AN OPEN LETTER TO BRITAIN'S POLITICIANS

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Category: Politics

Let me start off by saying that I genuinely do not know who I will vote for in the upcoming election; this means that each of the major parties has the capacity to win or lose my vote. In case you are interested, here are some of the things that I will be looking for over the next month.

Firstly, you need to realise that I am not stupid and I will not thank you for treating me as such. I am able to handle complex information and I don't need everything reduced to simple sound bites. I know that some problems don't have easy answers and I also realise that there may be more than one solution to a particular problem.Â So, please don't insult my intelligence by trying to pretend there is only one possible answer to every situation and that you are right and the other parties are wrong. I know that there are shades of grey, not just black and white.

While we are on this subject, please remember that I am able to read and understand things for myself. I don't need you to tell me what the other parties' policies are. Tell me your vision for the country and leave me to work out what this means for me. If all you have to offer me is a series of reasons why I shouldn't vote for the other guys, then I'm really not interested in voting for you.

Talking ofÂ 'the other guys', I am far more likely to vote for politicians who show themselves generous to their opponents. If the other side has a good idea, admit it. Don't set out to create division and discord where there is none. Listening to grown-ups squabble is not my idea of entertainment and I will simply turn off the Today programme or the TV rather than listening to you bicker.

Be honest and truthful. Please don't tell me about your values and your honesty; just be honest and demonstrate your values. I am not one of those people who believe that all politicians are greedy and out for what they can get. I actually believe that most of you are motivated by public service and the belief that your particular view of politics and economics is best for the country. However, I also believe that too many of you will be economical with the truth in order to be elected or re-elected. If I find that I can't trust you to tell the truth to me, I am unlikely to trust you to govern the country.

Give me a vision of the future and not stories about the past. I don't need you to tell me what life was like in Britain under the Tories in the eighties or Labour in the seventies. I remember both, and neither decade resembles this one very much. Give me a simple, realistic, believable picture of why the country will be better off with you at the helm and then trust me to make the comparisons.

Of course, I realise that you will, in all likelihood, ignore everything I have said. The election campaigns will have been planned to the last detail. Rather than looking at common ground and consensus, you will seek to show clear differences between the parties. You will exaggerate the little differences and seek to belittle your opponents at every turn. Spin (which is just a polite way of saying 'lie') will take the place of truth and complex issues will be reduced to banal superficialities.

At the end of the campaign, someone will win and they campaign teams will pop their champagne corks with a feeling of a job well done. But remember, there is another important factor in play here;

the future of our democratic system itself.Â Survey after survey shows that the British people are becoming disillusioned with politics and effectively disenfranchised. Turn out in this election is likely to be one of the lowest ever. If your party wins the election, but, in the process, alienates more votersÂ you will have done us a huge disservice.