

PRIME MINISTER'S ADDRESS TO CONSERVATIVE PARTY MEMBERS ON THE GOVERNMENT'S IMMIGRATION POLICY

The following extract is a transcript from an address delivered by the British Prime Minister David Cameron to influential members of the Conservative Party in April 2011.

A year ago, we were in the middle of a general election campaign. And there was one message I heard loud and clear on the doorstep: we want things to be different. People said they wanted a government that didn't just do what was good for the headline or good for their party but good
5 for the long term and good for our country, That's what we're engaged in.
[...]

Now, immigration is a hugely emotive subject ... and it's a debate in the past too often shaped by assertions rather than substantive arguments. We've all heard them. The assertion that mass immigration is an
10 unalloyed good and that controlling it is economic madness ... the view that Britain is a soft touch and that immigrants are out to take whatever they can get. I believe the role of politicians is to cut through the extremes of this debate and approach the subject sensibly and reasonably. [...]

Above all, I want to get the policy right: good immigration, not mass
15 immigration. That's why I believe it's time for a new approach – one which opens up debate, not closes it down; where politicians don't just talk, but actually act.

Let's start with being open. The British people are fair-minded – and I want them to feel they can be honest about what they think about this
20 subject. Here's what I think. Our country has benefited immeasurably from immigration. Go into any hospital and you'll find people from Uganda, India and Pakistan who are caring for our sick and vulnerable. Go into schools and universities and you'll find teachers from all over the world, inspiring our young people. Go to almost any high street in the
25 country and you'll find entrepreneurs from overseas who are not just adding to the local economy but playing a part in local life. Charities, financial services, fashion, food, music – all these sectors are what they are because of immigration. So yes, immigrants make a huge contribution to Britain. We recognise that – and we welcome it.

30 But I'm also clear about something else: for too long, immigration has

been too high. Between 1997 and 2009, 2.2 million more people came to live in this country than left to live abroad. That's the largest influx of people Britain has ever had ... and it has placed real pressures on communities up and down the country. Not just pressures on schools,
 35 housing and healthcare – though those have been serious ... but social pressures too. Because real communities aren't just collections of public service users living in the same space.

Real communities are bound by common experiences ... forged by friendship and conversation ... knitted together by all the rituals of
 40 neighbourhood, from the school run to the chat down the pub. And these bounds can take time. So real integration takes time.

That's why, when there have been significant numbers of new people arriving in neighbourhoods ... perhaps not able to speak the same language as those living there ... on occasions not really wanting or even
 45 willing to integrate ... that has created a kind of discomfort and disjointedness in some neighbourhoods.

This has been the experience for many people in our country – and I believe it is untruthful and unfair to not speak about it and address it.

So, taking all this into account, I believe controlling immigration and
 50 bringing it down is of vital importance for the future of our country.

Source:

Prime Minister's address to Conservative party members on the government's immigration policy in: The Guardian, 14 April 2011.

Annotations:

- l. 11 *soft touch: here* a person from whom you can easily obtain money
- l. 40 *down the pub: informal* at the pub