

POWER Inquiry Witness Session – Glasgow

**Witness Session
10am-4pm, 28 January 2005**

**Centre for Contemporary Arts
350 Sauchiehall Street, Glasgow, G2 3JD**

People least likely to vote

Witnesses:

Audrey Bronstein – Director, Oxfam UK Poverty Programme
Raji Hunjan – Co-Director, Carnegie Young People Initiative
Professor Shamit Saggar – Sussex University & Yale University

Abbreviations

AM	Audience Member [individual names indicated]	
BF	Ben Freeman	Commissioner
BM	Bano Murtuja	Commissioner
EB	Emma B	Commissioner
FM	Ferdinand Mount	Commissioner
HK	Helena Kennedy	Commissioner
PC	Phil Carey	Commissioner
PB	Paul Boakye	Commissioner
AB	Audrey Bronstein	Witness
RH	Raji Hunjan	Witness
SS	Shamit Saggar	Witness

HK: Welcome to the newcomers and to remind everyone that we're really looking at sustaining a British democracy, the lack of political engagement and how that might be changed.

We have a new panel this afternoon of witnesses to the Commission: Audrey Bronstein, who's the Director of Oxfam UK Poverty Programme; we have Raji Hunjan who is a Co-Director of the Carnegie Young People's Initiative; and Professor Shamit Saggar who as I mentioned this morning is a Professor but was an advisor, a policy advisor, at Downing Street and is a Professor of Politics at Sussex and Yale.

So I want to thank our witnesses for attending this afternoon and can I ask you Ben to kick off perhaps with some questions for our panel.

BF: Okay. We're concerned about the fact that people are obviously becoming less and less politically engaged, but it's the socially deprived and young people as well who are even less politically engaged. We're trying to come up with ideas and answers to understand what can be done, what prevents people, the least politically engaged from becoming more involved and any ideas as to try and progress that really would be appreciated.

RH: Well when I think about that question I suppose I have to start with some really obvious things which I know as Commissioners you probably have thought of – which is that obviously we can't see young people as one group, not all young people are the same and they're affected by different things and I suppose taking that, bearing that in mind, we also need to think about what we mean by 'least engaged' as well because there's quite a lot of evidence to suggest young people are very engaged, they're engaged with political issues but what they're not so engaged with is party politics, that's what's turned them off.

So I mean statistics, various statistics, there's David Marsh's research that he did for the ESRC in January 2004, which shows that young people wholeheartedly considered issues around racism, poverty, housing, all those things, as political issues. They were also concerned with those softer issues that everyone thinks young people are interested in like animal rights, fox hunting, all those kind of things that we assume they're more interested in – but they don't necessarily see those as political issues but what they see as political issues aren't the same issues that everyone else sees.

But having said that, if we think about why young people aren't engaged in party politics, I would say that traditionally probably party politics haven't necessarily targeted young people. If you're under 18 obviously you don't vote anyway. I think 18 year olds, 18-24 year olds traditionally from voting statistics have always voted less, the difference has been that in the past they would get into the habit of voting as they get older and start to see that as their civic duty but they're not doing that now, they're not getting into the habit as they get older.

But we also live in a changing society. For example 5 year olds now that start school in September won't have seen the 20th century, which I think is quite amazing. Most 16 year olds now don't know about life without new technologies and new communications and have no idea what we mean when we talk about vinyl. There are greater opportunities – young people are targeted as consumers and they're asked their opinions by people who want to sell things to them, politicians aren't asking their opinions but you can bet your bottom dollar if people want to sell them toys and games, they're asking their opinions. So they're consumers, they have more power and they have greater opportunities as well – I mean education, training opportunities etc and the world has become much smaller. We live in a world where young people have wider issues on tap and are much interested in those wider issues - be that war, poverty, etc.

HK: Terrific, Shamit?

SS: To start, there is a correlation between the relative have-nots and propensity to vote, so economics is very important.

Networks are also important, in other words the kind of networks that you have, do you have networks that are very inward-facing or do you have networks that are outward-facing, that's quite important.

The third point and Raji touched upon it, is this question of behaviour and learning the habit and in particular growing up in households where there isn't a well-established habit of registration and turnout, it's a very good predictor of not being involved yourself.

Fourthly what I call kind of political literacy and that's partly speaking to the extent to which some of these questions have been brought into the school, partly through the national curriculum.

And the last thing I just would point out, to re-endorse this point about not any one of these groups should be treated in a homogenous way, you do need to disaggregate and you find with any one of these groups there are relatively high levels of registration, turnout and participation as well as low levels. So the average often doesn't tell you very much, it merely says the young are less engaged than generations older than them, it's actually a rather unhelpful thing to know it seems to me. It would be rather more important to know what are the most engaged parts of the relatively young population and see whether or not those factors are present, are not present enough in a peer group and I think economics, networks and habits are three things you'd obviously want to pay attention to.

I might put it another way, which is that we sometimes think about abstention and general elections, and a lot of attention was given to this after the last general election. It's actually helpful to see which between on the one hand are casual or circumstantial abstention – it's raining, I can't be bothered to go and vote, if only it was easier to vote by mobile phone, these are kind of circumstantial casual ways people would be put off the process. So you can if you put your mind to it, think about efficiencies, you could think about ways in which to try and make that exchange, sort of an opportunity cost, lower that so people who maybe might vote, then go and vote. You can vote in a queue at Sainsbury's for example, that may help – but it's a long way from the other driver of abstention which is serial abstention, serial abstention is a set of people who are not connected with the process, their economics, their networks and their habits don't help and there aren't very many bright ideas I have to say to you on the table about how you tackle that serial abstention in one single move. I suspect none of the solutions are incremental but the former category I think there may be solutions on the table to take it forward.

HK: Audrey?

AB: I was struck this morning by Philip's challenge I guess to the panel about I suppose really to all of us about 'who are we?' – are we just talking amongst ourselves about the people who aren't here. So, I suppose all I can say is that all I can do is stress my experience from what I have learned working within Oxfam around poverty in the UK, and one of the things that we've learned is that poverty in the UK and around the world is not just about material goods, but

powerlessness and it's about what it's like to have effectively no choice, no control over virtually any and every decision in your life.

