

PETER RIDDELL BOOK LAUNCH

Can I say a very warm word of welcome to the Institute of Government. Probably apart from giving the vote to inmates in prisons, there's no cause less popular at the moment than the cause of politicians and Peter Riddell who likes leaping to the defence of unpopular causes proposed to write a defence of politicians which became so unpopular with his former employer at the Times that he had to seek refuge here at the Institute for Government which is as you know a charity, so is able to take on very unpopular causes where we create a special post called The Defence of Politicians Senior Fellowship and Peter is filling it and has written this splendid book. We're delighted that we're able to launch it here this evening, but also delighted that one of the very few genuinely popular politicians, David Miliband, is able to be with us for this (00.42 unclear, overspeak). He may elaborate on that theme in a few minutes. David is going to leap to the defence of his profession once Peter has spoken, but in fact Peter doesn't, as you'll see from the sub title. It's a defence of politicians in spite of themselves. He has a lot of formal proposals and proposals as to how they can raise their game and he's going to summarise those first, David will respond, we've got a few minutes then for comments and questions and then we're going to have a party. Peter...

Thank you very much indeed Andrew for that introduction. I should reveal today that far from Andrew, he's often been accused of being unelected, he confessed to me of course his period as an elected politician, his four years with Oxford City Council, and his knowledge of planning there and this is a crucial insight which helped him in his future career. So we have someone who's been an elected politician to my left. Also, the other unpopular cause I'm very involved in, because the next time almost I'll be sitting here in a couple of weeks time, is a report which I've co-authored with two of my colleagues who are here too, on Ministers. So I'm prepared to deal with very unpopular people. First, just briefly I'd like to thank Biteback very much indeed, it's a wonderful publishing venture, one of the few which actually keeps political books alive nowadays and what has happened there has been really... kept the debate on politics, which had largely died out in book form but for its existence. I'd like to thank them and the whole team there. Now my thesis here is quite a simple one, in defence of politicians in spite of themselves. It's essentially, if we believe in representative politics, we need politicians. You can't damn politicians if you believe in the political process. The sub title of course indicates the qualification. I'm talking about politicians as a class, I'm not talking about every individual politician. Since in the period I'm writing the book, a number of MPs have gone to jail, a few more will and they deserve to and there are a number of people who are very fortunate in both Houses of Parliament, not to be following them to prison. And since the thesis is partly obvious that it's been increasingly difficult to operate as a politician. They're condemned as charlatans, in it for themselves, betraying their promises. Now in a sense you can say to a it was ever so, politicians have always been attacked, you just look back at Tiny Rowlands and the cartoons of over 200 years ago, they were hardly sympathetic to politicians, up to Steve Bell etc, Peter Brooks, my old colleague on The Times, who skewer politicians, that's absolutely true, but what I think has changed quite significantly is the tenor of the debate and attitude to politicians. We've always been questioning in Britain, but scepticism has turned to cynicism and the Internet has actually made it much worse. The Internet liberates people in draughty bedsits. It gives them equality and not just those who like to Twitter super injunctions, but more generally. It liberates and gives a voice to people whose voices are heard and to question politicians and if you look at the...not the main blogs but the commentators on those blogs and you see an attitude of both popularism and

