

David Cameron speech to Conservative Party Conference

Speaking today at the Conservative Party Conference, Party Leader David Cameron said:

"Two years ago I stood on this stage and I gave a speech, a short speech, about why I wanted to lead our Party. Today I want to make a speech about why I want to lead our Country.

I am afraid it is going to be a bit longer and I haven't got an autocue and I haven't got a script, I've just got a few notes so it might be a bit messy; but it will be me.

You know my favourite conference in all my years of coming wasn't that one two years ago, it was almost twenty years ago after the Berlin wall had fallen and we met in Bournemouth. When I left school I travelled through the Soviet Union and Eastern Bloc and I will never forget the dull uniformity, the grayness of life under Communism, the lack of choice, the lack of freedom, the lack of expression. And I remember that day in Bournemouth standing at the back of the hall; hairs standing up on the back of my neck as a succession of democratically elected leaders, some of them just out of prison, walked onto that stage and praised Margaret Thatcher and our Party for the inspiration she gave on our long march to freedom.

And I felt proud that day, I felt proud of our values, I felt proud of our Party; proud of the part we had played in helping to forge a movement that brought freedom across our continent. But you know the triumphs of the past are not enough. Every generation of Conservatives has to make the argument all over again for free enterprise, for freedom, for responsibility, for limited government and that's why I stood here two years ago and said to our Party, after three election defeats, that we needed to make changes and we have made those changes. Today just one in ten of our members of Parliament are women but almost a third of our candidates are women. I didn't do that, you did that and you should be proud of what you've done.

Over these last two years we've campaigned on the environment, not just on climate change, but on cleaning streets and cleaning public places and we have won elections on the back of that. I didn't do that, you did that and you should be proud of what you've done.

And this Party, our Party, has campaigned over these last two years in a way we have never done before on our National Health Service up and down the country to save our services and to praise the people who work in the NHS; I didn't do that, you did that and you should be proud of what you have done.

But there is something else that our Party is doing and has to go on doing. If we are really the One Nation Party, the Party for opportunity for everybody, it's not enough to

just open the door and say 'please come in' we have to get out amongst Britain's ethnic minority communities and find the brightest, the best and the most talented and get them in. And that's why I am proud that I can stand here with the first Muslim woman of a Shadow Cabinet or Cabinet in Sayeeda Warsi who will be a great talent for our Party and our Country.

And those changes have brought us success, in local elections we have taken Plymouth, we have taken Lincoln, we took Chester, we took the Council right here in Blackpool and as William reminded us in that great speech on Sunday we are back in the North of England, a force to be reckoned with in every part of our Country.

And some people say that there is no such thing as friendship in politics but I can tell you that when you do this job, leading our Party, there is no better friend, and there is no better friend of this Party, than William Hague.

But change, real change isn't just about winning elections, real change is about getting ready to govern our country. Real change is about doing what our Party has always done, which is to make sure we understand and reflect and meet all the challenges of the modern world, and that is what we are doing. That's the argument I want to make today.

We face a New World in so many different ways and the old politics is failing and change is required. New World, Old Politics failing, Change is Required. That is what we have got to be about today. And you know there has been quite a lot of talk of lurching and I can't tell you we are not going to be lurching to the left, we are not going to be lurching to the right. We are just going to provide the good solid leadership that this country needs.

We need change for the long term, hope for our country and optimism for the next generation that is what this week has been about and that's what I am about.

Now last week, in Bournemouth or Bourne Mouth we saw the old politics on display. It wasn't just that we had heard it all before, I mean literally heard it all before. And I think quite a lot of people in America heard it all before as well.

There were the GP surgery family-friendly opening hours - we've had that one three times before, eco towns - four times before, competitive sport in our schools - six times before, and no indication about how any of these things are going to be done.

But it wasn't just that, it was the cynicism of it. He told us things that he knows he can't do: 'British jobs for British workers' is illegal under EU law. 'Deporting people for gun and knife crime', you can't do that because of the Human Rights Act. I have to say to our Prime Minister, if you treat people like fools you don't deserve to run the country let alone win an election.

But you know it is more cynical than that. Boy has this guy got a plan. It's to appeal to that 4% of people in marginal seats. With a dog whistle on immigration there and a word

about crime here, wrap yourself up in the flag and talk about Britishness enough times and maybe just maybe you can convince enough people that you are on their side. Well I say, God we've got to be better than that.