Now it would be interesting if people could just for a moment think, because everybody here, no matter how powerful we are, must have had at some point that feeling of powerlessness, of just remembering what it was like when you had no choice, something was happening to you that was wrong or something that was right wasn't happening and you just had no way out. So if you can just... it's a horrible feeling but to have that the whole time has an impact on you as an individual which is completely destructive and it makes people feel basically... and I know we've heard this before, as though they don't matter and so if society and I am for a moment making it sound as though people are very passive and have no sense of their own agency, but if you are made to feel like you don't matter, then why the hell should you care about what happens, why should you get involved, why should you think this time over the thousands of other times, it's going to make a difference in your life?

And I just want, if I could just read a couple of quotes... because one of the things that we've been trying to work on within the UK on poverty is really raise the ante on poverty as powerlessness and actually talk about power. And I was delighted by the end of this morning's session we started to talk about power – because it is about power relations, who's got it and who doesn't have it and what does that mean and so over the last couple of years we've run a whole series... we've just been involved in things where people talk about what it feels like and at least if we talk about what it feels like, then you can begin to identify it and begin to try and tackle it.

So in one of these meetings a woman said and I think she was talking about the benefit, engaging the benefit system, she said: "You're like an onion and gradually every skin is peeled off of you and there's nothing left, all your self esteem and how you feel about yourself is gone, you're left feeling like nothing and then your family feels like that." I couldn't have put it better.

One other thing, one other comment which was actually about someone's engaging in something called the All-Parliamentary Group on Poverty which is one of the groups in Westminster which is about focusing in parliament on people in poverty were invited to come and talk to MPs and sometimes Ministers and one of the people who came said: "The worst thing about living in poverty is the way it gives others permission to treat you, as if you don't matter, as if your opinions don't count, as if you have nothing to contribute. We realise that this doesn't show up in the statistics but there is a stigma attached to living in poverty. If you make a policy about us and not with us, then you reinforce that stigma."

So I mean that's a bit of a gloomy start but from my experience that's the big obstacle, is actually transforming how... transforming the kind of society we live in so that people who have very little are at the receiving end of a lot of very bad treatment and whose rights are constantly denied, even though those rights are enshrined in law. The fact that they're enshrined in law doesn't mean they can necessarily realise them and to me that's the task.

- FM: I wholeheartedly... I think you've put that wonderfully well and I wholeheartedly endorse it and that's clearly the major challenge which faces anybody trying to look at this, to see whether you can enlarge the power of the least powerful. But within that there is a minor kind of... recent historical riddle, which I don't think... I mean although I agree with everything that all three of you have said, I'm still not entirely clear why the lack of engagement among the least engaged, the lack of voting should have fallen quite so sharply off a cliff in the last few years. I mean the poor and the young always voted less as you've said but why has their participation gone so very sharply as part of the general very sharp decline. I think these technical reasons are interesting and all have a part to play but I'm still not convinced that we've found the real thing that drives that.
- AB: I suppose it's cumulative, what's happened to stop it would be another way of perusing that question and I'm not sure that there is any strong evidence and I'm speaking primarily about people in poverty, I'm not sure there is very much to lead them to believe... you know to change the way things are and especially if you spend most of your time on survival strategies and coping mechanisms and that sort of thing, then the actual act of voting really isn't there, it's just not on the radar.
- HK: Could it be and I raise this as a question... could it be that because we've seen party politics shifting and changing, that parties are seen to redefine themselves because there's a sense that the class system has if you like evolved and therefore the Labour Party which had always been a party which very publicly declared itself as a party to speak for the poor, has been anxious not to articulate it's... or not to position itself in that way because it might lose the support of people who are much more comfortable and a growing number of the more comfortable and have avoided if you like being presented as the party of the poor and therefore there's an even greater... a growing sense or growing number of people feeling nobody's really listening to our voice or representing our interest. Is that a possibility?
- AB: Can I just respond to that? You put it better than I could but perhaps I would just add that not only has that happened but to make matters worse, the language of rights and responsibilities and the reinforcement of the whole concept of the deserving and undeserving poor through references to hard-working families versus those who are benefit scroungers or young... it's done not quite so much anymore but only a few years ago one of the key messages, was talking about young people who 'don't want to get out of bed before 2 o'clock in the afternoon' and people 'not getting on their bikes to get jobs', that whole kind of language coming out of a party that was supposed to represent social justice and a shift in the allocation of resources I think probably just reinforces what you just said, it makes it much worse.
- FM: So the parties have only themselves to blame, the Labour Party in particular for pushing...?
- AB: What do they lose though, I mean what have they lost?
- HK: Well Labour say what have they gained because the sense and the argument they've made is...

AB: We're in power!

HK: No, but also we want to be the big tent which is also very warmly embracing the middle classes and the more monied and that we're encouraging the affluent and so on... and if that isn't our predominant language, we will alienate that section. So therefore they have the big gain because they've won that small number in the middle who make a difference when it comes to general election and so they would say well they've gained a lot because in fact at the other end, either we can count on that vote or they don't vote at all.

SS: Helena, can I come in. I agree with that but add an important caveat. I've actually got an answer to Ferdinand's question which is that that may be a good description of this government but actually I think it's fairly accurate of the previous Conservative government too. Actually we've just lived through about a quarter of a century of very strong executive government to start with, both governments, Conservative and now Labour, have pitched this sort of 'broad tent' philosophy that's been absolutely central to what they're doing but what that means by definition is that it loosens the sort of tribal moorings that people had in the past, the idea that parties were there to represent the social classes.

Mrs Thatcher's Conservative government was very, very successful in poaching lots and lots of members of the working class. Mr Blair's government is very, very successful at poaching lots and lots of members of the affluent middle class and so it goes on. Now that tends to sort of weaken the identification that people have or they had in the past and I think one thing you get from that would be this sort of manifestation of a lack of choice, both parties essentially pitching in the same territory, one is rather more effective at doing that now but the other party was quite good at it ten or fifteen years ago. These are the by-products of sucking the ideological oxygen out of the room and to some extent, just to add a note of caution, we've got to be careful not to complain too much about it as it were. I think there are problems with it but I think at the same time we've got to understand that these are the kind of things that happen when parties converge onto the centre ground and I just don't think it's something that describes this government, I think it describes Mrs Thatcher's government very, very effectively. But if it's a good thing or a bad thing, people have to make up their own minds, but I think that's a fair description of what we've just lived through for about a quarter of a century.

HK: Well I mean you're absolutely right, that it's happening and it's a kind of way in which we're seeing the coalescing of political parties around this central ground, either pitched a bit to the right of the centre rather than to... at different times it will move but basically in pitching its tent very much there in that ground and both parties having coalesced around policy that you therefore find that to make the language of protecting the poor very high up there on the agenda is something that its feared may alienate the better heeled who think that's going to cost in terms of tax and all that. So I just wonder if that isn't part of the problem, that because the language of selling this product, by whichever party, has become very similar for both, it means that people don't feel that their concerns are being...

