnesty that will allow you to come here freely in the end, without having to be thrown out of the country.

ADAM BOULTON: Thank you. David Cameron.

DAVID CAMERON: Well, the truth is there's a big difference between the Conservative Party, that is gripping this problem, and the other two parties, that I think are just dancing around it. The Government's had 13 years to control immigration, yet we've had some of the highest levels of immigration in the last 50 years. And frankly, I think Nick's ideas would actually make the situation worse. There are two bad ideas. The idea of the amnesty... It's been shown all over Europe that what that leads to is a big increase in false asylum claims and more immigration. That's a bad idea. And I think this idea of somehow having regional immigration, saying it's OK to come and work in Bristol but you can't live in Birmingham, or you can live in Bradford but you can't live in... I mean, it sounds like they're going to put up border controls along the M5. It really doesn't make sense. It hasn't been thought through, it would make a bad situation worse, we need real change, genuine change that only the Conservatives are offering.



NICK CLEGG: I just think... Look, this is a really sensitive issue. People feel, quite rightly, really strongly about immigration. People feel very unsettled that they have had no faith in an immigration system which has been run chaotically by both Conservative and Labour governments for a long time. All I would say to both David Cameron and Gordon Brown is, yes, let's have our differences, but please don't live in denial about what is going on. Don't live in denial about the fact that, because of the chaos in the system, we've got lots of people here who are working for criminal gangs rather than for Britain. We've got to deal with that. You can pretend we can wish it away. It is a problem. They are here. Now, of course what I'm saying is controversial and people will try and score points. It is at least an attempt to deal with an issue which we have to deal with. I don't think we can have another ten years, another 20 years in the old way, just ignoring these things. We can't come up with promises like caps, which don't work. And by the way...

GORDON BROWN: Nick, I'm not really interested in point scoring, I'm interested in doing the right thing. If we send out a message to people in other parts of the world, you get an amnesty if you come to this country, then you've got a real problem.

NICK CLEGG: What are you going to do?

GORDON BROWN: Net inward migration is coming down as a result of the points system that we introduced. It's come down three years ago, two years ago, and is coming down this year. We are taking the action that is necessary. From the end of this year, people will be counted in and counted out of the country...

NICK CLEGG: Gordon Brown, what are you going to do?

GORDON BROWN: It would be more helpful if you would support identity cards for foreign nationals instead of opposing them.

NICK CLEGG: I'm just asking for a simple, honest answer to a big question, which is that because of the chaos in the system in the past, we have lots of people who are here. Now, if you just ignore it, they will carry on living in the shadow of our economy. You can either deny it, which you're doing because you have no plan to deal with it, neither do you...

GORDON BROWN: We're removing them.

NICK CLEGG: Or you try and... No, you can't deport 900,000 people. You don't know where they live.

GORDON BROWN: We're removing them.

ADAM BOULTON: OK. David Cameron.

DAVID CAMERON: All I'd say is that the more they argue amongst each other, the more it's absolutely clear to me the only way you'll get real change, real action, sensible action on this issue is from a Conservative Government. It is a sensitive issue, and it needs to be dealt with sensitively and reasonably. It's very important that we talk about this properly. But I think the country wants and deserves firm immigration control rather instead of the nonsense we're hearing.

NICK CLEGG: What kind of cap?

DAVID CAMERON: And that would make a difference. And what it would really achieve is getting back to where we used to be, where we didn't have immigration questions at public meetings, we weren't asked about it on the streets. When you knocked on a door, nobody raised it. Why? Because the British public was happy with the level of immigration. We knew that was a level we could integrate and provide good health, housing and schools for people. It's been out of control these last 13 years. That's Labour's fault. And from all I can hear, the Liberal Democrats would make it much, much worse.

NICK CLEGG: No, David Cameron, what would the cap be?

DAVID CAMERON: You'd set the cap...

NICK CLEGG: No, what's the number? Is it ten? Is it 10,000? It is ten million?

DAVID CAMERON: If you have a cap... Do you want to let me answer the question?

NICK CLEGG: Just a number.

DAVID CAMERON: You're reminding me of Gordon last week. It's like another replay. The fact is, every year, you need to talk with the health authorities, the housing authorities, the education authorities, and business, and set a cap to achieve a very big reduction in overall immigration levels. That can be done, we've done it in our past, we can do it again in our future. What's required is political will from a party that's prepared to make the difference.

NICK CLEGG: David Cameron, you are... Let me get this straight, I genuinely want to understand, you're proposing a cap but you don't know what the cap would be. You're proposing to give people an assurance that we're going to count people in and count people out, but you don't know how many people. All I'm saying on the immigration debate, it's difficult, none of us have got perfect answers. But let's at least not pretend that you can put forward these ideas which have got no substance, haven't been thought through. At least the kind of ideas I've been putting through are trying to deal with a really, really difficult issue which has been brushed under the carpet for too long.

ADAM BOULTON: Gordon Brown.

