

IS THAT THE BEST YOU'VE GOT?

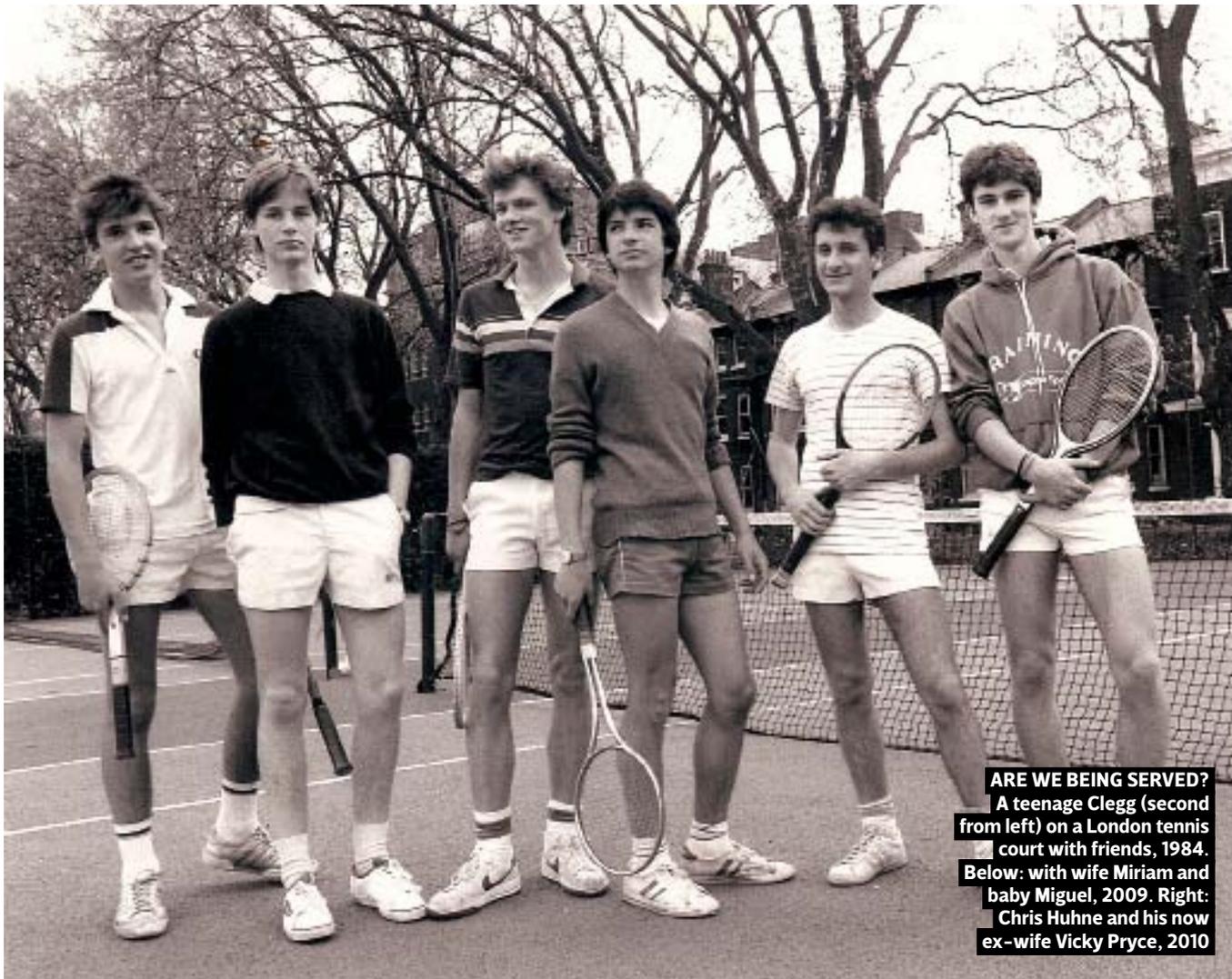
He would have loved to have been in *The Young Ones*, still sneaks the odd fag, and feels sorry for Chris Huhne. On the eve of the all-important Eastleigh by-election, the deputy prime minister **Nick Clegg** tells our celebrity questioners what he really thinks

QUIZMASTER: YORK MEMBERY
PORTRAIT BY HARRY BORDEN



NICK
CLEGG





ARE WE BEING SERVED?
A teenage Clegg (second from left) on a London tennis court with friends, 1984. Below: with wife Miriam and baby Miguel, 2009. Right: Chris Huhne and his now ex-wife Vicky Pryce, 2010

from whatever party, are decent people trying to do the right thing. And in my experience, the vast majority of MPs aren't in it for the money.