- SS: No, there's a paradox and I take your point there which is that you encourage people to some extent to stick up for their own specific interests because parties and governments are ever more sensitive to the need to articulate the largest number of those interests and aggregate them to start them. I mean that's how you often hang onto it... I understand that point but at the same time the trick is obviously to get people to loosen some of that identity around their interests, otherwise we get people essentially of one class or one interest vetoing an interest of another group. This government is a good case in point – on the one hand it's had enormous advances in terms of the New Deal reforms without a doubt...
- HK: I want to ask about the New Deal reforms – do they make a difference in terms of bringing people in?
- SS: Well they do yes but I would say that's not the point, the point is you wouldn't predict a government trying to implement all of that, given what we just said a moment ago, because the general popular vote is not in that, the general popular vote would be to essentially say this is an area where government has tried to rock things but actually run out of ideas. But it's been a highly innovative area which is not the area that you would normally predict. So there are unusual sort of by-products to all this as well.
- RH: Can I just add to that a bit as well? I think that one of the things we've got to be careful about is not just the participation about voting because there are all sorts of other reasons why people aren't voting and Shamit has mentioned some of those in terms of if it's a rainy day, for example, what if we could vote in the supermarket, all those kind of things. And I also second the view that the government, particularly in terms of young people, has done an awful lot to engage young people and young people are engaging with certain things that the government, local government, devolved executives, etc are trying to engage young people with, but you're not really... I don't think you're going to see suddenly loads more young people for example, loads more marginalised people voting as a result of that. They may participate outside of the election process and may be willing to go to some of these All-Party groups that are willing to listen to them but that's not necessarily going to mean they're going to vote because there are all sorts of reasons why people don't vote, other than simply not believing in any of the political parties.
- FM: One reason that research keeps on showing us is that the least engaged, the non voters, have very low levels of trust in politics and politicians. Have you any suggestions as to how that trust might be rebuilt or examples of ways in which it is?
- RH: Yes, I was thinking about that question before I came here and I wanted to start with there is some good news because there was this Mori research a couple of years ago which actually showed that young people trusted celebrities even less than they trusted politicians...

[Laughter]

RH: ... and they trusted journalists even less than they trusted celebrities and politicians! So I thought that was something good for politicians to think about. But I think one thing I was thinking about is behind every individual, group of individuals that aren't trusted, is an institution. So you can have individual politicians who are really good, if you go to Stephen Twigg's constituency, most young people know who he is; if I speak to young people in Glasgow, they know who Rosie Kale is... but it's the institutions behind them that seem to be almost letting down some of these really good individuals that want to do good stuff. So there almost needs to be that kind of organisational cultural change. People have to sit down: parties, parliament, government, all have to sit down and just go right, what is the problem, do we want to do something about this, if we do, then what is our strategy and then how are we going to measure that? And that's a much deeper way of changing because at the moment what you've got is things that seem tokenistic – so a party might celebrate a black politician but to outsiders we're looking at that and we see that as tokenistic because it's just one thing. What we want to see is that deeper level of change and once that happens I think certainly young people will start to trust those groups of people that have not been trusted.

SS: Just to go back to the question and if I can just sneak in a quick other point. If we could see a general rise in levels of interest and activism and single issue pressure groups, I'd become less concerned about whether or not people are participating in the parliamentary process. It's important but it becomes one of several things we need to keep our eye on. Clearly it is not the case of the young or any group you care to mention who are not interested in politics, we have disproportionate members of younger groups taking part in anti-Iraq war demonstrations at the same time as we have low levels of registration and turnout, I think those two things need to be reconciled.

But just going back to the question, what could be done about trust? Well here's a suggestion but it's to do with essentially trying to fix the leaky tap in the plumbing rather than stripping out the entire plumbing: I think one of the reasons why you have a lack of trust is that we have in this country ordinary folk who look at their representatives in the House of Commons, certainly, and see an incredibly weak legislature – in other words they see the consequences of a very strong executive government, Labour and Conservative... people like me for example, they don't like that, they don't like their representatives being pushed around by strong executive government.

So my obvious place to start would be to strengthen the legislature and a lot can be done. In 1980 the Conservative government, the leader of the House of Commons established the new Parliamentary Select Committees. This was explicitly modelled on the Congressional Oversight Committees in DC, and they swore then, this was about 25 years ago, within that decade, that decade that just passed, they saw those Congressional Oversight Committees in the United States dispose of a present, a silly present that shows the extent to which the legislature had teeth and it was prepared to use, albeit in very unusual circumstances in the White House. I'm not proposing the same thing for us, as such, but the logic of that must be right – that you want the legislature, you want select committees to have real powers of oversight, for example ratification of appointments by the executive to the executive, you know ratifying the chamber

of the monthly Policy Committee, the Governor of the Bank of England. These things do not take place today and it seems to me that's the sort of place you could start and it would see a greater degree of trust and faith in the system, actually, and a check and balance over these very strong executives that we've seen in the last generation.

- AB: One of the suggestions I would make which is something that needs to happen at the other end if you like is about tackling negative attitudes and negative behaviour towards people in poverty. So while there is still a hell of a long way to go on issues of race and disability, we have seen government take a very clear lead to strengthen legislation, change their language, outlaw certain ways of behaving on issues of race, on issues of disability, and really taken a very upfront leadership in saying this is the kind of society that we want and these are some of the ways that we aren't going to be behave anymore and some of the ways that we will begin to behave. Now if that were to happen throughout government, national and local authority, in terms of how people are treated when they deal with the benefits system, when they deal with the Housing Authorities, then very gradually if people could actually feel and realise they were being treated differently, I think that would gradually, gradually begin to tackle the problem of mistrust and distrust, but it's going to take a long time.
- HK: But we have to tease out what's in there, because what's in there is a recognition that, and this is the unfairness of it, is that you could be disabled, you could be black and you could be homosexual because they've now come round to the idea that no-one has any control over any of this, so therefore we can't have discrimination on any of those bases but there's still underlying it a notion that the poor are poor because of their own fault and that is what makes the differences in all that. Bano?
- BM: I'm not going to come back on that, I was going to but I think I've just dealt with it in my head. I do have another question though and that's going back to this balance of power and it really is what kinds of forms of institutions do you think that we need that would go beyond this consultation process and actually start allowing people to be really involved in decisions on the ground that are affecting them and I'm talking practical forms of institutions that we can put into place?
- AB: There are experiences in other parts of the world and I've suggested that the Commission talk to a number of people who are doing research in these areas, in Brazil, in India, and other places, they actually have tried to tackle building a positive relationship between participatory democracy and representative democracy by building in... changing legislation and changing regulations and actually trying to build in structures and systems which will create and legitimise participation, participatory democracy as a fundamental way of making representative democracy work. Now all of the research shows that its success depends on how well its implemented and how the attitudes of those who are implementing... you know if they're positive and favourable then it has a much better chance of success, it also shows that it's more likely to succeed where you have a very strong vibrant civil society as in Brazil, as in India, which actually has come up through decades of struggle to where the political party actually at this point in Brazil, for better or worse, does have a strong commitment to social justice. So that very active, vibrant civil society, if you like, is a framework that