GORDON BROWN: Net immigration is falling as a result of the measures we are taking. The points system is the key to this. It's done in Australia and other countries. You can't come in unless you've got a skill to offer, if you're from outside the European Union. That has meant there are no unskilled workers coming into this country, a reduction in skilled workers, a reduction in university students as well. That is what we are actually doing now. We're counting people in and out from the end of the year.

DAVID CAMERON: I don't want to bore people with the figures, but it is important. Up until 1997, the highest number for net migration into the UK was 77,000 in a year. Since 1997, since Labour came to power, it has never been lower than 140,000, sometimes it has been 200,000, that's equivalent to two million across a decade. That's just too high, it can be brought down, we have done it in the past and can do it again.

GORDON BROWN: What happens is there are a million people from Britain who are in the European Union, and staying in homes and staying in countries of the European Union. And there are one million people from the European Union who are in our country, that is what being part of the European Union is about. There are many British citizens who want the chance to stay for a period of time in other countries in the European Union.

ADAM BOULTON: We are going to have to leave it there, I'm afraid that is the end of our audience questions. It's now time for the leaders to make their big pitches for your votes. With their closing statements. A reminder that each leader has one-and-a-half minutes for this. Lots were drawn for the order in which they are going to go, we start now with Gordon Brown.

GORDON BROWN: The buck stops here, if you are in the job I'm in, you've got to take responsibility for the decisions. We've talked this evening about Afghanistan and the responsibility I take, every day, making sure our forces can do the job in Afghanistan, and can soon, as a result of the efforts we are making, bring our forces home. We've talked today also about security, and how we need to be part of multilateral disarmament negotiations, so that we, Britain, do not give up our weapons, unless others are prepared to do so, and reduce their weapons as well. We have talked also about the economy this evening, I've heard a number of people ask questions about the deficit, ask questions about how the economy is going to fare as businesses in the future, whether in or out of Europe. The issue for me is don't do anything that puts this economic recovery at risk. We have fought so hard, for so long, over these last two years, to make sure we get through what has been the worst global financial recession since the 1930s. We've had to take ownership of our banks, we've had call the world together in London to have

a big summit so that we can make decisions that everybody will work together. We all decided we'd put resources into the economy. Unfortunately, the Conservatives want to take these resources out far too early and put thousands of jobs at risk. I would say this evening, David, you're a risk to the economy. Nick, you're a risk because of what you're saying on Iran and on nuclear weapons to our security. Nick, you would leave us weak. David, you would leave us isolated in Europe. I think these are the problems that these parties have got to face up to. We have a credible long-term plan for the future of Britain.

ADAM BOULTON: Thank you, Mr Brown. David Cameron.

DAVID CAMERON: Well, I don't know about you, but I thought all that sounded slightly desperate and an attempt to frighten people, instead of doing what I think we need to do in our country, which is to take and make a clean break from the last 13 years. To have new leadership, to take the country forward, to solve the problems that we have. I think the Conservatives are best-placed to offer that. If you vote Conservative, you know you can get fresh, new leadership, from a new team on May 7th, rather than being stuck with what we have now. You've heard in the debate today some big differences set out between us, about how we believe you have to give more priority to keeping our country safe, keeping our borders secure, making sure we keep our defences strong. But also you've heard a lot of differences on values, how the family comes first for me, how we need to do more to help those who actually do the right thing and want their Government behind them. We do face some difficult times in this country, but I still think we have incredible days ahead of us. We're a great country in so many different ways, with the right leadership, with the right values, with a clean break from these 13 years of failure, we can achieve anything if we pull together and build the big society we all know we need to make our country a better place to live in.

ADAM BOULTON: Thank you, David Cameron. Nick Clegg.

NICK CLEGG: What I have tried to do tonight is to show if we do things differently, we can be a force for good in the world. We can lead, we can shape the world around us, not complain about the world around us. We have talked about a number of things this evening. We've talked about Europe, Afghanistan, climate change, the Pope. We've talked about things closer to home as well, immigration, MPs' expenses, pensions. I believe, on all those things, all those issues, we can act differently. There's still some way to go before this election is decided, but I hope that whether you're going to vote in the next few days by post, or make up your mind in the ballot box on May 6th, you agree with me that something really exciting is beginning to happen. People are beginning to believe, beginning to hope that we can do something different this time. Of course there are people who will try to block change, of course there are people who are spreading fear to stop the change you want. I think they're wrong. I think if we do things differently, if we stand up for the value's that have made our country great, then we can be proud again, proud of greater fairness here at home, and proud also, of standing up for the things we believe in, in the world. We don't simply need to choose from the old choices of the past, we don't need to repeat the mistakes of the past. Don't let anyone tell you this time it can't be different. It can.

ADAM BOULTON: And that concludes this Sky News leaders' debate. Full reaction and analysis continues, of course, now here live on Sky News. The third and final debate in this general election series will take place next week in the Midlands. After that, of course, it's up to you to cast your vote on May 6th. Many thanks to you for watching, thanks to our questioners, to the our studio audience, and to the people of Bristol. And above all many thanks to our three leaders, the first ever to agree to debate live on television. Gordon Brown, David Cameron, and Nick Clegg who I now invite to step forward and shake hands with each other. APPLAUSE