extremism which would make impossible for the political process to continue. Now various themes like I have in this, partly, I'm not exonerating politicians, in fact it's their fault, not just the expenses scandal but also for the way they discuss issues, raise expectations. I then identify a number of challenges, populism and extreme partisanship. There's a tendency not to recognise the legitimacy of your opponents. When Gordon Brown was Prime Minister there was a gibe "he's an unelected Prime Minister". Well you make a political point about where he was but he was a perfectly legitimate Prime Minister under the British system. Equally in America, the Burthers, unfortunately I don't have hair quite like Donald Trump, but I've been trying, actually for about 60 years and have failed, is that Donald Trump's challenge to Barack Obama to question his legitimacy as President and it was something like nearly half the public identifies in the polls who doubted whether Barack Obama was a legitimate President because they doubted whether he'd been born in the US. Now that is the kind of perversion of the legal process, it was a clear cut election, Barack Obama was quite clearly elected, there was no serious evidence and we've now seen the revelation of the birth certificate, he wasn't President. Those views of your opponent is not legitimate to do it is corrosive to the political process and partisanship can be so extreme in the sense that people take the view that because someone won the election, it doesn't give them the right to push through their measures. Excessive expectations, the tendency to believe you can cure everything. I mean Labour was guilty of that before the '97 election when it had the slogan, so many days to save the NHS. The only thing, perhaps we can now discover, are very long term policies on the NHS. Gordon Brown was also at fault, end to boom and bust, one of the most stupid things imaginable to have said, only rivalled by his great claim that this was the longest period of sustained growth for 100 years in one budget, 200 years in the next budget and 300 years in the following budget. Since National Income Statistics were only devised in the 1940s, that was an interesting feat of historical imagination and of course he suffered enormously for those hubristic remarks. The other aspect of excessive expectation was the sense of everything's got to be an absolute, that the way politics is discussed and the way politicians often discuss it is we're always right, the other side are wrong. That's bound to lead to disappointment and disappointed expectations. The truth of politics is we can't (5.47 unclear) and we need to regard politicians as people who are going to provide answers at the margin but not total answers. There also is the threat to depoliticisation, taking issues out of politics. There's a wonderful element of hypocrisy there in the way political debate is portrayed. We like people who don't present themselves as politicians but at the same time, we don't recognise, they're a perfectly legitimate different views and you can't depoliticise everything because there are legitimate differences in that way. I also look at the role of Parliament, which I'm going to come back to, and constitutional reform. There are people who argue, if only we had a combination of elected second chamber, electoral reform, perhaps less strongly since last Thursday, a code of high constitution with the judges dealing with it, a federal Britain, everything would be perfect. Well one, if you look at countries which have that combination of constitutional changes, they don't seem any happier with their politicians than we are here. There are no panaceas, there are no automatic solutions that way. The media I criticise, I have a slightly autobiographic chapter there, including one or two remarks about James and Rupert Murdoch from my years working there. There's a tendency again to treat things in absolutes, you treat every policy change as a U turn and we may see this on the Health Service over the next couple of months, that when the Government modifies the Health Service policy, immediately people will jump up and down and say U-turn, when in fact what they're doing is responding to what the public say and want. Just finally, what could happen? I think there's a great illusion of talking about trust. We haven't really ever trusted our politicians and there was a period perhaps in the 40s and 50s when trust might have been a higher level because of the way the war was handled and the post

war generation, there was also a deferential in relation to politics, but that was in fact an illusion. We never really trusted them, we've been sceptical about them. What I think we can do is talk about effectiveness of politicians and what I argue in the last chapter of the book is various ways, some behavioural, some structural in which politicians can try and demonstrate to us that they're doing a job for us, because I don't think there's any easy way of saying, we're suddenly going to trust them again. I don't believe that will happen. I think we can, if politics is done in a different way, in a more measured way, a less extreme way, it is possible for people to say, yeah, I understand what politics is about, I have various individual suggestions both collectively for Parliament, for example a number of people in this room, Christopher Foster (7.58 unclear) Government initiative, much in the way legislation is considered. That would be an improvement compared with in the past. Also there are individual aspects to it. I believe that individual MPs need to connect much more with their constituents, not in a plebiscitary way, but for example doing annual reports for their constituents on what they've done. Also I strongly believe that issues should be able to be raised by constituents which are put on the agenda of Parliament, with Parliament having the final say. None of these will transform their position, but we are on a very destructive path I believe if we carry on now, we don't give space for political debate to happen. The key is space, it is having the realistic expectation about what politics is about rather than believing suddenly everything is going to be improved. That's the way of dictatorship, disillusionment and cynicism. Thank you Andrew.

Thanks very much. David...

Thank you very much...

And thank you David for coming.

A pleasure to be here, I've got a bit of time on my hands, so happy to come and do this. I think that...I thought this was a drinks party and I was going to make a few remarks, so I'll...

It is, you've got water.

The first thing I want to say actually is something about Andrew and something about Peter. I think Andrew is not just a good friend, he was an outstanding colleague and I want to pick one particular aspect of the work that we did together, which, I don't know how many of you read the little piece by Christopher Caldwell in the Financial Times on Saturday, but he reflected on a fact that to an intellectual and to be a politician were an impossible combination. I think one of the remarkable things about Andrew is that he combines being an intellectual and a politician with brilliance at both. The Caldwell thesis points to Michael Ignatieff who managed the remarkable feat of not just losing an election and losing half the seats of his colleagues, but also losing his own seat in a Canadian General Election. And the Caldwell thesis is that to be an intellectual is by definition to being an elitist and, and being an elitist is to be out of touch, to be out of touch is to be asking for trouble. I think Andrew disproves that and his round Britain railway tour as the Transport Minister, spoke to his political skills as well as his passion for the subject and so one reason I'm here, I wanted to say nice things about Andrew. The second reason is that I wanted to say a couple of nice things about Peter, because he is a serious and engaged and public spirited journalist and has been a journalist of real distinction. He is far too reasonable to be an effective politician. His book deals with his...the demon he's trying to slay is Peter Osborne's book about the political class and the worst that Peter can bring himself to say about Peter Osborne's book is that it involves 10 to 20 per cent exaggeration

which in Peter's book is an absolutely damning indictment but I think speaks to his reasonableness. He's also a brave man because he used his podium on The Times, to promote a pro-European perspective, not an easy perch from which to do so and he did it without fear or favour for 15 years and I think that is important to recognise as well. His bravery doesn't yet extend to writing a book in defence of journalists but I look forward to the sequel to this book. I was just going to say three things really about politics rather than about politicians because although Peter refers in his book to Bernard Crick's In Defence of Politics, the distinction between a defence of politics and a defence of politicians is not exactly the same thing and part of Bernard Crick's book in the 60s I guess it was...