gives this new way of operating a chance to succeed. So it is actually about bringing in new systems and I can't give the detail on that but there is quite a lot of research internationally on why you can't just simply transfer it, there are a lot of lessons that could be learnt.

BF: Could I come in on that? Are you saying that to take root, a lot of that would be at the community and local government level rather than national government? I mean if you're trying to create that sort of environment and you want people to participate in things that are real to them, not the sort of highfaluting national economic things, so if you really want to get traction there, then maybe it's the local government level then?

AB: Well one of the examples is participatory budgeting that started in Brazil and a number of us are trying to make it work in a couple of local authorities in the UK and that's a system whereby using the community structures that already existed, actually legislating so that the community has the say over a certain aspect of the local authority budget, I think in the case of Brazil in Porto Alegre, it's 10% of the investment budget, so it's 10% of the new money and over the years the process has meant that that amount of money has gradually gone increasingly towards poor communities to tackle water and sanitation, build roads and that sort of thing whereas before that didn't happen. So it's a very complex system and now they're moving on to actually monitoring the implementation of the decisions that the community supposedly took because they found that just taking those decisions didn't necessarily mean it would be implemented as effectively as all expected. So yes certainly starting at local government and community level but I think there's a danger that it only stays there because so much of what happens at those levels is actually determined by the national framework.

FM: Could you say something about your UK experiments or initiatives?

AB: Well we've got some successes, limited though they are, and some big failures. One of our big failures which is what led us onto the concept of power sharing and changing the decision-making structures was a lot of work that we did within the New Deal for communities, urban regeneration context, in one of the local authorities in the North and we were involved in training a lot of local people in participatory techniques, to go out into the community, into shopping centres and schools and wherever to try and get a more grass-roots design in terms of what the NDC should be looking at and at the end of the day the plan that they came up with, the investment plan that they came up with, was praised by all concerned and it was actually held up by the Neighbourhood Community Unit as one of the success stories in terms of actually tapping into what local people wanted. What happened though once that piece of work was done, was that the standard decision-making frameworks came right back into play, the doors were closed, the shutters came down and a lot of that was just overturned, but worse than that, all of the trust that had been built up was completely dispelled. So that was one that worked only to a point and that led us to realise that we had been fairly naïve in terms of what our expectations were and even though the NDC has a 10 year framework, we're actually talking about changing power structures over a 20-30 year period.

Some of the more successful ones and I don't know if there's anyone from Engender in the audience... We were involved with a group in Scotland called Engender which works primarily with women and it was a piece of work which was trying to enable women from the community to engage more effectively with the Scottish Parliament and the new devolved powers and they had a very rigorous training and selection programme whereby they identified women from community organisations and supported them over a period of weeks with information about how the system worked, capacity building, self-esteem, skills development in terms of how to talk to your MPs, how to put together a policy and advocacy strategy on their issues and a number of those women have actually gone on supported by their organisations to make real changes in their communities and engage with the political systems. It was a very labour intensive and relatively expensive operation when you look at the small number of people involved but actually in terms of the impact on those women and their communities, over the long run I think it will have a huge impact.

BG: Do you think that there are any good practices from abroad that you know of, Canada...?

AB: Most of my experience... well I am actually Canadian, but most of our experience in terms of what we've been trying to bring to the UK is from the international sector and the reason that is, is because there's a much more 'small p' political approach if you like, and there's more of a structural analysis in terms of trying to decide what to do, rather than a more task-oriented focus and just to put it in very simplistic terms, on any housing estate there may be a problem with childcare and so a more task-oriented role, an immediate problem solving approach is let's set up a crèche but actually if you really want to have an impact and change what's creating the problem, then you would go through a process of looking at what the issues around working with people to come up with a range of solutions which would tackle a number of the causes of the problem and that's the way the international sector works, it's a much more structural analysis.

HK: Raji, would you like to come back in?

RH: Yes I suppose one of the thing that's quite frustrating is that we do have bodies that are supposed to be holding our executives to account, we have parliament and if parliament was effectively doing its job, engaging with the public and trying to feed back in those views, we'd kind of have a system where consultation worked a bit more effectively. Because one of the problems we have for young people is that young people themselves simply don't feel that they are being consulted at all and we've done lots of work with groups of young people where in a more kind of deliberative situation they would speak up, talk about things but then once you start trying to feed those views back into the system, that's where things seem to break down. So that's part of the problem. One of the things to note though is that governments are trying to do something about it, I mean the Children and Young People's Unit have these 'Why Speak?' consultation funds which young people can access, it's small bits of money that they can use to try to do their own consultations and up here in Scotland there's things like 'Dialogue Youth' and in Wales there's 'Funky Dragon', so there are ways in which people are trying to consult with young people but I don't think young people feel they're being consulted enough.

BM: Those initiatives that you were talking about, are young people setting the agenda?

RH: Yes, I mean I think there's two types of things going on, there's those things going on where organisations, adults think that there is something that they think young people should be interested in and then go out and recruit the young people who are interested in that... But then there's the other type of work going on which is much more organic, just working in small groups with young people because they all have something in common, it might be a Barnardos group, it might be a group from a pupil referral unit but actually sitting down with them and saying what is it you are interested in and how then can we get you to take more action. So I think there are two types of things going on there, I mean we see that a lot because we fund so many projects and when you see the applications you can see the ones that are young people led, they're bit more messy...

[Laughter]

RH: ... not in terms of what they're trying to achieve but a little bit more tricky, a little bit more ambitious, but it's about people ... like influencing people to put their money where their mouth is but also governments doing that as well.

HK: Phil?

