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Prepared: 15:30 on 3 February 2010

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## PRIME MINISTER

*The Prime Minister was asked—*

### Engagements

Q1. [314797] **Mr. David Evennett** (Bexleyheath and Crayford) (Con): If he will list his official engagements for Wednesday 3 February.

**The Prime Minister:** It is a year for the Conservatives changing their mind every week about every single policy that they put forward. Two weeks ago, the Leader of the Opposition said that it would be "moral cowardice" not to tear up the Budget for 2010. The shadow Business Secretary then said that there would be "calamitous consequences" if that were to happen. Now the shadow Chief Secretary to the Treasury is boasting that he does

"not have a detailed plan".

In other words, not only do the people not know where the Conservative party stands, but the Conservative party does not know where it stands.

Q7. [314803] **Lembit Öpik** (Montgomeryshire) (LD): Thanks to the assistance of Finance Wales, the staff of the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills and the Royal Bank of Scotland, we have secured up to 100 new jobs at Regal Fayre in Montgomery. However, those are more than outweighed by 180 potential redundancies in Shop Direct's Newtown call centre. Could the Prime Minister arrange a meeting with the relevant Minister, once I have met Shop Direct's senior management tomorrow morning, to discuss this possible closure, which could cause a localised new recession in Montgomeryshire?

**The Prime Minister:** I understand the concern when any jobs are lost; it is a personal tragedy for those people who have, in many cases, given their lives to one company, which is unable to continue to employ them. I shall arrange for these meetings that the hon. Gentleman asks for to take place. I can assure him that every teenager who has been unemployed for six months now has the guarantee that they will get work or training, and that the services available to those who are unemployed are better than they have ever been. The result of that is that 300,000 people are leaving the unemployment register every month, and that employment is at a higher level and unemployment a lower level than people expected months ago.

**Andrew Miller** (Ellesmere Port and Neston) (Lab): Even though the claimant count is 48 per cent. down in my constituency, it is nevertheless a great disappointment to hear of Bowater going into administration. Will my right hon. Friend do what he can to ensure that the parent company's actions are investigated—it seems to be playing fast and loose with the British work force—and that the work force affected and the supply chain are given every possible support?

**The Prime Minister:** I know that the regional development agency stands ready to help my hon. Friend's constituents and the company that is in difficulty. This is clearly a difficult time for the work force. The administrators have said that in this case they will keep the business trading while they explore all options, which include looking for a buyer for the business. I can assure him that all the local agencies, including the rapid response teams at the jobcentre, will be available to help those workers in his constituency who are affected.

Q8. [314804] **Sir Paul Beresford** (Mole Valley) (Con): I am sure that the Prime Minister is aware that in percentage terms the population of the United Kingdom and Ireland is the greatest reservoir of the prion that causes the fatal and incurable human brain disease variant vCJD. One of the means of transmission is blood transfusion. Last October, the Government's scientific committee that is examining this issue recommended the use of a filter for blood for transfusion for children initially. When are the Government going to react to that recommendation?

**The Prime Minister:** The hon. Gentleman raises a very serious matter in great detail. That recommendation is obviously very important for the future of the blood transfusion service. I shall look at it very carefully and get back to him.

Q9. [314805] **Tony Lloyd** (Manchester, Central) (Lab): Can the Prime Minister confirm that inheritance tax cuts of £200,000 for the richest 3,000 families could be achieved only at the expense of spending on schools and hospitals throughout the nation? If he rejects that policy, can he guarantee that there will be no Cameronian wobble on this side of the House?

**The Prime Minister:** The one thing that the Conservatives have stuck to through this month of muddle and division is their policy on inheritance tax. Like their policy on hereditary peers, it will give the richest people in our society the greatest amount of additional wealth. That could be at the expense of schools, it could be at the expense of the health service and it could also be at the expense of defence. I think people should know that the Conservative party's first priority, above all others, is to reduce inheritance tax for those who are perfectly able to take care of themselves. We are for the many, they are for the few.

Q10. [314806] **Mr. Graham Stuart** (Beverley and Holderness) (Con): Health funding is skewed towards younger, urban, Labour-voting areas, rather than towards older, rural areas such as my constituency. That is why Hull receives more than £1,800 per head whereas East Riding receives just £1,200 per head. The Prime Minister knows that age, not deprivation, is the key driver of health need, so why does he put the electoral interests of the Labour party ahead of the needs of the sick?

**The Prime Minister:** I have to say to the hon. Gentleman that the evidence is that in his region there are 12 new hospitals and 37,000 more NHS staff. We have doubled expenditure on the national health service so that everyone in our country will benefit and we are giving personal guarantees to every citizen of this country that they will receive cancer treatment within two weeks, that they will be in a position to get an operation within 18 weeks, that they will get regular check-ups and, at the same time, that they will be able to see a doctor at weekends or in the evening. The party that has resisted giving rights to every citizen is the Conservative party.

Q11. [314807] **Mr. Brian Jenkins** (Tamworth) (Lab): My right hon. Friend is only too aware that we have, regrettably, too many war widows, to whom this country owes a great deal. Will he promise, in any Administration that he runs, to stop any suggestion to make those people relatively worse off, via the tax system, because they are not married?