Yeah, it's nearly 50 years ago.

...Andrew lent me Gill Russell's copy of it, and I just thought I would say three things about politics really. The first is that obviously in the Miliband household, in our house, politics was an important part of our lives but I was reflecting...I just wanted to say something that is perhaps slightly surprising, I was reflecting who was the first politician I met and the first politician I met was Edward Boyle, Lord Boyle, who was a Conservative cabinet minister in the 1950s, 1959/64 government, he was the education minister and he became disenchanted with the Tories and became Vice Chancellor of Leeds University and was instrumental in hiring my dad to be the Professor of Politics at Leeds University. His rationale he told me later was, if you had to have a Marxist you might as well have one that was an intelligent and a good Marxist to teach in a university, but what was interesting to me was that my dad always defended Edward Boyle as being a serious politician as well as being a serious opponent and I just want to draw out a couple of aspects of why politics as opposed to politicians, politics involves a respect for your opponents and an engagement with your opponents using my dad's own history, because he was, he decided not to become a politician in the 1950s, which I think allowed him to reserve more purity in his views, but he, his inaugural electorate at Leeds University in the 1970s was called Teaching Politics in an Age of Crisis. You'll be relieved to hear I didn't read it at the age of eight when he delivered it, still less go and listen to it, but when I went back to it some years later at the heart of his argument was that politics in an age of crisis, he said especially if you were a Marxist, involved the most passionate exposition of the views of Burke and others who were on the opposite side of the political spectrum and it was quite moving for me to read that argument about how to (12.09 unclear) politics because it spoke to...it didn't deny partisanship, and one thing I wanted to say, I want to defend partisanship later, because politics without partisanship is just waffle really. Politics without partisanship has no meaning because without partisanship there's no difference as to how you would run your society. But the respect for those of alternative views is something that he talked about a lot and when I first started working for the IPPR in the late 80s early 90s, I got a demonstration of this, because I received an invitation to write for the Institute of Economic Affairs, specifically from Keith Joseph personally and Keith Joseph said, I'd really like to meet you because – and my dad was still alive at the time – because in the 1970s I used to have, furious, but respectful debates with your dad, because of course Keith Joseph was a Leeds MP and I arrived at this lunch – it's called...

North Street.

...North Street, but there's a name of the IEA house and there was Keith Joseph and three or four of his people standing outside, it was like a very odd job interview, but it was all about trying to understand how I could be so misguided to have ended up on the left of the political spectrum – I'm not sure my dad would have seen me as left of the political spectrum – but I think that's an important thing to reflect on, that politics