You know, what about the 40% of our fellow citizens who have given up on voting. They are just fed up with the whole rat-race of politics, the whole merry-go-round. We have got to inspire them that we can bring real change and deal with the things that people care about. People want the politics of belief and that means politics they can really believe in. So today I want to tell you what I believe. I want to tell you what's wrong with our country and I want to explain what I am going to do to put it right.

What do I believe? I am by nature an optimist. I think if we give people more power and control over their lives, I think they'll take the right decisions, they will grow stronger and society will grow stronger too. I don't believe in an ever larger state doing more and more, I believe in trying to make people do more themselves for their families and with society as well. And I believe that if we really want to tackle crime, if we really want to make our society stronger then you have got to make families stronger and society more responsible and to me that word responsibility really means something. I think over these last 10 years we have seen responsibility sucked away from people, sucked away from our public servants and taken away from our public services.

And it ended with that extraordinary farce of two community support officers standing by a lake after a boy had drowned, feeling that because the rule book said they couldn't intervene, they shouldn't. Well, we've got to start tearing up the rule books and allowing people common sense, initiative, and responsibility in the jobs that they do.

And I believe as everyone in this hall believes and as most of our fellow countrymen believe that the first job of any government is to protect against threats old and new. Against crime and war, against terrorism and climate change. That is why we must make our country safer and greener. Now, how do we do these things? Let's take the first one, give people more freedom and control of their lives.

We live in an extraordinary world of change and freedom. The internet is transforming people's lives. The website MySpace has got 130 million members. If it was a country, it would be the tenth biggest country in the world. Facebook, the social networking site, 30 million members. People using it to talk with each other and meet people. I had a look the other day. There is a network on Facebook called 'David Cameron is a hottie'. It's got 74 members. And I looked a little further and there is another network called 'Am I the only person who doesn't like David Cameron?' and it's got 379 members - I am sure there is nobody here today. But the point is a serious one.

As in our private lives and our work lives we get more and more control and more power to do what we want. When we look at our democracy, we are still stuck in the dark ages. When it comes to politics we just have to take what we are given and put up with it. And to me nothing sums this up more than the European Constitution. It's not just that it's an issue of trust, we put it in our manifesto that there should be a referendum, Labour put it

in their manifesto that there should be a referendum and it is one of the most blatant breaches of trust in modern politics they won't give us that referendum.

But it actually goes further than that. In a world where we have this freedom and control are we really saying to people that when it come to how you are governed, how your country is run you can't have a say, it's nothing to do with you? That's wrong and that is why we will keep pushing for that referendum, campaign for a No Vote and veto that Constitution.

And the revolution of freedom and control, of passing power to people shouldn't stop at Europe it should go much, much further. But don't believe anyone who tells you that citizens' juries are a sign of giving people real power, they are just glorified focus groups where politics ask your opinions and then go ahead and do whatever they wanted to do anyway. Gordon Brown has got a new one, bigger than a citizens' jury... He wants 1,000 people to come together and come up with 6 words that sum up Britishness. Well I've got six words for him. Stop wasting money on pointless gimmicks.

In government we will take this revolution and freedom and control much, much further. I believe it's time in our big cities for elected mayors so people have one person to blame if it goes wrong and to praise if it goes right; great civic leadership that we heard from Mike Bloomberg in his great speech on Sunday. I think it's time with local government to tear up rules and all the ring fencing and the auditing and actually say to our local councils, it's your money, spend it as you choose and get judged in the ballot box by people that you serve.

And while we are at it, it is time to abolish those regional assemblies and pass those powers back to the local councils where the power belongs.

Those are the first modern conservative changes for this new world of freedom. And this new world of freedom is having huge effects on business and our economy. Big business can now locate anywhere in the world, small businesses can find customers anywhere in the world and Britain has some great advantages in this globalised world. Not least because of the changes we made 15 or 20 years ago. There are huge changes taking place in Europe, the Spanish are cutting corporation tax by 5%, Angela Merkel the Chancellor of Germany who I met recently she is cutting it by 9%. President Sarkozy in France is cutting the top rate income tax to make his economy more competitive.