5 RICHARD MADELEY

Broadcaster

Getting a peacetime coalition airborne was one heck of an achievement. How long before the back-bench mutineers of both parties bring everything crashing back to earth?

There have been stresses and strains — one pulling to the right, one pulling to the left — but as long as I'm involved, I'm going to make sure it's anchored to the centre.

1 JEREMY CLARKSON

Journalist and broadcaster

Do you feel sorry for Chris Huhne? After all, he was only speeding.

I do feel sorry for the whole family because they have all clearly become engulfed in something that has spun right out of control. It's not the speeding that is the issue here, it's the subsequent offence of perverting the course of justice — and Chris has pleaded guilty.

2 IRVINE WELSH

Novelist, author of *Trainspotting*

Now that you've reneged on any worthwhile policies you had, and have effectively been lobby fodder to prop up a reactionary and unpopular Conservative government, what exactly is the point of the Liberal Democrats?

What a wonderfully objective question. I think Lib Dems can hold their heads up high on having delivered some key manifesto promises. I've also just recently announced a very progressive policy to allow mothers and fathers to take interchangeable parental leave. That wouldn't have happened without us being in government. The same goes for the Green Investment Bank and the triple-lock

guarantee for state pensions. These are great achievements, but I perfectly accept that Irvine is never going to give us credit for any of that.

3 ARTHUR SMITH

Comedian

What would you do if you lost your parliamentary seat and had to pursue a career outside politics. Would you make a good marriage-guidance counsellor?

I've no intention of losing my parliamentary seat! My political career has got a way to run yet. But I've always said that I don't see myself in politics for ever. After politics, who knows — though I think one Lib Dem MP turned stand-up comic is enough [Lembit Öpik].

4 CAROL VORDERMAN

Broadcaster

Why can't we halve the number of MPs, pay them more — and get better people?

Most MPs I know,

6 MARCUS BRIGSTOCKE

Comedian

You have three wishes, one political, one personal and one free choice. What will you do with them? Answer correctly and you win a peerage.

On the political front, that's easy — a Liberal Democrat government. On a personal front, my wish would be to get more sleep. The third would be to have more time to practise my tennis. But you can forget the peerage — I certainly wouldn't want one, at least not in today's unreformed House of Lords.

7 LEE CHILD

Thriller writer

Was joining the coalition worthwhile? Aren't you politically impotent?

I flatly disagree that it's an exercise in day-to-day impotence. I think in 2½ years as a party in a coalition we've already achieved as much as many single-party



thing in the national interest — although we're thankfully not fighting a war, we do have troops in Afghanistan, and we're facing prolonged economic difficulties.

16 JONATHAN DIMBLEBY
Broadcaster

I am sure you want to lead your party into the next election. Can you think of any reason why you should not do so? I've got a lot of fuel in the tank. And the more one goes on and learns from experience, and yes, one's mistakes, the more one gets a clearer idea of what the big things are that need to be done. All I can say is that you shouldn't go into frontline politics if you've got a thin skin.

17 SIR ROY STRONG
Art historian

Will England have a right to vote on Scottish independence — and if not, shouldn't it? No, I think it's a decision for the Scottish people to decide, although I think independence would be disastrous for all of us.

18 RICHARD HARRIES
Bishop of Oxford from 1987-2006

If you're in a coalition with Labour after the next election, what Liberal Democrat policies would you insist on?

I'm not going to start writing our manifesto here — but given that coalitions are likely to be more, rather than less, likely over time, all political parties are going to have to be upfront with people about the policies they're going to fight tooth-and-nail to deliver under all circumstances.