PC: The other side of that is young people can be consulted too much to the point where they get consulted about absolutely everything and they don't want to be consulted on everything, they want to actually see results, they want to see action, and there is always that fear that if you set up a young person's group, people see it as a tokenistic thing, let's go to that youth group and ask them what they think, then tick the box we've consulted young people and that's not really what it's about. You know young people, especially from schools and from different sorts of backgrounds, they want to help other young people but they don't want to be like the only young people that they ask, they want that work to be carried on and I was just wondering how would you think groups could overcome that to achieve that?

RH: I met a young guy who's a designer now and he said to me: 'Look since I was 14, I have been consulted so much because I happened to be part of a youth group...' ...I think in Harringey, that everybody wanted to consult with because by consulting with them they were apparently consulting with socially-excluded young people and he said he just got to the point where he was so fed up, he decided that he was going to make money out of this agenda so he set up this design company and he was basically designing posters and stuff for small organisations, government, local government that wanted to consult with young people. He was just making money out of them! A problem... which I thought was a real shame because it just shows how cynical those young people who feel that they're being over consulted begin to feel.

I think what you need is that sort of variety and it's almost like tapping away at a big concrete stone and trying to experiment with different ways, different approaches and at the moment we've set up an action learning set which is a

type of training with a small group of civil servants within DEFRA and the idea is that over a longer period of time they sit down and work out how to resolve the problem that on a day-to-day basis as non experts, as people who don't normally work with young people, they should be consulting with young people on an everyday basis rather than I just one-offs which is what's happening at the moment and it's that that's much harder but it's about variety because then it's about the bigger, wider questionnaire type way of getting to a lot of young people. It's about working with smaller groups of young people, it's about going out to young people rather than always expecting them to come to you. So it's about variety...

- PC: It was interesting what you said about people making money out of it because we've just set up a group of young people, we've got these young people to actually be consultants now so that instead of them being consulted about different issues, they come to us and say could you go and consult young people about this and then we go out and do the consultant work for them. I mean doing consultative work is so stupid I think, people are now doing consulting on how to consult, it just gets stupid after a while.
- HK: It is very much the flavour of the age, this business of consulting, and it's become a sort of shallow exercise in many circumstances and box ticking and so on. Shamit I'm not going to accuse you of being the person at Downing Street that invented this but how do you move beyond that kind of shallow consultation?
- SS: I agree with this death by consultation point and it is the age in which we live, the pendulum's clearly gone far too far because it's become a meaningless exercise, if what Philip was saying is to be believed, it's just entirely for the sake of providing a bit of paper. But to cut straight through that and to go back partly to Bano's question, I actually have seen a programme that I think has got about the kind of right balance in terms of consultation on the one hand and autonomy on the other and it's not a democratic participation programme, it's actually a core part of politics – the Sure Start programme which is about early years interventions for kids in deprived households and this government has rolled it out. I give credit to this government or any government that would roll it out and it was very careful to make sure that the actual architecture of what was going to be rolled out to these under 5s at these at-risk households was really not up for grabs – I mean very clear thinking in central government about what works and looking at the evidence about making sure that those early interventions with young kids makes a big difference to their life prospects. Now that wasn't actually up for grabs, that's not the great deal... what was up for grabs was the way in which that has been delivered, the way in which it would look, the extent to which it would be more or less user-friendly and then you've got a consultation exercise on the top of that to get the answers to those questions but not in the form of questions and I think that's about getting it right.

That programme has been evaluated left, right and centre and every evaluation that I've read and I've looked at them incredibly critically, show that it's worked at both levels in terms of the interventions for the under 5s but also in terms of this participatory feel and flavour, well those parents of the kids who are getting those interventions feel that they are consulted about them at the right level, no more, no less. But, yes, this has gone to some extreme, I think... I can take you to parts

of Milton Keynes where several government departments have set up shop to pilot every single new initiative they can think of, the poor old people of north-eastern Milton Keynes, I know them very, very well!

[Laughter]

SS: And why have they gone there? What have they done? But what we're trying to do is you run a pilot for a programme to work out whether or not it's got some horrible flaw in it before you make it go live nationally, but it doesn't mean that you then bolt onto that a consultation about every last bit that moves within it in order to satisfy yourself and frankly not the world, that you are consultative and you are user-friendly. I think that smacks of an absurd form of apolitical correctness in my view.

HK: Audrey you must have direct experience of this, given the poverty programmes that you're involved in?

AB: Well actually I was just sitting here thinking how easy it is to say that other people should do it because even within our own programme, I don't think we do it very well. You know we're just about to go through a process of rethinking our work and we're grappling with the issue of how do we involve the people with whom we're working, the organisations that we support in determining what we should do. So I'm the first to acknowledge that it is very difficult to do it in a meaningful way and deliver the results at the same time, I think that's one of the issues that we haven't talked about that's been around with many of the new deals for young people in the community and I think Sure Start is a very good example of something that has worked. One of the problems is that it's a real conundrum because people want results quickly, they see money going into their community and they don't necessarily want to have to take years and years and years to get some positive change and to see that money being put to good use. So you have that drive both from the government and the community for quick results on the one hand, yet at the same time you have a sense, you know that people need to be involved and it does take time, it does take resources. So that doesn't necessarily answer the question, I'm just acknowledging that there are real trade-offs but perhaps what we're not doing is acknowledging those, within government I suspect this isn't being acknowledged in as upfront a way as it could be, that the targets and the results have to be balanced against the way... the end doesn't justify the means, I suppose that's what I'm trying to say and I think we just need to have a much more upfront consideration about balancing that trigger.

HK: I think we're getting ready to have a Philip Dodd hand grenade thrown in... So how about it Phil? What have you got to say?

[Laughter]

PD: I just want to summarise what I've heard and then ask a question to see if it makes sense. There have been two kinds of models enunciated: one has been the number of parliamentary initiatives, so it's absolutely true if you strengthen select committees so they can do something, at least it would restore some of the dignity and maybe effectiveness of parliament. So that seems to me one good thing that we could look over. Then a number of extra-parliamentary

programmes, some of which are consultative, some of which are driven by groups trying to operate with the socially excluded and they can lead to a certain kind of comic solutions in terms of over consultation or bad consultation but we understand that there are virtues and values in those. What's missing is that I suppose, and it's just history that has lost it for us, is I was much struck by Shamit's comment near the beginning that it isn't as if in itself being poor isolates you from it, there are a number, a set of other variables he mentioned, family histories is also one and the truth is the kind of world I grew up in which was a mining community, your family, the Trade Union, all those things gave you access to a participation in party political process without ever being told it, whereas now we're setting up programmes to substitute for a history that's passed away for good or bad, it doesn't matter whether it was good or bad, it's just gone.