And look under the bonnet of the British economy and too many things are going in the wrong direction. 20% of the jobs created are created in the public sector; the private sector is becoming smaller as a percentage of our economy. The decline in manufacturing and manufacturing jobs meaning that we are losing important skills. And I know that business wants to hear from the Conservative Party how we will reduce regulation and reduce taxation to give them more freedom in this new world. And we heard from Alan Duncan how we will introduce regulatory budgets to cut that regulation and I can tell you that we will get out of the European Social Chapter so we can make those rules in Britain rather than in Brussels.

And as we share the proceeds of growth between public spending on the one hand and lower taxes on the other hand, we can give business the lower tax regimes that they need. But here's the deal. For business and for us, to make sure we have sustainably lower taxes, we need business to help us to cut the bills of social failure. That's the only way you can keep tax and regulation down in the long term. So we need business to be responsible in the way they market to children, in the way they treat their employees, in the way they encourage family life - all of those things will help us to get tax and regulation down for the long term good of our economy and that is the modern Conservative change for this new world of freedom.

In this new world of freedom nothing matters more in terms of opportunity and our economy and our future than education. But too many things are not right in education in Britain. Almost 50% of 11 year olds leaving school are not able to read, write or add up properly. Falling down the European leagues in terms of educational performance. 23,000 young people leaving school without any qualifications whatsoever, we are not doing enough to prepare young people for this world of freedom. I am a father of three children, all of them under 5, all of them I want to go through the state sector. I know what schools I want for my children, a school where they turn up and the head teacher knows your name, a school where there is proper discipline so they don't keep people that behave badly in school and wreck the education for those who want to learn.

Schools where they use the tried and tested teaching methods, not some experimental system of letting you discover the world for yourself. Schools where they understand that children are different, that they have different needs. That equality isn't putting them all in the same class and teaching at the same speed. It's setting by ability, it's taking the brightest pupils and stretching them and helping those that are falling behind. And for parents with disabled children, it means not having to fight for a special school and save your special schools it means special schools are there if you want to choose them for your children.

And why aren't we getting these things? We have a government that 10 years ago said education was the number one priority that has put billions into the system whose intentions are probably in the right place. Why haven't we succeeded? If we don't understand why Labour are failing we won't succeed ourselves and I think there are three vital areas we have got to get right:

The first is, we need to open up the state monopoly and allow new schools in so we can get the sort of innovation, choice and diversity that there is in the private sector. I want that choice, innovation and diversity in the public sector.

The government has got its academy programme. It's a good programme. But I feel that Gordon Brown is putting his foot on the brake when he should be putting his foot on the accelerator and we should be making it easier for these new schools. So we will say to churches, to voluntary bodies, to private companies, to private schools come into the state sector, find the parents and the children who have a simple regulatory regime, per capita funding and we can have those new schools so we can really drive up standards.

But you know there are lots of parents, and frankly I am one of them, who can't wait for all those structural changes to make the long term difference in education. They want, I want, action on standards now and again we have Labour Ministers and Labour Prime Ministers talking about great standards. Ed Balls gave a speech the other day - not the one at the conference that was dreadful - he gave a speech the other day that I could have given myself about standards, about rigour, about discipline - so why isn't it happening? I don't think they've ever got to grips with the educational establishment, some of whom still think it's wrong to say children have got something wrong, because you'll brand them as failures, who still seem to think that all must win prizes, who still seem to think we have to treat all children the same. So we need to be courageous and strong on standards to insist that children are taught using synthetic phonics and they learn to read properly. To be clear that a GNVQ is a great exam but it's not worth four GCSE's. To be absolutely clear that in reforming the exam bodies it is fine to make the QCA independent. It is fine to make the QCA independent but that won't help unless the exam bodies are really put under the one group of people that want to make our exam system rigorous and tough and believable for the long term and that's the customers. That means business, it means the universities, it means the colleges, they want our exam system to be robust for the long term and so do I.

But there is a change we need to make even more quickly and that's about discipline. I went and taught in a school for a couple of days in the North of England and one teacher said to me 'there is only three words that you have got to focus on', and not the ones you might expect, 'behaviour, behaviour, behaviour'. And I stopped a boy as he was running into his GCSE exam and I said 'What's the problem?' and he said 'Well, I got completely pissed last night, I've got a hangover and I'm going to flunk this exam'.

And I asked a teacher about him and I was told well he'd attacked a teacher before and he trashed a classroom and none of us know why he's still in this school. So why do we allow this to happen, why don't we intervene earlier? Take the children out that are causing so much trouble, try and turn their lives around.

