

Prime Minister².

*If this is the best they can manage
you have little to fear. . .*

10/15/12

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PARTY POLITICAL BROADCAST BY THE SOCIAL AND LIBERAL DEMOCRATS

Michael Barrett interviewing Paddy Ashdown, Leader of the Democrats.

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IN CUE

There now follows a Party Political

Broadcast by the Social and Liberal Democrats.

BARRETT

Hello, I'm Michael Barrett and I've

come to the home of the Democrats Leader Paddy Ashdown. Just a week or two, Paddy, since what might be called your grand tour. Tell me about it.

ASHDOWN

Well I set out Michael, not to look

at all the gloom and doom but to look at Britain. Get out of the hot-house atmosphere of the House of Commons and see for myself.

There are some good things happening in our country; quite a lot. I saw some young people in Chatham, had started their own business and were doing very well and I'm glad for them and I hope it continues. But my prevailing impression, I'm afraid to say, was one of a country which is sadly .. terribly .. tragically divided. I've seen people living in poverty in Britain today, of a sort that I have not seen for many years. I've seen people who are homeless. 370,000 people - the equivalent of the population of Portsmouth and Warrington will be living homeless over this Christmas. I

visited people living in cardboard boxes every single night. I visited a place in Britain where the water is so polluted in one of our rivers, that one of our councillors locally has said, that if he fell in it, you'd be likely to get Heptatis before you drowned. I visited the great dead shipyards of Sunderland, where they've built ships for Britain for four hundred years, where that community that is built on the skill of those people, is now in danger of dying for a sum of money which is about half what we gave to the advertisers for the sale of British Gas. And frankly that has made me angry. Angry about the nature of our country and worried about the price we're going to pay.

BARRETT Now your wife Jane was with you on at least part of this trip. Was her reaction the same? Her anger equal to yours?

ASHDOWN Yes. She reminded me the other day when we were talking about it, of that time in Wearside when I met with the unions in the boardroom of these empty dead shipyards, hanging on the end of a thread and there was a union man there. She reminded me that, there he was, big shipbuilder, Wearside man, proud of his job, proud of his community, nearly in tears about what was now happening. She was as angry as I was and as determined as I am that we will now begin to do something about it. You know, so many Tories came to see me in this tour around Britain. So many of them saying to me, we voted Tory at the last election, but Mrs. Thatcher has gone too far. I think they're right. She's gone too far in robbing resources from our National Health Service - a hospital in Glasgow where they haven't even got the money

to mend the roof and when it rains, the maternity ward floods and they have to bring out the incontinence pads to mop it up. They're angry about what's happened to pensioners; some of them may not be able to heat their houses in the cold weather of this Winter. And I'm afraid the consequences of that will be tragic.

BARRETT Were pensioners particularly telling you that they may perhaps now change their allegiance?

ASHDOWN Yes, quite a few of them. One in Leeds, a lovely lady, Daisy Brough came to see me, said she'd voted Tory all her .. voted Tory all her life. But now she was determined to ensure that we did do something to stop this Government and she joined the Democrats the day I arrived there. She's like many others who simply feel angry at the way that pensioners have been treated and at the way that the dignity of our old at this stage is really under severe danger.

BARRETT So what are you suggesting people can do about all this? I mean, you mention, for example, the down and outs in London - a lot of people would say they could do a great deal more for themselves.

ASHDOWN Well that's a fair comment. But I invite people to go and have a look. I spoke to one man .. down under that roundabout, who's an ex-Serviceman. There he was, nowhere to live, nowhere to sleep - by the side of his bed on the floor - was a pair of perfectly polished ex-Army boots. There's a man who was proud of himself but didn't have a chance to be proud of the life that he was living.

BARRETT So, finally do you seriously suggest

that by marching at your side, something really different will happen?

ASHDOWN Well, as one of the ways. I hope people will make their voice heard to this Government, to make sure that they make that anger felt. But obviously those who would like to join a political party, dedicated to now ensuring that we build a decent kind of opposition in our country, as so many hundreds of thousands are now doing, will come and join us.

BARRETT Well let's just tell them how they can do that very quickly. By phoning, totally freely - 0800 500 245. I'll repeat the number. 0800 500 245.

OUT That was a Party Political Broadcast by the Social and Liberal Democrats.