

CONSERVATIVEHOME.COM'S QUESTIONS TO DAVID CAMERON AND DAVID DAVIS

1. Some people think Conservatism is about helping people to help themselves. Does contemporary Conservatism have anything distinctive to say to those people who cannot help themselves?

DC: "Yes it can and it must. Modern compassionate Conservatism means being clear about our obligations to help the weak, the vulnerable and those who get left behind. There are two particular aspects of this which I have addressed in my leadership campaign and which I would emphasise here. First, my plans to free the voluntary and social sector so that community organisations and faith-based groups can expand the scope of the fantastic work they do, and secondly my campaign to save special schools."

DD: "I am very proud that the Conservative Party believes in helping people to help themselves rather than enslave them into a dependency culture. I believe people want to be free to live their own lives and be given opportunities to succeed. The issue for Conservatism and the heart of my campaign is to show that there is nothing incompatible with this philosophy and concentrating our attention on helping those who are the poorest in society. It is the poorest in society who often don't get the opportunities to help themselves and who are most often forgotten by state failure. It is the yardstick by which I measure all my domestic policies. That is why I have concentrated several of my policy announcements on improving lives for the least well-off: at least 20 new grammar schools in our most deprived cities, tackling the poverty trap where people are penalised for trying to better themselves and on ensuring equal access to healthcare. I believe this is a distinctive message and one we need if we are to regain seats in our inner cities and the areas the Conservative Party does not at present reach."

2. In the early Thatcher years some taxes were increased in a bid to protect the public finances but others were cut to address the brain drain and other disincentive effects. Do you agree that the first budget of the next Conservative government should include some simplification and reduction of the tax burden that Gordon Brown has imposed on Britain's wealth creators?

DC: "I agree that lower and simpler taxes are essential components of what should be our principal aim: a comprehensive economic policy that helps create prosperity in an age of global competition. A strong economy needs competitive tax rates and good public infrastructure in areas like education and transport. That's why I've argued that we must share the proceeds of economic growth between tax reduction and investment in public services. But I don't think it is at all sensible to specify the contents of a budget four or five years in advance – when we have no idea what the public finances look like."

DD: "The cost of all the extra regulations on our business is put at £40bn by the British Chambers of Commerce. We have now the heaviest tax burden on people for 25 years. Regulations and the burgeoning tax burden is crippling our economic growth and damaging our competitiveness. It will soon stop us being able to afford the public spending we need to obtain the public services we want. Reducing the

regulations imposed on business and the tax burden are therefore essential and will form the core of the first budget of a Conservative Government under my leadership. I have announced that I would ensure public spending grows within the growth rate of the rest of the economy and return £38bn back to people from Government. This could equate to giving back £1,200 p.a. for an average family. I have set out examples of where this growth policy has worked in practice e.g. as in Ireland and Australia. The argument is a difficult but vital one to make. We must start now in getting this argument over to the electorate if we are to have a chance of succeeding at the next General Election.”

3. Is there any chance that you will reverse the position on cannabis that the Tories held at the last election and support the existing downgraded classification of this drug?

DC: “We considered this issue while I sat on the Home Affairs Select Committee. I’ve said that the Conservative Party, as part of its broad policy review and policy development process, should review the cannabis laws. I will accept the conclusions of that review. I do believe, however, that the classification of different drugs should reflect the harm they do and therefore send out a credible message to young people.”

DD: “No. As a parent bringing up children I know the worry and horror parents have about drugs and their children. Drugs ruin lives. I believe we need to have strong sentences for people who push drugs and extend powers to confiscate the proceeds of crime. Together with strong action against those who deal in drugs I believe we have to do more to help those who are dependent on them. In my role as Shadow Home Secretary I committed us to a policy at the last election of expanding 10 fold the number of intensive residential drug treatment places providing for 50,000 patients a year with a programme of 6 months.”

4. Do you believe that tax-payers' money should be used to support voluntary and faith-based organisations that are helping couples to build healthy and stable marriages?

DC: “Yes.”

DD: “I believe that voluntary sector and faith-based organisations are often the best at delivering the services people need. The volunteers and faith members are rightly focused on the communities they want to serve rather than focused on meeting targets and diktats from Whitehall. I think that funds should therefore be allocated to voluntary and faith-based organisations as part of our drive to increase efficiency in the delivery of services. I believe also that we should adopt a lighter touch to regulation so that volunteers and faith groups can get on with the job. For example at the last General Election we committed ourselves to encouraging wider rights of supply in education so that more charitable and faith-based schools could be set up. This is a policy that has worked with stunning success in Sweden and I want to take the best of what works in the world and implement it here in the UK.”

5. Many people believe that embryonic stem cell research could produce major medical breakthroughs. Others believe that it destroys nascent human life. What is your position?

DC: "I don't believe we should create life in order for it to be experimented on, but I support stem cell research because of its potential to contribute to breakthroughs in treating medical conditions (something I feel passionately about as the father of a severely disabled child). I think that adult cells should be used wherever possible."