So let me tell you what we'll do, we will give head teachers complete command of their school. If they want to have forcible home school contracts which parents have to sign about the behaviour of the children before the children go to school, that's fine. And no ifs no buts, if a head teacher wants to exclude a pupil because the behaviour is wrecking the education of others they should be able to do so, the appeals panels have got to go. Those are all Conservative changes for this new world of freedom, as George reminded us in that great speech on Monday - one of the aspirations, hold on a second I don't want to praise him too much...

One of the aspirations people still have, and rightly so, is the aspiration to own a flat and a home of their own. And all of us, all of the Shadow Cabinet here they can tell the same story of young people who come to our surgeries, they show you their salary, they talk about local house prices and they just say I don't see how I can achieve that dream. And George showed how we going to cut stamp duty to show that we're on their side and we

will help mend the housing ladder and get on their side. This is the party of aspiration and opportunity and George has shown us the way.

And just as people want aspiration and opportunity at the beginning of their life so they deserve opportunity and security in retirement. And Gordon Brown's worse legacy will be his destruction of Britain's pension system, and we in this party will never let him forget it.

There's a man in my constituency called John Brooks and he's got cancer. He spent 40 years working for the same company, paying into his pension fund, it was a blanket factory in Witney. He was told his pension fund was copper bottomed and guaranteed - the business went bust, the pension scheme went bust and he was left with nothing.

There are 125,000 people like him in our country. I raised his case in Parliament and surprise, surprise he was offered some money. And do you know what he did? He said I won't take a penny of that money, until you can guarantee that other people nearing retirement in my company get that money too. That is a modern British hero that I am proud to know.

So George, your first task when we win the election is to set up a lifeboat fund, and give those 125,000 people the support and the money that they deserve for having been let down so badly by this government.

In this new world, the winds of change, can sometimes be quite harsh rather than just invigorating. Globalisation will help poorer countries become richer, it will help them close the gap with the richer world, but sometimes globalisation can increase inequalities within a country. And I think we all know that while our economy is getting richer, our society in many ways is getting poorer. And I think we have to recognise in the Party that freedom is not enough. That we have to help make families stronger, we have to help make society more responsible. If you talk to a young mother half way up a council block trying to bring up her children - trying to find somewhere safe to play, trying to find a good school. If you just say we're going to give you more freedom and control, I think you'll get quite a blank look. And that's why the second thing that we believe in so strongly - stronger families and a more responsible society - is so vital for the future of our country. And again, the picture isn't good, the old politics has been failing. Labour's great passion was tackling poverty but in many ways its been one of their greatest areas of failure. There are five million people in our country of working age who aren't working. There are a million young people, more than a million who are neither in employment, nor in education, nor in training. And the number is actually higher than ten years ago.

You remember ten years ago being told how many young people were on the scrap heap, well that scrap heap has actually got higher, and that is a scandal in our country. There are 600,000 people, 600,000 more people, in deep poverty than ten years ago. Again, why have Labour failed and gone on failing, if we don't understand why, we won't get it right. They've put the money in. We've had New Deals and Fair Deals and hand ups and

thinking the unthinkable and then going away and thinking again but it hasn't worked. Why?

I believe it's because they relied too much on the state organisations that can treat people like statistics rather than like human beings. And Ministers are so keen to shout success that they count success as just six weeks in a job. So we get this revolving door of people living a life on benefits and then just a few weeks in work and then back on benefits again. Change, modern Conservative change, is required so what are we going to do? We should look at the models that have worked elsewhere in the world. In Australia where they have got private limited companies to run benefits and they have cut unemployment by 50 per cent. In states like Wisconsin in America where they've cut benefit roles by 80 per cent, and the changes we will make are these: we will say to people that if you are offered a job and it's a fair job and one that you can do and you refuse it you shouldn't get any welfare.

And we will ask the charities, the voluntary bodies, the private companies who have such expertise in this area to run these benefit systems for us, why do I think they are better? I think they show a greater understanding of the personal and emotional needs of people who have been stuck out of work for so long. It's worked in other parts of the world, it can work here, it's a tough choice, it's a difficult thing to put through, but we have got to do it.

You know the best welfare system of all, it's called the family. If you think about it, what's the best organisation at bringing up children, at helping us with the right values, helping us get on with life, looking after us if we are sick or disabled, caring for the elderly, it's the family.