at its best is about engaging with the high point of what your opponents think, not the low point and the point I want to make to you is, that is not an intellectual point. Labour only started winning elections when it engaged with the high point of what the Tories were saying rather than the low point. The Tories only beat us when they engaged seriously – we could say they copied some of what we did but that’s a different argument – they engaged seriously with what we were arguing. So I think to say that politics are about respect for your opponents is not just a piece of sort of blather, it’s a piece of good political advice because generally parties that don’t take their opponents seriously lose. The second point I just wanted to make is that Peter’s... I think it’s impossible to discuss Peter’s book without reflecting on the fact that trust and engagement with politics in Western societies is at a low ebb, at a time when engagement with politics in the Arab world, the one major region of the world that hasn’t experienced politics, leave aside China as a country not a region, the Middle East has been the part of the world where the waters of politics have been held back by the dam of dictatorship, suddenly you’ve got this flowering of politics of a quite extraordinary kind. It is striking if you think about it. In the 1970s a third of the world more or less was governed by democratic structures and by the end of the 1990s, after the end of the Cold War, after the collapse of the Latin American dictatorships, according to Freedom House, about 65/66 per cent of the world was governed by democratic systems. The Middle East and China were the outliers and there were two things that struck me – well there are many things – but two things that struck me about the Arab uprisings, revolts I suppose they are, and it’s not clear to me whether they represent a sort of 1848 shifting of the elites or a much more fundamental transformation, but I think it is striking that no-one predicted them but if we’d had a seminar here in December and listed the factors of Egyptian social and economic structure, we’d have said, politics is bound to strike out in this educated, impoverished, rundown, collectocratic corrupt country and that the contrast between the disengagement that Peter reflects on in Western societies and the engagement you see in the Middle East, is worth thinking about. Bernard Crick in the Defence of Politics that I referred to earlier says that politics, ‘is a way of ruling divided societies without undue violence’, which is quite a modest definition of what politics is about. But if you think about the choice that millions of people made across the Arab world, which was essentially to embrace reasonably peaceful revolutionary politics rather than violent politics, as proved by Bin Laden and others, that’s a pretty profound statement about a significant part of the world and I would say, and this really leads me to this point about partisanship really, because I know what Peter means, it’s stupid to believe that just because someone’s in another party that they’re necessarily stupid or that your own party’s got a monopoly on wisdom, but I honestly don’t really understand...I struggle with this argument, you hear it a lot in America, that in the modern age politics have become so partisan that’s why people have been put off it and Peter I think said – I hope he doesn’t mind me picking it out – but just now he said, he talked about, you know the dangers of extremism. Sometimes extremism is devised as anything that exists outside the letters L to K in the alphabet. You’ve got to be careful with what ... the sociologist Philip Reeve talked about the narcissism of small differences, beware the narcissism of small differences and I think the danger at the moment far from their being extremism in politics, I think that there’s a narcissism about some of the small differences that are sometimes exaggerated into massive differences in Western politics. The danger at the moment is that the right has a clear ideology but the left doesn’t and I think if you’re in the US, that is a very significant feature of the political scene, but the right knows what it’s about and the centre left is trying to figure out what’s about, successfully in North America under President Obama, less successfully in the six main countries who are governed by the centre right. A third point I just wanted to reflect on briefly is whether or not political reform is a diversion from the economic and social questions that countries like ours face or if political reform is an essential part of economic and

social reform. At one level Peter makes a very, very important point, that whether you have elections for everything as they do in America or an unelected House of Lords in the UK these institutions can be held in pretty low esteem and systemic answers can't be all the answers. That's a good point, but I think it is very, very important that we don't learn the wrong lessons of the AV referendum last week. (unclear) having said things publicly about this last year and last year I said if we wanted to find a time and a place and a circumstance to ensure the defeat of an AV referendum, you'd have chosen to have it on Thursday 5 May after one year of the Tory/Liberal coalition government. What I don't understand is why the Lib Dems never understood this. To hear Vince Cable on Saturday in his interview, I try not to listen to the Today programme anymore but I did listen on Saturday and he said, you know it's terrible (17.05 unclear) Conservatives are ruthless and calculating and, well it's really we're going to have to operate a different way and I was...I felt like saying they are serious grown up politicians in the Tory party who believe that they've got the best answers (17.16 unclear) country and are absolutely determined to hold on to power for as long as possible and the fact it's taken you a year to figure that out is really pretty worrying. No wonder you've got raped and pillaged in the coalition negotiation. But I think the wrong lesson to take, certainly from my side of politics, would be to conclude that political reform is just something for the middle classes, political reform is a diversion from "bread and butter issues" etc, etc. I think that would lead us into a bad position on the House of Lords reform. I'm under no illusions that there's any return of debate about electoral reform for the Commons. One of my complaints to the Lib Dem MPs has been that you can't devise an effective system for elections for the House of Commons without having clarity about what you want from the House of Lords, because you have to see our Parliament as a whole, not just one part of it completely separate from another part of it. But my own view is that if you're on the progressive side of politics, political reform has got to be an essential part of your economic and social project, because I think that representing a constituency in the North East of England, there's absolutely no question in my mind that part of our economic and social difficulties reflects our lack of political power. Now a regional assembly was not going to answer that, I don't think AV would have been the answer to all of our problems either, but the sense that our towns and cities are underpowered reflects a political malaise that is key to getting over the economic and social difficulties that constituencies like mine face and I suppose the question that is left hanging by Peter's book is, what are politicians for, if I move from thinking about politics to politicians and they're ideologists, they're legislators, they're governors or executors of government policy, but one I think very underestimated part of the role of politicians is to be educators. The most worrying statistic I've seen recently is that 47 per cent of Americans think that the Chinese have a bigger economy than they do and anyone who's spent time recently in the US will I think struggle not to notice that it's a country, certainly I was in Boston for a couple of weeks and then I was in DC for three days just before Bin Laden was killed, it was a country asking fundamental questions about itself, are we still a special country, what's our role in the world, it wasn't a confident superpower that wants to bear the burdens of superpowerdom. One part of that is that it's got a very, very inflated view of how the Chinese are breathing down their neck. I mean American GDP per head, which is admittedly a different figure, is ten times that of the Chinese level. Now, what does that tell you? It doesn't tell me that Americans are legislating wrong, but there's a big gulf, there's an education gulf to be filled and I think that one of the historic opportunities that President Obama has is to be the educator in chief not just the Commander in Chief. He has the global vision to actually explain to his own people the new world that they're living in and it's a world with challenges for a country like America but it's a world of opportunities too. In that sense, as a concluding remark, politics and politicians reflect their societies, political leadership changes societies and in a way, buried in Peter's book is that distinction that some of

the cynicism that he reflects, some of the short termism that he alludes to, some of the obsession with PR, with public relations, not proportional representation that he talks about reflect wider society. The difference between politics and political leadership is that political leadership is the project of changing that society and I think that you won't change politics unless you also change society, because they reflect each other and that's why politics has enduring and fascinating content.