DD: "This is a very difficult area where I believe politicians should be informed and guided by both the scientific community and the faiths. It is also an area which is moving quickly as there are already some reports which suggest that embryonic stem cell research may not be required in the future and stem cells can be fully utilised from other sources. This is something I would strongly favour as from a personal moral perspective I am very uncomfortable with allowing embryonic stem cell research. Until this is achievable however I believe whether to allow such research should be an area for a free vote in parliament so all MPs can exercise their conscience. I believe provided research is strictly controlled and subject to frequent review research should for the time being be permitted in order to help cure some of the worst illnesses that can affect people."

6. With the Assisted Dying Bill, Lord Joffe is currently attempting to introduce Britain's first right to die legislation. Would you support such legislation if it included satisfactory requirements?

DC: "No."

DD: "No. I do not believe that sufficient safeguards could be built into the system to avoid the possibility that patients may have changed their mind or may feel they could be a burden on their family and therefore believe they should die. This is a fraught area of moral and legal complexity but I do not believe people have a right to die."

7. Up to 400,000 people have died in the Darfur region of Sudan over the last eighteen months. What specifically should Britain and the international community have done for the people of Darfur that has not been done?

DC: "We should have pressed for the situation to have been described as genocide by the UN, a decision which would have prompted a series of interventions."

DD: "Those 400,000 people have died while the rest of the world has been busy debating whether it was genocide or not. So the first thing we, the international community, can do is make it quite clear that what we've seen in Sudan is state-sponsored genocide. That enables us to consider war trials for those responsible. The UN has been feeble, while the African Union troops deployed to keep the peace are proving to be ineffective, despite their efforts, because there are too few of them. Their number should be increased. The international community should ask NATO to enforce a no-fly zone in the region to stop the Government and militias using aerial bombardment against their victims, and we should seriously consider imposing sanctions on oil and arms against the Sudanese Government. Britain has particular

responsibilities in Africa because of our influence through the Commonwealth. It is in Britain's own interests – as well as those of the people of Darfur and other poverty-stricken regions – to promote democracy, development and the rule of law around the world.”

8. Britain currently sells arms to undemocratic and repressive regimes. Would you stop this trade?

DC: “We need a clear set of rules about those countries we're prepared to sell arms to, but countries have a right to self-defence, and we cannot expect smaller countries to manufacture every single piece of defence equipment themselves.”

DD: “If regimes are patently undemocratic and repressive, then yes. I believe each case must be judged on its merits, but the human rights background of the country in question must be one of the primary considerations.”

9. Would you have voted for George W Bush or John Kerry in last year's American Presidential election?

DC: “It's up to the American people to choose their President; it's up to the British Prime Minister - and the Leader of the Opposition - to work effectively with whoever they choose in order to maintain the special relationship between our two countries.”

DD: “My vote would have been for President Bush. In fact, maintaining good relations with America would be one of my top priorities in foreign policy. A lot of people mock the President and our relations with America generally, but the fact is that we rely on America for intelligence support and technology. I am a firm supporter of the Anglo-American relationship. President Bush has also done a lot of good work at home – notably by promoting a conservatism that is ‘good for me and good for my neighbour’. We can learn a lot from him and his electoral success. He may be the ultimate un-spun politician, but I think that's what people are looking for in today's political world.”

10. When it comes to climate change are you more inclined to support the Asian Pacific Partnership on Clean Development's emphasis on technology or the approach of the Kyoto Treaty?

DC: “I don't see these as alternatives. What we need is a new emphasis on technology which will help us move to a low-carbon world, and a framework of market incentives to bring forward the least-cost, most environmentally sensitive solutions. We do need an international agreement that goes beyond Kyoto and involves all industrialised and industrialising countries, and I've made clear my ambition for Britain to show real international leadership on this issue. But we can only do that if we ourselves become a low-carbon economy, and to that end I have set out a long-term strategy for carbon reduction including a new cross-party commission on energy and the environment, a new statutory framework for carbon reduction, and an independent monitoring and forecasting body, a Carbon Audit Office.”

DD: “Both are important, but the emphasis on technology is surely the right way to go. The greatest threat to the environment in the coming years will come from the emerging economies like China and India. Frankly, the impact they will have will dwarf anything we do here at home. So I think they are right to be focusing on finding new technologies to tackle the causes of climate change rather than just the symptoms. Politicians generally are guilty of focusing on the easy answers – those that seem like they will help while imposing extra burdens and regulations on businesses, large and small. Finding new ways of doing things by developing new technologies is the only sustainable way to deal with the problem.”

11. Would you support an open primary-style election for selecting the Conservative Party’s next London mayoral candidate?

DC: “This is a very interesting idea and I would be happy to consider it.”

DD: “I am not convinced that the primary system will be as effective in Britain as it is in America, but I believe the Party membership should have a decisive say, just as they have done in this leadership election. “

12. Do you support grassroots Conservative Party members retaining a vote in the final stage of future leadership elections?

DC: “Yes. I favour an electoral college system, but frankly feel that we have spent enough time in recent months discussing this issue. So I can’t promise that this will be the first act of a Cameron-led Conservative Party!”

DD: “It’s very important that a party that preaches about localism and accountability is seen to put those beliefs into practice in the way it selects its leader. There may be problems with the current system, but the answer is not to take the vote away from the membership but to come up with a solution that takes into account the views of all sections of the Party. I have suggested flipping the current system round as an alternative, but there are strong arguments for an electoral college. Generally, I believe we must be seen to be as open and democratic as possible. These are principles that must guide how we select our candidates as well as our leaders.”

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