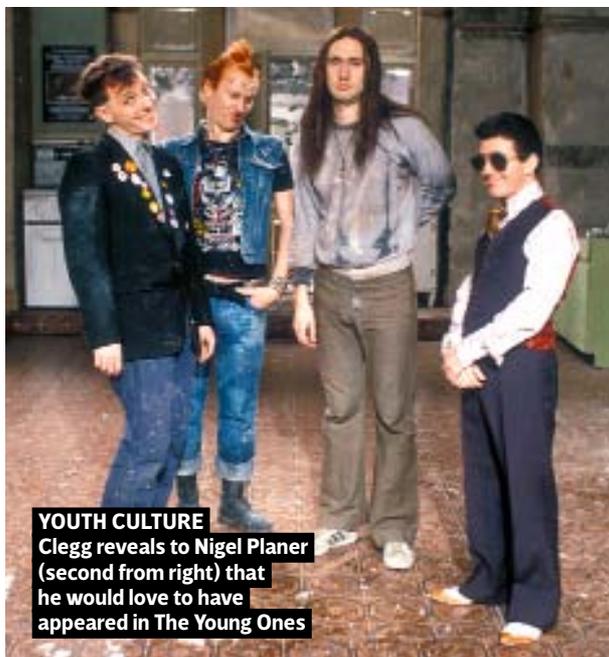
19 ROD LIDDLE
Journalist, broadcaster and author

Do you feel uncomfortable being a member of the least socially representative cabinet of the past 50 years?

I think the whole of politics, not just the cabinet, isn't representative of modern Britain. But neither is journalism, for that matter. I think Parliament as a whole looks and acts like a place from another century.

20 ADAM BOULTON
Political editor of Sky News

Who do you think will be the next leader of the Liberal Democrats? Is that a job application? I'm afraid I'm going



'THERE WILL BE A NUMBER OF SERIOUS CONTENDERS FOR MY JOB WHEN THE TIME ARISES'

to leave any predictions to the pundits. There will no doubt be a number of serious contenders for the job when the time arises.

21 SIR BERNARD INGHAM
Margaret Thatcher's chief press secretary

Why don't you concentrate on the only thing that will bring you electoral reward — namely, putting the nation's appalling finances in order — instead of chasing irrelevancies such as Lords' reform and proportional representation?

If Sir Bernard casts his eyes back to Mrs Thatcher's time, he'll know it's possible for a government to do more than one thing at once. When he was in government, the Tories, for instance, liberated the Falklands and decimated the industrial base in the north of England. That's two things at once.

22 LORD TEBBIT
Former Conservative party chairman and cabinet minister

Would most of your party be happier in coalition with the Europhile Labour party than the Eurosceptic Tories?

Clearly, the Lib Dems and Labour have more in common in wanting to make the most of our EU membership rather than constantly heading towards the exit sign. But equally, a fair number

of Lib Dems and Conservatives want to decentralise things away from Whitehall. And it's not so much personal preferences that determine the nature of a coalition — it's what the people tell us.

23 LYNN BARBER
Journalist

Did your admission that you'd slept with 30 women lead to a whole new crop of offers?

No.

24 NICHOLAS PARSONS
Radio presenter

Do you think you've increased the prestige of the party by agreeing to join the coalition — and what is the party's future as a result?

By being in coalition, not only are we showing that our heart is in the right place, but we're capable of taking those difficult decisions.

25 MARK BORKOWSKI
Publicist

Do people know the 'real' Nick Clegg — or have your PR team let you down?

I totally accept that people want to know who you really are, but at the same time I've always sought to protect my family's privacy. My wife and I are lucky: we're very happy and have three young children, who are the apples of my eye. I want my kids to grow up as normal as possible, so if it's a choice between an easy headline or protecting my children's privacy, I'll always choose the latter.

26 NICK FERRARI
Radio presenter

You were captain of tennis at school yet you always seem to lose to the prime minister. Why?

Because I let him win. That's a joke. I think the reason is simple: I don't practise enough. I'm far too erratic a player.

27 LORD STEEL
Former Liberal leader

Are you happy that serious law breakers are allowed to return to the Lords (unlike in the Commons) because we have no power to expel them?