Well David, that was a brilliant exposition following Peter's brilliant opening. Who'd like to pitch in, we have quite a number of politicians. We have civil servants, we have academics, we have the full spectrum of those people who you're talking about represented in the room. Who'd like to pitch in first? Since we have some politicians who I know can't keep silent, I may just pick on them in a moment if they don't show signs of coming forward. I see Malcolm Wicks in the corner there. I see Nick Raynsford...Nick would you like to make an opening comment?

(20.50 unclear) which quite rightly Peter you've criticised but there was still nevertheless a strong element of truth that compared with the period when I entered politics at the moment we see a professionalization of people, many of whom have a similar background, have very little outside experience and that homogenisation of the political process is, I think, potentially damaging and reinforces many of the problems that you've identified. Isn't there an element of truth, however much we may disagree with the Osborne thesis, in that particular observation?

Shall we take a few then (21.26 unclear) like Peter and David to respond. Malcolm, would you...as I'm going around the room picking on people, would you like to ...

Yeah, a couple of points really. I mean not to contradict the thesis about the demise of whatever, respect for politicians, but nevertheless I think one can draw a distinction between if you ask in an opinion poll, what do you think of politicians, people say they're rubbish, although I sometimes think about that question ethnologically, it would be a bit like saying to football fans in North London, what do you think of football teams? I mean it's a bit of a silly question because they're either going to support Arsenal or Tottenham, the same with politicians. But I think there is a contrast between that general cynicism and what you actually I think find in the constituencies where I think MPs of most colours would say, by and large, people want to come and see you and get your advice, you're very welcome at schools and bazaars and cultural evenings, and there's actually more respect I think for the MP in the constituency I think than the general thesis of cynicism would warrant. The other question I wanted to ask is this, I mean notwithstanding that we're in the age of Twitter and blogs and for the interested person there's all sorts of ways of following politics, but for, as it were ordinary folks, if I can put it like that, not too pejoratively, how now would you find what was going on in Parliament if you just read a newspaper every day and with respect to people sitting near me, watched BBC or ITV? You'd hear about the big clashes, the controversies but any sort of reportage of what was actually happening that day in Parliament, you'd have to search very much for it. I just left a debate on an energy bill and very serious politicians on both sides were discussing the green deal and you know, one level very boring, but at one level very important, where would you hear that reported in mainstream media? How does that ordinary elector, as it were, find out about Parliament?

Two very good contributions and practitioners. We have Jonathan Powell in the second row, one of the last book launches we did in this room was Jonathan's *The New Machiavelli*, that is not I think necessarily engaging at the high points of politics... Machiavelli often engages in the low point. Jonathan, what's your view?

Do you think that coalition governments, particularly if we had more than one of them, will make politicians even less popular? And does the result of the AV referendum indicate the obsession of the political class with constitutional reform one of the reasons why they're so unpopular because they're completely out of touch with what people really care about, not constitutional reform or the reform of the House of Lords?

How do we get rounded politicians, how can people engage with the work of Parliament now that the newspapers are so bad at reporting it and what is the coalition doing to the reputation of this profession?