And in this world of unease as well as freedom we need to do more to support the family, and again the old politics are failing. Look at Britain today: one in four children brought up with an absent father, the highest rate of family breakdown in Europe, and I just don't believe we can walk on by from the evidence that's in front of us.

Children from broken homes have a 70 % chance of failing at school, a 40% greater chance of getting into debt, a 35% chance of being unemployed. Single mums do a brilliant job, they do the most difficult job in the world but, I don't think we can ignore the state of family breakdown in Britain and I think we have to try and do something about it.

You know there is a phenomenon in Britain that's called LATs - that's Living Apart Together and there are two million people who pretend to live apart because the benefits system pays you more to live apart than live together.

I met a young man the other day, he came to my office, he had recently been in prison and he was trying to go straight, he had got a job, he's got a kid already and he's got another on the way. He is being mentored by someone in my office and the only reason he doesn't live with the mother of his children is because she would lose benefits if he

did.

We must be crazy in this country to be using the benefits system to drive people apart rather than bring them together. We've got a tax system that doesn't recognise marriage and we've got a benefit system that actually recognises any form of co-habitation, any form of commitment and penalises it.

So what will we do to change that?

Well, as George has set out, we will end the couple's penalty in the benefit system, so we don't penalise couples, we will reward them and yes I believe we should recognise marriage in the tax system as well.

But I don't just want to give people a tax cut, I want to give people a time increase, time for many families is the most precious commodity of all, time you can spend at home, time to help with the home work, time you can do things in the house and that's why I think its time not just for these benefit and tax changes I've spoken about but also to say to all employees in all companies with children that you should have the right to ask for flexible working.

Companies that have adopted this have found that they are able to grant the request in the vast majority of cases, they have actually found that productivity has gone up, profits have gone up, staff morale has gone up and keeping staff is easier. I think at the next election we will be able to offer people the strongest family package any Party has put together. Yes we will recognise marriage in the tax system, yes we will take the couples penalty out of the tax system and yes we will give people more time, more flexibility, so we can be the Party of the family once again.

The one thing that lots of families rely on more than anything else, my own included, is the NHS, and when I think of the NHS I think of the people in it. I think of the care worker who turns up at our home three nights a week to look after my son and cares for him as if he was her own son. I think of the community nurses who help you fight for all the things you need for your family life. They understand that it's not just about the child it's about the family too. I think about the neurologist who was just desperate to give us a better quality of life and he wouldn't stop until he found the answer. He got us back into hospital day after day, week after week. It must have played havoc with his figures for through put and out put and patient episodes and all the rest of it but he just wanted to do the right thing. That's the spirit of the NHS that I think motivates everyone in our country.

But again why has it gone wrong?

Ten years on from a government that said "24 hours to save the NHS", billions spent and yet moral is so low, some hospitals still threatened with closure, departments shutting down, productivity so poor in the NHS, what's gone wrong? Again if we don't understand why Labour are failing we won't succeed.

I think it's because the reform has been topped down. Targets imposed from above, endless re-organisation, nine in the last ten years, and an NHS computer costing billions of pounds that many professionals in the NHS can't really tell you what its for, though they are worried its going to take away patient confidentiality, and I think they've demoralised the staff in the NHS and questioned their professionalism and their vocation.

I will never forget walking on the streets of London marching with ten thousand junior doctors who felt like they were being treated like cogs in a machine rather than professionals with a vocation to go out and save lives and I think Labour have got something else badly wrong. They talk about a personalised NHS but they haven't done anything to deliver it.

So what will we do to be different?

First of all we've got to scrap those top down targets and trust our professionals in the NHS. Now that doesn't mean letting go and just giving up on quality, quite the opposite, we've got to replace those process targets with measures of outcomes that's what people care about, how long am I going to survive if I get cancer? What are my chances of a good life if I have a stroke? What are my chances of surviving from heart disease? What we've got to do is make the NHS and doctors answerable to the patient and not to the politicians. And the way we'll get a really personalised NHS is make the changes that are necessary. Giving people a real choice of GP's, giving GP's control over their budgets and allowing GP's to choose between whatever hospital they like. Public or private or voluntary not just some limited list. Those are the modern Conservative changes that we will make to our NHS. There is something else our NHS is suffering from and it's an excess of fads imposed from Whitehall. Those of us representing rural areas remember when we were told the community hospitals had to go and the huge hurt their closure caused. Then we were told 'No, community hospitals are the future and they should stay and we'll build new ones'.

