

CARE for Scotland BRIEFING

Questions for Hustings 2010



Church-based hustings are invariably different from other opportunities where election candidates meet the electorate. The range of questions tends to be more varied and many of the questions asked give some insight into the personal views of the candidate.

The introduction of devolution has meant that many of the key topics at election time – for example, education, health, social work, justice – are now the responsibility of the Scottish Parliament. As a result, questions to Westminster candidates on issues devolved to the Scottish Parliament will be less meaningful. (It should of course be pointed out that at present Scottish MPs in Westminster can still vote on the English health service, English educational system, English justice issues etc, although it has been suggested that this right might in future be withdrawn and that only MPs from English constituencies should vote on English issues.)

As a result, the suggested questions below are designed to reflect the particular role of an MP from a Scottish Constituency serving in Westminster.

THE ECONOMY

1. The amount which UK households spend in servicing their debt costs has risen from 18% of disposable income in 2005 to 25% in 2008. In the USA, the figure is 14%. What effect do you think this is having on our economy and society, and will your party be trying to reduce this level of personal debt?
2. How do you reconcile the Government asking us to spend our way out of recession with the need to consume less to protect the environment?
3. Do you think that economic growth and personal wealth should be the main measures of our country's success and happiness? If not, what measures would you use?

SOCIETY

1. Do you believe that good parenting of children in their early years has a positive impact on their emotional development? If so, what would you / your party do to support mothers who prefer to be in the home during their children's pre-school years?
2. Do you believe it is important for people to have one day in the week of rest and recreation and time to spend with their families? If so, would you support restoring a ban on Sunday trading?

BIOETHICAL ISSUES

1. How did you vote / would you have voted in the Human Fertilisation & Embryology Bill on the issues of
 - a) the creation of hybrid animal/human embryos for experimentation
 - b) a reduction in the time limit within which abortions are permitted
2. How would you vote if a Bill was presented in Westminster similar to Margo MacDonald MSP's End of Life Assistance (Scotland) Bill which would allow assisted suicide and euthanasia?

INTERNATIONAL ISSUES

1. Despite the credit crunch, the UK is still a very wealthy nation and is able to contribute significantly to development and to the relief of poverty in third world nations. What is your party's approach to international development, and what proportion of our Gross National Product do you think the UK should be allocating to this cause?
2. The Policing and Crime Act which recently came into law makes it illegal (in the UK except Scotland) to pay for sex with someone who is subject to force. The hope is that this will reduce the number of women being trafficked into Britain. What are the policies of each party represented in relation to countering human trafficking?
(Notes – several hundreds of thousands of people are trafficked internationally each year; similar legislation on the purchase of sex is currently being considered by the Scottish Parliament)
3. The Old Testament offers clear guidance to the people of Israel that they should care for immigrants in their community. How can the UK develop an immigration system which is fair and would allow us to assimilate a reasonable number of immigrants and asylum seekers?

TAXATION

1. Research by CARE has found that the tax system discriminates against married couples. For example over the past 40 years one-earner married couples with two children have seen the proportion of their income taken in tax double while most other taxpayers have experienced little change. What is the view of each of the candidates on how the tax system can be used to encourage a stable society?
2. In order to help clear Britain's debt it has been suggested that it may be necessary to raise the level of VAT. Would doing so have a disproportionate impact on poorer people?

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

1. Do you think it's fair that church adoption agencies have had to close down because they were unwilling to place children with same-sex couples?
2. A number of prominent people – for example former Prime Ministerial adviser Lord Donoghue and ITV news presenter Julie Etchingham – have recently spoken out about the growing discrimination against Christians that has developed over recent years. Do the candidates agree this is happening, and if so what is needed to bring about change?

MORE LIGHT HEARTED....

1. If you are elected as an MP, do you have any concerns about being able to exist under the new regime of expenses?
2. Is there a policy from any of the other parties which you wish your party had thought of?