In reverse order. I think the interesting point about last week's vote, or rather the campaign that preceded it, which I regard as almost as important as the outcome, was the view of coalitions as politics. The expectation, which was explicit in the No Campaign towards the end, particularly when the rhetoric was ratcheted up, was this is a temporary, rather unpleasant necessity, very different from the way if we did have a different system or if we had a succession of hung parliaments that people would have to get together and it was almost, oh well, this is unfortunate we have to get together and we'd rather not do it. I mean, as has been shown in some of the Tory right reaction to the result of the AV referendum, but the underlying thing was this is a regrettable necessity and I think that was one of the things that struck me about the debate. But also, implicit in that, is all the language of betrayal. Now, Nick Clegg and the Lib Dems were idiots before the election to do that pledge on tuition fees. Anyone who thought, as the Lib Dems have always said, we want to be in partnership in government, then to make a pledge which would have bound to be dropped when it went into government, I mean it was completely mad. It showed that oddly enough they're more interested in the processes of powers than the realities of it, (24.43 unclear) a lesson they learnt and a very painful one. They also said something about politics and assumption of politics. We're still operating a majoritarian mindset that therefore the word betrayal is there and rules out compromise on that. On Malcolm's point, I think...I mean on your point about discrepancy on polls between individual politicians and politicians in parliament generally, absolutely, but there's also a trap there because what strikes me from my ex-journalist days is that the incentives for you all are to be very good constituency welfare officers. That's very, very important, discretionary, welfare state, the housing problem a lot of you have in your own constituency, immigration problems, that's very important. Because Parliament itself is held in low esteem, there are fewer incentive for you to be effective at Westminster. All the incentives at present in esteem and response are for you to represent your constituents. Very important role. There are many fewer incentives for you to do what you've done over the years in relation to Parliament as an institution, because you don't get any publicity for it, no-one thinks you're effective on that. On reporting, I would differ. It's certainly true that mainstream media, although I do wake up in the morning, every morning to listen to what's happened in Parliament the previous day, so you know, I woke up this morning to Andrew Lansley's voice. Now, are there any psychologists here? But, the BBC does do its bit on that. More to the point is the Internet. Actually many more people now follow and can follow what happens in Parliament thanks to the Internet. Not just what you read on the sites, but on the Parliament site itself. Within three hours you can read it and actually I'm not so sceptic on that. On Nick's point about the rounded politician, yes, there is a danger there but I think it can be overdone a bit on that. Funnily enough, Andrew and I were talking about the rise of the ex-special advisor. What's interesting about that is their prominence, not their number. Yes, there's some very prominent former special advisors, like David and others who became very important people, but there weren't that many of them curiously and we can exaggerate it by their prominence, the same's true of David

Cameron and George Osborne now. I think there is a problem there and it's partly through selection processes. One of the things I think I mention in the book is the dilemma of Sarah Wollaston, that there she was, selecting the primary in Totnes by all...it was open to all the voters. I very much doubt if the Tory Whips now are terribly keen on repeating that, given the attitude she's taken to the NHS bill and the fact she's proving to be rather spikey and rather individual. Yet I should think down in Totnes she's going down rather well. I think there are real dilemmas there on constituency selection and so on.

Very briefly, I think first of all the parties are in even greater crisis than Parliament and that speaks to Nick's point. I think that the parties have been left miles behind. What's happened to Parliament as well as the expenses scandal in terms of opening them up and turning them outwards, hasn't happened properly to the political parties. One of the things I'm spending part of my time on is a leadership academy (27.20 unclear) to turn the Labour Party outwards, because I think that we've got to become a very, we've got to become a (27.27 unclear) that is a very different, in a way it's going back to our roots, it's a very different kind of project. Secondly, look, I think there's a huge (27.31 unclear) voters going on here. The reason people use the word betrayal about the Lib Dems is that they feel they were told one thing one day and then told the opposite the next day. If the Lib Dems had come out and said, look, tuition fees is the price we're paying for this coalition and we think it's in the broader national interest that we do it, that would have been one thing. They've suddenly become the most zealous advocates of the tuition fees policies they've now got. They ran to the left of Labour and then went into coalition with the Tories. That's why they're in trouble. And the voters aren't stupid to say, hang on, that wasn't what we were sold. So I think that there is a grave danger in this general bemoaning of the situation that we underestimate the voter's ability to penetrate a lot of the superficial discussion and get to the main point. The truth is, the next election is much more likely to be a traditional two party contest than any election for quite a long time. Not because people hate coalition, but because they feel that their vote for the Lib Dems didn't deliver what they wanted and so you're going to see a strengthening of the two main parties. I see that personally as a bit of a blip, I don't think that is a permanent 30 year trend, but I think we're going to see, I think it would be a brave person now who would put money on the Lib Dems getting more votes at the next election than they got at the last one. It seems to be much more likely you're going to see, at least in the short term, the two main...a traditional left, right, Labour, Tory contest. The final point, I've said to a lot of our new MPs that Parliament is actually a place they'll make their name. For all the talk about Parliament not being the place that it used to be, if you pick a devastating intervention on a government minister when he's making a speech, if you make a speech of your own that commands the interest, even if it's a relatively small number of colleagues, you will actually do quite a lot for your own reputation that will percolate out fast. The fastest way to get reported what you're doing outside Parliament is for your colleagues inside Parliament to be saying to journalists, keep your eye on Joe or Josephine Bloggs, they've really got their heads screwed on, they know what they're doing they've just embarrassed Osborne or Cameron, or whatever with a really good intervention, you'll suddenly find Joe or Josephine Bloggs when they're doing an article or something else, you'll get a bit of interest. And I think the smart MPs realise that.

Pete?

I'll take one more round and then I think we'll adjourn for the party.