The latest fad comes straight from the new Health Minister and he say's of District General Hospitals, that their days are over. Well I think he's wrong. People in this country, towns and villages and cities really care about their District General Hospital, they want it to be there when they're ill, they want their children to be born in it and they want an accident and emergency unit open 24 hours that they don't have to drive hours to get to.

So if this government goes ahead with the plans to say the District General Hospital is over we will fight them every step of the way between now and the General Election and when it comes to public services and when it comes to this new world of unease there is another issue that we have to approach and approach sensibly and it's the issue of immigration. I think this country has benefited immeasurably from immigration.

I think this country has benefited immeasurably from immigration. People who want to come here and work hard and contribute to our country. I think our diverse and multi-

racial society is a huge benefit for Britain but we do have recognise the pressures that can be put on public services, schools and hospitals and housing if immigration is unlimited. And that's why I think David Davis in that excellent speech yesterday, set out the steps that we need to take. We do need to say that new EU countries should have transitional controls and yes there should be an overall limit on economic migration from non-European countries. I want our Party, a modern Conservative party, to talk about this issue in a reasonable, humane and sensible way and to take the very sensible measures that are necessary. What I always find with the government is that you get the exact opposite. You get a whole lot of language, often quite inflammatory but they don't take steps that Britain needs. So let us be the ones that handle this issue in the way that it needs to be for the good of our country and our public services.

The other feature of our modern world, of this new world, is the sense of insecurity and danger, particularly in foreign affairs and security. The world that maybe some people dreamt of at the conference back in Bournemouth when it looked as if maybe history would end, that Liberal democracy would triumph, that free market economics would slowly progress and we would have a new world order, that world is not going to happen. We have instead 15,000 nuclear weapons in the former Soviet Union, we have Iran trying to get hold of a nuclear weapon and threatening Israel, we have insurgency in Iraq and the possible impact on the Middle East. We have progress in Africa yes, but countries in the East like Somalia that are failed states and narco-states in the West like Guinea Bissau and perhaps most threateningly of all, almost perhaps as many as 4,000 of our fellow citizens have been through terrorist training camps in Afghanistan or in Pakistan and many will have returned to our country. And yes, we have great plans, great ideas, great proposals for what we want to do in health and education and housing but anyone who wants to be Prime Minister of this country has to be ready to face those threats and meet them. And I think that people have a right to know how I would react to them.

The first thing to say is that when it comes to these issues, we must never put Party before Country. I have always believed in the Atlantic Alliance and I have always believed in Britain's independent nuclear deterrent. And when Labour came forward with plans to replace Trident, I am proud of the fact that we marched our members of parliament through those division lobbies to make sure that vote was won. And when it comes to Iraq we all want to see more of our troops come home and if the Prime Minister makes the right decisions, if we can guarantee more security in southern Iraq, then we will support him when he acts in the national interest. But I think the key principal that we must apply to these great challenges in our dangerous and insecure world is keeping our defences strong. I have been to Afghanistan twice, and spent a night under canvas in Camp Bastion. I remember sitting in a room with a whole lot of guys from the Worcester and Sherwood Foresters and asking them how many had fired their gun in battle. Every single hand, almost every single hand went up. We need to understand the incredible bravery of what our soldiers are doing in Helmand province. But again in a world of danger and insecurity, we need to recognise again that the old politics is failing. Yes, we have changed some things since 9/11 but we haven't changed enough. And our Prime Minister likes to say that nothing in Britain is broken but I would refer him to a piece of paper which is all about the sacrifices our troops are prepared to make on our behalf,

including the ultimate sacrifice and our duties and obligations to them.

It's called the Military Covenant and Mr Brown, I believe your Government has broken it.

There are things we could do, quite small things, that would make a difference. If you sit in the back of a Hercules at Kandahar air base or Bastion as I have done, you will hear soldiers telling you about some of the smaller things. Why don't we get more contact time with home via telephone and e-mail? Why can't we have free parcels all year round, not just at Christmas time? Why can't we have the same system as the Americans where your leave starts the moment you step foot on American soil rather than when you actually leave Camp Bastion in the middle of Afghanistan. All we need for these things is just a government that values our military properly, rolls up its sleeves and gets them done. But there are bigger things. We have got to look at the schools they send their children to. Many of them, the children come and go within a year but they don't get the extra funding that they need. We have got to look at the housing, so much of which is completely sub-standard. And yes, we have got to look at the health care. I know our soldiers want to come home to a great British hospital and in Birmingham they do. But when you are wounded on a battlefield in Helmand one day and you wake up next day in a hospital you want to recuperate with your comrades in arms and that must mean a separate military ward. But there is something else that we need to understand and that is that we will never be able to really improve the welfare of our forces unless we also look at expanding our Army. I am delighted that Liam has made his priority restoring those cuts to the Army, the three battalions that should never have been abolished by this Government.