What then moved into the space that's been vacated is the thing that was demonised in this morning's conversation which is the media and what's really interesting about this afternoon's conversation, in effect it could have been taking place in the Nineteenth Century so far, because there's no sense... because one of the things about the poor is they stay at home more which means they watch more television, there are a whole set of figures on this which I've certainly got access to and it seems to me we need if we're going to be serious about these things, to factor in the media because the media is the place now that once families and communities and Trade Unions used to be... it was one of those places where you learned certain kinds of politics.

So I'm interested I suppose in two things, it's not a hand grenade but the first is I'm interested in what you do when a particular history comes to a close and that in a sense now government and NGOs have been having bestowed upon them a responsibility, in a sense it's just not possible for them to realise and the second is the role of the media in this which seems to me... I thought it was lamentably demonised this morning but hasn't been mentioned this afternoon.

HK: Shamit I saw you...

SS: I agree with the thread of that and would just say to begin with there are many plus sides from the rise of the media that are probably worth mentioning, one would be obviously the rise of the television age from the 50s onwards that gave stable class communities, especially for what it's worth the British working class, a window into another world and from that we suddenly had an aspiring working class, you could see how the other half lived and nowadays, half a century later we have a mass media in which not only can you see how the other half lives, I think participatory television means you can be there half the time. I entirely accept that point.

One spin on that Philip has been the extreme atomisation of British society, that sometimes you get the distinct impression that you're dealing with 60-odd million individuals and that's the most coherent thing you can say, there doesn't seem to be any sort of stable identity over and above that identity that seems to last for a fortnight and it's nothing remotely like something that's going to stay with you for a generation or what have you. I mean I think these are all very fancy words to describe a breakdown in the fabric, the connectedness, that we had, at the very

least with people of our own kind, of our own class, of our own neighbourhood and so on and so forth. I mean those things have diluted enormously and I'm always uncertain as to whether I think it's a good thing or a bad thing. I mean would we necessarily want a society in which people had fixed identities that they learnt early on in life or had handed down to them for that matter and they would then struggle for years and years to try and escape them, presuming they wanted to escape that or conversely identities that gave them privileges where there would be no incentive to escape. It's an absolutely wide open debate as to whether that's a good thing or a bad thing but I do think you can say that at all times for all these communities that have become... all the communities I think in a sense have become more and more atomised, to go back to a greater sense of being a community, well whether it's a local level for that matter or a national level, would probably be a good thing. You know how do you build the connectedness? There's a very interesting piece of work we did in the unit I worked in and it was about happiness and contentedness and what made people happy...

SS: ... and you had all these variables fed into this very complex model, now what made people tap in was more and more money, more holidays and whatever, and this was an international survey and the thing that stood out on the top of this list was what people would really want was a greater sense of belonging, they wanted to be needed and need others, in other words they wanted to connect. Now we can get tearful about it if necessary but they clearly were piping up about something that they felt was missing, either in their lives or the society in which they lived or in the sense of both. Now that's diagnosing a relatively easy thing, my point would be to say to you and we spend a lot of time thinking about this quite seriously, you can take it from in government but how do you synthetically artificially recreate, using government, those kinds of networks? I mean programmes, there was a shortage of bright ideas about programmes and a small proportion of them tend to work for a time but in general, governments are not good at synthetically recreating this stuff.

PD: Well I suppose that really is one of my questions which is government programmes are no substitute for history and what's interesting for me is one of the sites where belonging takes place is the media, for good or bad, but absolutely in terms of that, there are a few national occasions but some of them are to do with soaps, others to do with sporting events which is seen through the media, so I suppose what I'm asking is precisely the degree to which the government is the right agency to try to re-imagine...

SS: Well to some extent the die is cast and we can't artificially recreate that but we can take what I call preventative or slightly remedial measures: say, for example, the BBC's Public Service Remit is something to be defended, I mean only if I say that with a degree of consensus in the room, we all actually know what that expression means. Also we have to be careful about the kind of hereditary model we have for an organisation such as that which is facing competition which clearly is not on a level playing field. I mean you've got to be serious about this regulatory role, it's not about market share *per se*, it's about providing different kinds of content in order to create some of this community imagined or otherwise that you care about.

But in all of this, I suppose the caveat would be that there are importance and I think as Raji's point earlier on, in every big sub group you think of, there are important allies, there are important groups that are at the extreme end of having more or less obvious connectedness and I think it's important sometimes just to remember that. I mean the caveat that always comes to mind is that we should remind ourselves that although it is true that minorities are disproportionately in this country part will have lots, it's true, and therefore they should be to a large extent affected by the problems that we've been concerned with.

It's also true that many of these but not all these minority groups have very high levels of social trust and connectedness from within – some may say well that's a product of an immigrant history, they bring it with them, by the next generation it will be gone, I don't know, the jury's out. But I wouldn't want to sort of quickly extinguish that; I would want to say well could we make some use of that frankly and actually what we have in this country is that parties do make use of that... you know and I know they do that in order to broker votes, they want community leaders in principle to hand over large numbers of block votes, often at times in exchange for very little or nothing or maybe a peerage and you can all be cynical about it... but that's the model they have, quite cynical vote gathering. They're not really interested in what it is that allows these communities to have high levels of connectedness from within and never mind the larger question: which is, is there some way to try and replicate that and try and use that more generally for society? So this outline I think is useful for us to put on the table.

FM: Wouldn't it be at least a fairly obvious way of reversing this atomisation, to reverse the drain of power away from local... at the lowest level, local authorities and in fact not only to take it back to what it was in post-war or pre-war years giving real control over their own budgets but also to take it a degree lower, to give not just this myriad of consultariats to north-east Milton Keynes but to give a genuine devolved power to that ward or district over these programmes?

SS: In principle that architecture is right. I think that's fine. But I think we both know that governments in practice struggle with two or three big insolubles, one is that local government however you measure it, spends a larger public expenditure and most Chancellors most of the time in most governments feel very uneasy about not having that lever as something that they can pull. They want to be very, very clear, they want to be very clear that public expenditure can be partly controlled through that. It's a big obstacle and I've yet to hear a way of breaking through that point.