David needs a lawyer, poet and (29.15 unclear) cultural leadership at (29.14 unclear) University. I've a question for David and a question for Peter. Question for you David is, how do you preserve your passion for politics serving the people in the face of devastating disappointment in politics in your career and for Peter...

(29.35 unclear) question.

...yes...and...that's for David, I suppose it goes to the first point of your three points that is about engaging with your opponents in a very real way on the high points, so it's a preservation of passion because it can be quite demoralising, so...that's the question for you. And for you Peter, if it is true that you're speaking the loudest on behalf of politicians as a journalist and so far we haven't seen the capability on the politician's part to speak for themselves, in defence of themselves, despite themselves, what does it say about themselves? What does it say about the state of politicians and politics in this country?

Anyone that's got any tougher questions than those ones... I see Will at the back.

Thanks, this is an easy one. What... do the panel think that MPs are underpaid and if so, how long will it take to resolve that?

Well that one of course solicits an honest answer from our panel too. And at the back?

Hi, Steve Blinfield at Monical Magazine, I wanted to ask about mayors, which I think partly touches on what David said about the disconnection people feel between themselves and what's actually happening in their communities. The magazine I work for, we do a lot of stuff on cities and looking at who's changing cities and often it's a dynamic mayor, whether that's Cory Booker in Newark or whether that's a guy in Mogadishu who's trying to sort out that city and I just wondered what you thought on the experiment so far with mayors and whether you think that that could help other cities and politics in general?

And Gill to complete the questions or comments and then we'll go back to Peter and David.

I just want to ask a question, mainly directed at David, not just as retribution for (31.35 unclear) in my book, but it's quite interesting what you were saying about partisanship and I wondered how far you saw partisanship and the importance of that in the political process mitigating against successful and durable policy. One of the things we've been doing here is running a series of policy success reunions and one of the features of some of the really long term reforms is how they've sort of gone beyond conventional party politics, either by reaching outwards, mobilising lots of groups or actually using techniques like, we look at AdairTurner's commission to actually depoliticise issues and do things and then bring them back in and I wondered whether there is a tension between politics and very successful policy, and our first one of course was the Climate Change Act, which was like a David Miliband tribute fest for anyone who wants to read it.

I can't say I've been invited to any of these ...

But then again that was partly because of the reaction to David Cameron making that, running with the Friends of the Earth campaign and actually using that in reaction to moving sort of more of a bi-partisan position, a bit of a political competition there.

Well David, are you underpaid, are you devastated, do you think you should be reaching out more effectively to civil society, because (32.45 unclear, overspeak)?

Well one of the things you learn in politics is it's always better to have three or four questions because you can navigate your way around the difficult ones while people try and figure out which one you're answering. Look, the truth is that bi-partisanship comes through where a policy is either political or policy commonsense, so either, for political reasons a party can no longer oppose it, or because it's actually the sensible thing to do. The beset case is both. The Tory opposition to the minimum wage, in the end willed because it would have been stupid for them to oppose it, it was voted by political analysts, political scientists the most successful policy of, I can't remember, 100 years or something, but it also turned out that their argument it was going to cost two million jobs, turned out not to be true. Now, the truth the art of partisanship is to choose the ground and to make sure that the differences that you have and debate are on issues of substance and take on the high ground. On...what was your question on there, I don't understand what...

I think it was in favour.

That's not a question.

(33.39 unclear voice from back without microphone)

All other things being equal, yes because theAndrew and I know who the leader of Birmingham City Council is, if he's not a big name in Britain he's not going to be a big name in the global debate where Birmingham should be playing its role, which at least to be fair to him, has become a national figure in British politics, the leader of Manchester City Council, he's not an elected mayor, so you don't have to be an elected mayor but he's had durability and he's had some pretty bold policy experimentation. But if you're saying, do we need to be more accountable, more clarity, more leadership of our cities, I think all those things being equal that's a good thing. I mean I've taken that absolute vow never to discuss or to opine on MPs' pay. There are people I know who were at university with me, as it happens on the Tory side, who have decided not...who have ended up, who didn't want to become Tory MPs in the '90s because they thought they were going to lose, and now don't want to become Tory MPs because they're well paid and don't want to go on £66,000. Equally, £66,000 is three times the wage, the average wage of my constituency. So, it would be stupid of me to....the best answer actually is we're the last people who should be opining on our pay. The answer to the first question is actually an easy one, which is that we should never do anything in life if you think it's the end of the world if you don't succeed. You've got to feel...if you're going to go into any race you've got to be...come to terms in your own mind of the fact that you might lose and if you...it's something you should learn as a child. As a child you can cry your eyes out if you lose at football or you're not made the team captain, but you learn in life that actually you work like hell to win but unless you're reconciled to the prospect that you might not, you shouldn't start the race, and the truth is, you've got to approach (35.13 unclear) elections like much else that, you win if you win but you're going to make it a win if you don't win. Sometimes it's rather more difficult to do that and you know, it's challenging, but I think that's the best answer. How you then make your contribution is something you then figure out, if you're passionate about politics, you've got to then figure out how you make your contribution because you're not going to make it in the way that you wanted to. I think that's the best answer. There's one other thing which I want to get in, in defence of politician's families is a very important book. I hope you'll excuse me if at the end of these remarks I don't

stay for your party, because I've promised my family I'm going to get there before my kids go to bed, so excuses from me for ducking out after the formal proceedings.