But I think that the most important change that we need to make, the most important Conservative principal we need to apply to our foreign and defence policy, is to make sure that we are realistic and not utopian. Yes, we support freedom, yes we support democracy, yes we should try to punch above our weight in the world to achieve these things. But I think that if we have learnt anything over the last five years, it's that you cannot drop a fully formed democracy out of an aeroplane at 40,000 feet.

And I want people to know that if I am a Prime Minister in one month or one year, my top priority overseas would be Afghanistan. We are doing fantastic work in that country. Our troops are incredibly brave but my worry is that we could win the military campaign but start to lose the country. How can we win an insurgency when there are seven different military chains of command? How can we rebuild a country when we don't have one person coordinating the aid between the EU, NATO and the UN? How can we really help a people when the country is still so awash with drugs and has so much corruption? We really need to make this our number 1 priority. And I tell you why. If we get out of Afghanistan the Taliban come back into Afghanistan and Al Qaeda and that will mean danger and terrorism on British streets again.

We really need to make this our number 1 priority. And I tell you why. If we get out of Afghanistan the Taliban come back into Afghanistan and Al Qaeda will set up in

Afghanistan and that will mean danger and terrorism on British streets again.

But frankly there is no foreign policy and domestic policy any more. There ought to be National Security Policy. And I'm very proud of the fact that in our Shadow Cabinet is Pauline Neville-Jones who used to run the Joint-Intelligence Committee before the days of the dodgy dossier.

In those days civil servants felt that they could stand up for their integrity and tell Ministers when they got it wrong and that's what we need to happen again.

And when it comes to terrorism, again when the government gets it right we will support them. But I think that there are things that they are getting wrong.

They won't give us proper border controls but they long to give us ID cards. They trash important civil liberties like jury trial but they will keep the Human Rights Act that actually hinders our fight against terrorism.

And they talk about Britishness but they won't ban the group Hizb ut Tahrir and I think I quote it exactly "kill the Jews wherever you find them". We will do things differently.

We will give Britain a proper Border Police Force, and we will scrap the pointless ID cards. We will defend important civil liberties like jury trial but we will replace the Human Rights act.

And in a Conservative Britain Hizb ut Tahrir will be banned.

Those are all modern Conservative changes for this new world of insecurity. And when it comes to the new threats, we have to face them directly. New threats like terrorism, and new threats like climate change. It doesn't matter whether you look at the snows of Kilimanjaro, or the melting Greenland ice sheet, or the fact that closer to home the Thames barrier meant to be lifted once every six years, is now being lifted six times a year. This is a clear and present danger to our country. Some people say it is not popular to talk about green issues. I don't care. It's right and it falls to this generation to deal with this issue.

Some people say that there is nothing that we can do because China builds a power station every six weeks and what can we in Britain do? I think they have got it wrong. Look at what's happening in China. The Gobi desert expanding by 4,000 miles every year. A half of their river water not just not fit to drink but not fit to use for farming. Hundreds of thousands of people dying from air pollution every year. And how will we be able to encourage China to act unless we act here at home. And again the old politics is failing. Carbon emissions are up under this Government. Green taxes as a share of total taxes are down. And we are failing to give people proper incentives. This Party never wants to punish or hold back the aspirations of people who want to get on in life and have a good life. And what we must be in the Party of sensible, Green leadership, and that is exactly what we are going to stay.

But undoubtedly the biggest threat that people face in this country is the crime on their streets. Our Prime Minister has said that our society isn't broken but when you think of 20 children shot dead on the streets of London, when you think of gun crime doubled, violent crime doubled, a boy on a bike shooting Rhys Jones.....I wonder what society the Prime Minister is living in?