That's one of the many things that's wrong with the unreformed House of Lords. But as David knows, his own bill will only apply to future ➡➡➡

criminals, not to those who've already committed a crime.

28 SIR MARTIN SORRELL *Businessman*

Why doesn't the government have a growth strategy that embraces education, taxation, technology, infrastructure and immigration? The electorate needs a vision. (Vince is right!) I think the vision is there — you just can't deliver it overnight. We're not just balancing the books — we need to do a whole lot more than that. Crucially, we need to wean one part of the country off its reliance on one sector, financial services, and rebalance the economy. It's about catering to the near-100,000 square miles of the United Kingdom, not just the one Square Mile in the City of London.

29 KATE ALLEN *Director of Amnesty International UK*

Are you aware that UK-supplied aircraft were reportedly used by Saudi Arabia to

'I LEFT MY FULL-TIME SMOKING HABIT BEHIND ME. BUT I STILL FALL OFF THE WAGON'

bomb villages in Yemen as recently as 2009? In light of this, do you think Mr Cameron should have been seeking new arms deals with Saudi Arabia?

You can take a purist position — saying that we should never manufacture arms or sell them to other governments — if you're a pacifist. I'm not. I believe there are circumstances in which armed conflict is unavoidable. The key thing is to make sure that the manufacture and the trading of arms is done with the utmost transparency — and I think by common consent we have one of the most rigorous arms export regimes

in the world. Vince Cable, in his role as business secretary, plays a prominent role in ensuring it's properly policed.

30 MICHAEL GRADE *Former chairman of the BBC, CEO of Channel 4 and executive chairman of ITV*

Who is going to win the next election? There is a lot of fluidity in politics at the moment. You've got a quite profound disenchantment with mainstream politics, with the result that some non-mainstream parties are doing better than they used to. But at the end of the day, when people's pencils are hovering over the ballot paper, I think they'll ask themselves who is best placed to produce a strong economy and a fair society. The answer to that is the Liberal Democrats.

31 JACQUI SMITH *Former Labour home secretary*

Apart from Cameron, which prime minister of the last 50 years do you most admire?

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I'd like to stretch the time period a bit and choose Attlee, who was deputy PM to Churchill during the Second World War, and went on to be prime minister in his own right in the 1945-51 Labour government — and in his own quiet way, delivered some of the biggest transformations in this country in the postwar period. I admire his quiet resilience and his capacity to leave Britain transformed.

32 SIMON MAYO
Radio presenter

In the years I covered Westminster for 5 Live, I found MPs, overwhelmingly, to be honest, decent folk trying their damndest to represent their constituents and argue for what they thought was right. Why isn't that reflected in the public's opinion and what can you and your fellow MPs do about it?
Politicians may be rightly sneered at some of the time, but the vast majority of MPs from whatever party are sincere people, working hard trying to pursue their own particular idea of how Britain should be run in an aggressive

political culture. I think we just have to try harder to make people aware of this fact.

33 FLOELLA BENJAMIN
Actress, former children's TV presenter and life peer

Following the result of the US presidential election, do you think the battle for the BME (black and minority ethnic) vote could decide the next election here — and why should people from the BME community vote Lib Dem?
The BME vote will obviously be more important in some parts of the country than others — but I don't see winning that vote as an electoral tactic. We should, as a matter of course, be seeking to build a society in which everyone feels they have a rightful place.

34 LADY ELSPETH CAMPBELL
Wife of former Lib Dem leader Sir Menzies Campbell

Are you still smoking — and if so, how do you find the time? I ask as someone who's

shared a few fags with you over the years.
I remember those times very fondly. Lady Elspeth is one of the most dedicated but also distinguished smokers I've ever come across. I actually left my full-time smoking habit behind me some time ago. Although I have to admit that I still occasionally fall off the wagon.

35 CHRIS TARRANT
Broadcaster

You've admitted crying to music. What triggers your tears — One Direction?
I love music, but I've learnt a few lessons since becoming deputy prime minister. One is not to expand on a question that's already invited a fair amount of ridicule.

36 SUSAN PENHALIGON
Actress

What's David Cameron's most endearing trait? And his worst?
He's got a very good sense of humour. But he is a Conservative ■

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