Oh David, I'll come back to thank you. Just on those points, on the question you asked about politicians standing up for themselves, it's actually very kin to David's answer about pay. It's actually a measure of the thesis I've got that it's so difficult for them to do so. I had no end of politicians said to me about the book, it needed saying you've been brave you've been courageous, rather than the Sir Humphrey like way, we can't sell it and it's exactly the same point on pay and I think there's a real problem there of politicians getting up and saying, we're doing a reasonable job and I think the expenses scandal made that so much more difficult to get through it because a lot of people were in morally flawed positions, even if they weren't crooks. Some of the crooks are going to jail, a lot of them have been forced out of Parliament, they are people who accepted a morally flawed position, so it's very difficult to do so. Ultimately, the only way it's going to work is if people just stand up and say no, this is what I'm doing, but it also means adjusting their own behaviour and I think that's a very fair point behind your question, that I've done it....

(36.42 unclear voice from back of room, no microphone)

I'd agree with that entirely, every possible way has been done, it's now in theory going to be referred to IPS, (36.57 unclear) survives the vote on Thursday in the House and so on and so forth. Ultimately, I think it has to be done from something outside which has authority and respect, the problem is (37.08 unclear) doesn't and IPS is now going to find itself either popular with the MPs for what it says on pay and unpopular with the public or some way round. I mean there's no easy answer to it. My view is yes, MPs should be paid more, and one of the main reasons behind the expenses thing was a classic incomes policy saying, income policy imposed by wealthy people like Margaret Thatcher et al, or puritans like Gordon Brown and not recognising the recent economic demands and a lot of the expenses row arose out of.... On mayors, I totally, totally pass on to the concluding remarks Andrew will make on that but the answer is yes. On Gill...coming back to partisanship, I might just finally...I believe in partisanship, but it's a partisanship within a context which recognises, going back to your father, the legitimacy of the other persons point of view. My worry is excessive partisanship which doesn't recognise the legitimacy of the other person's point of view and indeed, one of my worries is the reaction against some of the excesses of partisanship has been this desire to take the politics out of issues. I think on the whole that's absolutely wrong. Some issues technically you can take the politics out of, it would be desirable to do so, but some of the enthusiasm over the last 15 years we can get (38.15 unclear) mean and women to determine things is actually wrong, because there are absolutely different interests to do it. Yes you can get expert advisors to do things, but ultimately there are disagreements. I mean classic examples we've seen recently. Tuition fees, pensions. I mean Gill's point on Adair Turner and so on is right, but you've got to reconcile different interests. I mean, my interests are not necessarily the same as someone aged 15 on pensions or for tuition fees for that matter. We're in different interests and that's what politics is just to reconcile. But, yes you should get expert advice, but that's within the context of recognising the other persons point of view on that and I think that's where I'm worried about excessive partisanship and I take your L to K point, I really feel that people who reject L and reject K as being illegitimate, that's a problem and certainly in the States it's quite a big problem. Andrew.

Thank you very much. The ITs have been doing a lot of work on theirs and on their websites, we've got a lot of material, I've been turning myself into a bit of a single issue campaigner on the subject and rather hoping that the referendums that are

going to take place on whether elected mayors should be established in the 12 largest English cities outside London next May, that these are at a rather higher level of debate than we had last Thursday and produce more positive results. Just two concluding comments, you have in this room F W de Klerk and Nelson Mandela and Martin McGuinness and Ian Paisley, I don't think you could have a better encapsulation of the purpose and reason for democratic politics and politicians than that and if it's possible to heal those two conflicts in those two societies then on David's point about the higher purpose and the moral purpose of politics, it is possible to achieve almost everything, fortunately, not that Northern Ireland is settled as an issue, we don't have to grapple with these life and death issues in our society but from time to time we do. We have the more limited task of how we make it better and all I can say, having listened to David Miliband this evening, if you want an exhibition of a politician who has the capacity to act as an educator, a representative but also a leader, David exemplified it this evening and we all know that his own political career has a long way to go from here and we hope it involves being a leader and not simply being an educator. Thank you very much both Peter and David.

END.