TALKING POLITICS

Aim: Discussion, expressing opinions, agreeing and disagreeing

Activity: Political Nightmares - Interviewing and discussion

Level: Advanced

Outline:

• Split students into two groups - a group of journalists and a group of politicians.
• Give each student a copy of one of the interview notes. Each student should be assigned one role as either a Journalist or a Politician (i.e., Environment Minister, Foreign Minister, etc.)
• Ask students if they have any questions on the explanatory notes.
• Give students ten minutes to prepare for the interview.
• Have students break up into pairs and conduct the interview.
• Circulate around the classroom helping students and taking notes on common language problems.
• Begin the activity follow-up by going over some of the more common mistakes made by students.
• Finish the activity as a class by asking each pair to argue one of the points in front of the rest of the class. Ask other students to comment on the arguments presented.
Political Nightmares

Environment Minister

1. You own three cars, one of which is a Ferrari.
2. You were seen dropping litter in a park.
3. When asked what you thought about 'Green Peace' you were quoted as saying, 'I believe that plants have as much right as humans to have a bit of rest.'
4. You own part of 'McDonalds' which is responsible for cutting down large sections of the rain forest.
5. Earlier in your career you served in the Navy, where you took part in nuclear testing.

Foreign Minister

1. On a visit to Latin America you were quoted as saying, 'I wish I had studied Latin at school then I might be able to understand you guys.'
2. You thought Extremadura was in Scotland.
3. On a visit to America you thought that the Vice President was a waiter and asked him to get you a cup of tea.
4. When asked your opinion on China you were quoted as saying, 'I don't know much about the country but the people make great servants - very hard-working.'
5. In a recent interview with the French Foreign Minister you offended him and he called you 'xenophobic' to which you replied, 'Sorry, I don't speak French.'

Home Secretary

1. One day after you gave a speech on the importance of parents to teach their children morals your son was convicted for selling drugs.
2. When you were younger you were a supporter of capital punishment.
3. On a recent visit to Wales you were quoted as saying 'Wales is a beautiful country it's a pity about the people.'
4. In a debate on equal rights you said, 'Women are weaker than men.'

Education Minister

1. You talk about the importance and good standard of state schools but both your children attend private schools.
2. On a visit to a school in Hackney (a depressed area) you were quoted as saying 'I've never met so many impolite children, they should be in prison.'
3. When asked about increasing class sizes in schools you replied '25, 35 - what's the difference?'
4. You were quoted as saying, 'Mixed Schools are a bad idea because the girls distract the boys.'
5. When a Cambridge professor allowed his students to use American spelling you said, 'This man should be sacked for a lack of patriotism; he obviously has no love of language.'

Health Minister

1. You talk about the need for people to stop smoking due to the cost for the NHS but smoke yourself.
2. When asked about the ever increasing waiting list for patients you were quoted as saying, 'Well, it's not my fault that people keep getting sick!'
3. In a debate on care for the disabled you said, 'The thing with disabled people is that they can't do the same things as you or I.'
4. When asked what the government planned to do to reduce the amount of hours worked by nurses and doctors you were quoted as saying, 'They should be grateful that they've got a job.'
5. You believe that there should be a move towards more private health care with a reduction in the public sector.
Politicians

You are about to be interviewed by a journalist who has a reputation for embarrassing politicians and exposing their faults. If this interview goes badly you could be in danger of losing your job. Luckily someone who works for you managed to steal a copy of the journalists’ notes. You have ten minutes to think about the questions that the journalist is likely to ask you and to think of suitable answers that will hopefully save your job.

Journalists

You are about to interview a top politician and are keen to expose he/she as being inadequate for the job they do. The government has been under increasing pressure recently and cannot afford any more mistakes. You have worked very hard gathering information that these politicians would like to forget. This is a your big chance to enhance your reputation and further your career.