And the other is the autonomy point, that different central governments even may accept the logic of that architecture but will worry about local governments going off and doing their own thing. Thatcher worried about it and did something about it, Mr Blair clearly worries about it and tries to do something about it and actually failed. So those are big things, I mean about how we feel about sub national democracy and we have a very centralised system in this country. The prize is all concentrated in Westminster and Whitehall and you would need I guess at the very least, I don't want to be facetious about it but a generation of people to be recruited to politics who didn't give such a huge premium to Westminster and Whitehall that actually... frankly in the Nineteenth Century came up from local government.

HK: The problem with that is that we're even having problems getting good folk go into Westminster, never mind into local government. So a part of it is the very thing we were talking about this morning, is the shrinking of the political party system which is the generator of the politicians who will go and do any of these things. So it gets back to the business of what do you do about those political parties. But before we even think about that, I want to hear if Paul wants to come in on anything?

PB: I wanted to go back to the question that Phil raised and that's the connection between media and politics and do you feel that the media and politicians are inseparable in the creation of this kind of distrust in the whole parliamentary system?

SS: I think we get the media and politicians that we deserve, not the ones that we want – is my instinctive reaction to that. And if there is an appetite in this country to have mass media consumption which there is a description of what this country looks like in terms of the media, mass media consumption with lots and lots of choice, consumer power driving it more than anything else, not withstanding my point about the BBC.

I'm not really understanding why we're surprised when we get the kind of media that we get, the kind of content that we get. It looks increasingly like American mass media and the market force is driving that. Now the relationship with politicians is more complicated, politicians will want to maximise votes, they will see the media as a vehicle for doing that, at the very least you will have them sensitive to the need to be media-friendly and media-savvy as it were, and there is this sort of relationship, they are as it were got a vested interest, one with the other. But that doesn't get away from the other point which is that most of the debate takes place on the centre-ground, I don't think the media particularly drive the question of whether there should be more fundamental choices available to British citizens, I think the media to some extent are missing that.

HK: I mean the Daily Mail is always invoked as being the great sort of motivator of for example home office policy and that's the test bed of anything and I just wanted on that thing about the media which Philip raised, was to say that isn't it just the same as talking about youth as if they were homogenised and talking about racial groups as if they were homogenised, that there are variations of many different kinds depending on wealth and so on and depending on what kind of family you're born into – all those different things. But in the same way the media is different. The young people we spoke to yesterday very interestingly were very clear that they didn't trust the media but they trusted television more than they trusted the print media. And so they do see that the newspapers do all this celebrity stuff and they spoke about how they were more interested in the royal family and whether they wear swastikas on their arm and so on... but they also were clear that they actually were quite trusting of news that they got from television, partly because they could see the people and see what was going on and they could make the judgements more with how they felt. So I think that we perhaps shouldn't lump it all together either and if we say the poor are at home, which is right, and because they don't go out, they're watching television, they're

not reading probably as many newspapers, so there are differences in how people are affected by those things.

RH: I think the most visible media when it comes to politics seems to be that media that almost thinks that it's holding government to account, almost – and government almost seems to be afraid of it. Because whenever I speak to people about issues around changing the way they do things to suit young people, it's what do the press think of it, oh let's ask our press department how would we sell this one and you almost feel like there's this kind of Westminster village that most people feel quite alienated from where you've got the kind of Andrew Marrs and Jon Snows knowing Tony Blair by first names. It feels like they're almost trying to do a job that parliament should be doing sometimes and I'm not sure how that bodes well with the public and certainly in terms of young people, part of the problem is and I was saying earlier, that they can be so negative about young people, it's all about negative reporting – so much so that you've now got to campaign to say to the media please can you be more positive about the way you talk about young people and that's being led by young people now.

And there's a feeling that something's been lost in that we the public should be able to engage better with politics through the media. Every time I look at the red button I think if only you could just press that and get more information about that debate and all those things and I can't understand why more of that isn't happening. And then alongside that, again does anyone actually care about the public because I'm so sure that if the media wanted to present politics to them in a really good way, they could do it because they've done it with cricket, they did it with Wimbledon...

PB: Yes, but part of that is to do with the politicians faults because the politicians are constantly playing up to the media and...

RH: Well this is chicken and egg isn't it, which comes first?

PB: Which means that everything's about soundbites: all politicians sound the same, very bland. And the real issue is that within Britain it is unlikely that we would see a black Prime Minister and we have to think about...

HK: More likely to be bald and black, bald and black go well together. Bald and pink faced and...

[Laughter]

PB: But I mean what I'm saying is it's less about the kind of political conviction and more about the presentation and...

SS: We definitely live in a presentational age that has been described by Paul, I mean make no mistake about it and as Raji said there's an enormous amount of trying to predict what Andrew Marr's question will be, it's absolutely driven by this lowest common denominator, it's spin city gone out of control without a doubt. But just ask yourself a big question, as recently as 30 or 40 years ago, the logical place for a government minister to be held accountable was on the floor of the House of Commons, today it's in a television studio – that has happened in front

of your eyes. Now I have no problem with television studios holding Ministers to account, I have no problem with that, I have a real problem with the fact that the floor of the House of Commons is not a logical place, the Ministers go to bed worrying about being laid into by Mr Paxman! Now something's gone wrong there.

AB: Can I just pick up a point that Raji made in passing earlier and it's around the media. Isn't there an issue and it links to the issue of mistrust that we were talking about a while back, isn't there an issue about the extent to which the way you see yourself reflected in the media and *de facto* you're seen by the rest of society? In other words young people having themselves represented very negatively, people in poverty constantly... it's still single parents, the way you see yourself reflected in society in the media and seen by society which actually may not be a very honest reflection of your feelings, your life, the complexity of what you have to deal with and the level of mistrust... that it's an iterative process, is what I'm suggesting.

And I think there is an issue of responsibility and accountability that I don't think as a society we're dealing with very well. Yes we have a complaints system, to the Press Complaints Commission and the Broadcasting Authority but actually I don't think that most people feel that that's a mechanism that makes much sense to them. And I think there is a real issue about the extent to which and the ways in which people who are at the receiving end of negative representation actually have any chance of holding the media to account and what that does to them and their relationship to the democratic process and voting and all the other things that we've been talking about. Does that make sense?