But let us resolve right here, that we will not pursue the old politics. No more Downing Street summits, get together a packet of measures for the 6 o'clock News, brief them out and then while everyone has reported them they never actually happen and everyone moves onto the next thing. That is not what this Party is going to do.

Yes we will make changes to the criminal justice system where necessary. How can it possibly be right that magistrates can only send someone to prison for a few weeks rather than a year? Yes we need to scrap that early release scheme in prisons; 24,000 released on our streets that David Davis spoke about yesterday. Yes we will take those steps. But as important, probably more important, is actually to reform the police. I went out on the beat the other day with a police officer in mid Wales. Really dedicated public servant who wanted to do the best for his community and he told me a story. He said a mother had come to him and said her son was nicking money out of her wallet. And he said "do you know how I had to handle it? I had to explain that I couldn't just give him a talking to because of all the targets, and the bureaucracy, and the paperwork. I have to take him down to the station, I have to go through all the paperwork, I've got to caution him, and then I can turn round and say I have detected a crime, I've cleared up a crime and I have solved a crime". Well what a ridiculous way to treat the police force.

So we will reform the police. We will cut out that paperwork, we will get rid of the performance assessments, get rid of the targets, make them look not up to the Home Office but instead to locally elected mayors or police commissioners so that they can be accountable to local people and we can have the beat-based, zero-tolerance policing that everyone wants to see in their community.

But as Iain Duncan Smith said in that great speech yesterday, action on criminal justice, and action on policing...those are just two of the dimensions we need. The third dimension in strengthening our society, strengthening families, strengthening communities. And there is one last thing I just want to mention. If you ask people of my parent's generation about National Service they tell you often that it was something that brought people together. It didn't matter whether you were from the North or the South or whether you were rich or poor. It was something we all did together and it was about serving our community and serving our country and we learnt responsibility. Now I am not about to suggest a return to National Service, sorry to disappoint you, but I do think this. I think the time has come for National Citizen Service where we say to 16 year old 'we have got a compelling programme that is about the transition from youth to adulthood, that's about your responsibilities in society, that is about community service, that will challenge you'. I launched this programme at Amir Khan's gym in Bolton. He is a fantastic man. He doesn't just want to be the best boxer in England or the best boxer in the

world, he's built a gym to bring people off the streets, to give them something to believe in. And I agree with him that this sort of National Citizen Service for 16 year olds can teach young people the self respect and the social responsibility that we really need to make our society stronger.

Well, that's it. That's what I believe. Giving people more power and control over their lives. Making society more responsible and families stronger. And making our country greener and safer.

I've told you what I believe, I've told you about the changes I want to make to our economy, to politics, to health, housing, education, the environment. And I've told you some of the ways how we would do it. I've talked a bit about labour. Not because they're bad people with bad intentions but because as I have said if we don't understand why they have failed we won't succeed. But I've said something else, it's about me. People want to know are you really up for it? Do you have what it takes? Are you tough enough and strong enough to make those decisions? And I answer unreservedly: yes. That is why I stood here two years ago, that is why I am standing here today. I can't give you some hard luck story. I'm the son of a magistrate and a stockbroker but the great privilege of my upbringing wasn't the wealth it was the warmth, it was the family. And yes I went to a fantastic school and I'm not embarrassed about that because I had a great education and I know what a great education means. And knowing what a great education means there is a better chance of getting it for all of our children which is absolutely what I want in this country.

Now, my mother the magistrate, she sat on the bench in Newbury. Because of the bypass protestors, she had to cope with the likes of Swampy, because of the Greenham Common protest she had to deal with all of those protests and she did because she believed in public service and so do I. And do you the greatest service that this party can do to our public today, it is to get out and fight for what we believe in and the changes we want to make. Because you know people in this country after 10 years of Labour really despair that they can get the sort of change they want. They don't believe it is possible any more and we've got to inspire them, we've got to say to them, it doesn't have to be like this. You don't have to put up with this, you can get it if you really want it, we can get a great NHS, if we make doctors answerable to patients and not to politicians. We can get great schools if we break open the state monopoly and allow new schools in and insist on high standards. We can get safer streets if we strengthen our families and get the police onto our streets, we can get it if we really want it. That's what we've got to do. So, Mr Brown, what's it going to be? Why don't you go ahead and call that election? Let the people pass judgement on 10 years of broken promises, let people decide who's really making the arguments about the future of our country. Let people decide who can make the changes that we really need in our country. Call that election. We will fight. Britain will win."