HK: Yes it does. We talk about the public not trusting politicians but there's a mutuality in trust and the thing is why would the public trust politicians when the politicians don't seem to trust the public because of lots of things... in fact it goes back to what Philip said this morning about this business about loving the people but also being fearful of the people and because if you gave them too much power, if you ask them too directly, then they may actually say things that you don't want to hear. So there is a way in and you see lots of manifestations of it, about giving power away, and it even happened with devolution in Scotland, giving power away but then at the last minute trying to pull it back a bit because of the fear of what really giving it away would mean. I think you see it in fear of jury trials, and wanting to restrict it because you just can't trust people to do the thing that you think is the right thing and you see it in lots of different areas, not trusting the people to make some of the decisions that would directly affect their lives because you don't think they will be good ones, there is that around isn't there?

I'm going to take this out to the audience now, unless there are colleagues here... there are any other areas they would like to bring up with our witnesses but I thought we might open it out to the audience.

BM: Can I just ask Shamit one thing because I was really interested in seeing why the House of Commons is no longer the place where the Prime Minister is held to account... well this morning we were hearing about the professionalisation of politicians and I'm not sure professionals holding the Prime Minister to account

would be reflective of the way the public would hold the Prime Minister to account, and in that sense doing a Channel 4 let's have question time with Tony Blair. And that for me would speak a lot more to the kind of questions that I would ask Tony Blair than maybe the questions that the House of Commons would ask Tony Blair and so I'm not sure whether this is something that needs to be mistrusted.

SS: No, it's not either/or, it's both you see. I'm just saying that the Prime Minister is going to bed at night worrying about whether the Commons is going to savage them tomorrow, is actually a good thing in my view, this doesn't happen to the extent that they worry enough about being savaged in a television studio. That's an important foundation upon which you could then say well let that cross-examination take place in the media but also beyond that, I mean a lot of people say that the House of Commons is not reflective of British society, we hear this all the time, to some extent it's not in there and to some extent parties are busy trying to do something about that and you can see the social make-up of parliament changing, albeit very, very incrementally, so that you then have an opportunity to look at a Commons exchange or a Select Committee taking place and you understand, we all understand it's professional politics, no one's saying it's mass participatory politics but at least it also takes the form that you see as being legitimate and familiar, in other words not a lot of pale males making this up...

BM: And boring.

SS: Well, my advice would be... modernise the processes within the House of Commons, get rid of some of the arcane ways in which you table motions. How many people in this country know that one of the most useful ways, probably the only way the poor beleaguered backbenchers can let off steam, short of rebelling and voting against their own side, is to sign something that's arcane as an Early-Day Motion and what does that mean? What it means is a serious 'count me, I'm worried about this'. Surely you could find ways of making that rather less boring.

RH: Because this goes back to the point that I was making about my fear that sometimes the media holds the government too much to account. At the end of the day parliament for all its faults is our elected representatives, we've elected them, we've asked them to hold government to account. When you're listening to Jeremy Paxman or even June Sarpong... she might ask some interesting questions but who asked her to ask those questions? I didn't – do you know what I mean? So I think we really should ensure that parliament is strengthened in a way, that it is holding government to account.

PB: I don't understand your point, I mean when you say these things, are you saying that these media people should not ask...

RH: No I'm saying they should but my concern is that it's only them that are doing it, that parliament isn't doing it in the same way that Shamit was saying.

SS: And it's not as if they're doing a better job than parliament, no I think it's...

[Talking across each other]

SS: They should be both doing the job in different ways, they have different skills to offer in a complementary way. I don't want to throw the baby out of the car or anything, remember parliament is there and I'm advocating reinforcing and strengthening it, Mrs Thatcher was often keen to remind us that the French Chamber of Deputies spent half the year not even in session! So there you have it.

HK: But there are two things here, one of the things that has happened as we've moved into contemporary times is the stage management of all of this and it happens at party conferences, it always happens on the floor of the House, which is that the only surprise questions are likely to come in, that's why the business of the moment between the Leader of the Opposition and Tony Blair is still the kind of frisson moment because apart from that the questions that come from their own side of the House are all planted, they anticipate and prepare in advance for questions that are likely to come from the other side, they go in with a script. I mean I see it in the House of Lords, the Minister will go in with a script and there'll be flags as you see on Tony Blair's documents and every possible question has been thought up in advance and you turn and the answers there are already written out for you. So everything is actually Coronation Street, there is a script to which the people are...

FM: Yes, but Helena, I think this is a very interesting point Shamit made which is that *are* hidden in this great rehearsed pudding, there are these plums like the Early-Day Motion, which are things that the Scottish Parliament in ways thinks its reinvented, things like the Early-Day Motion, this kind of decision device and I was thinking also of the Ten-Minute Rule Bill there which is a bright idea which is off the wall and just a spark protest. So there are these things in there but they're not angled towards the public, they're just these little arcane bits within the thing which could be part of a larger programme of opening up...

SS: Just put it into this context, despite it being stage-managed, despite the gradual erosion of legislature in favour of the Executive, there are three important occasions in the twentieth century when the Prime Minister went to the House of Commons and did not know what was going to happen: Chamberlain left the House of Commons in September 1940 no longer the Prime Minister – the debate turned against him; Eden in '56 and as I say it could have happened with Mrs Thatcher in 1982 at the start of the Falklands War.

Three important occasions when this has happened, now maybe they shouldn't be dozens of occasions, but I'm saying that they strengthen it, turn some of that stuff, make it more outward and user-friendly, not just inward and elite and professional...do both these things because look at the hurdle we've set, we've set the hurdle as high as we can possibly imagine it, dismissing the Prime Minister on his feet in the House of Commons. I mean it's happened on a small number of occasions in the twentieth century, it should happen again in my view.

HK: Well the war was a moment where you thought is this possible but I suspect that probably...

SS: Well was it a bit more stage-managed from the other side? We don't know.

- PD: I mean I'm very in favour of what you're saying but of course it's on the basis that you're taking quite a lot from the American model here, what it doesn't guarantee is more interest in, as it were, the places of power, does it? I mean in other words it may be good in its own terms but as a motor for voter increase it looks as though it doesn't work if America's the model.
- HK: I want to take it out, can I take it out to the audience and we've ranged over quite a large area looking at the particular areas of very low participation amongst youth, amongst minority communities, amongst the poor... the very important point that to homogenise is actually not to look at the reality because children from politically-aware families and leaving school with the idea of thinking about politics may actually be in a very different business from other young people, we mustn't lump everybody together. It's the same thing about minority communities, that actually... and it will very much depend on their own context and their own situation but what is a joining up thing is that the poorer you are, the less likely you feel that you've got a voice and that there's any point in knowing even more about it. So in all of that, the role that's played by the media, the role that's played by the institutions, I want to hear from you about what you think can be done and how we can try to be inventive about re-energising our democracy.