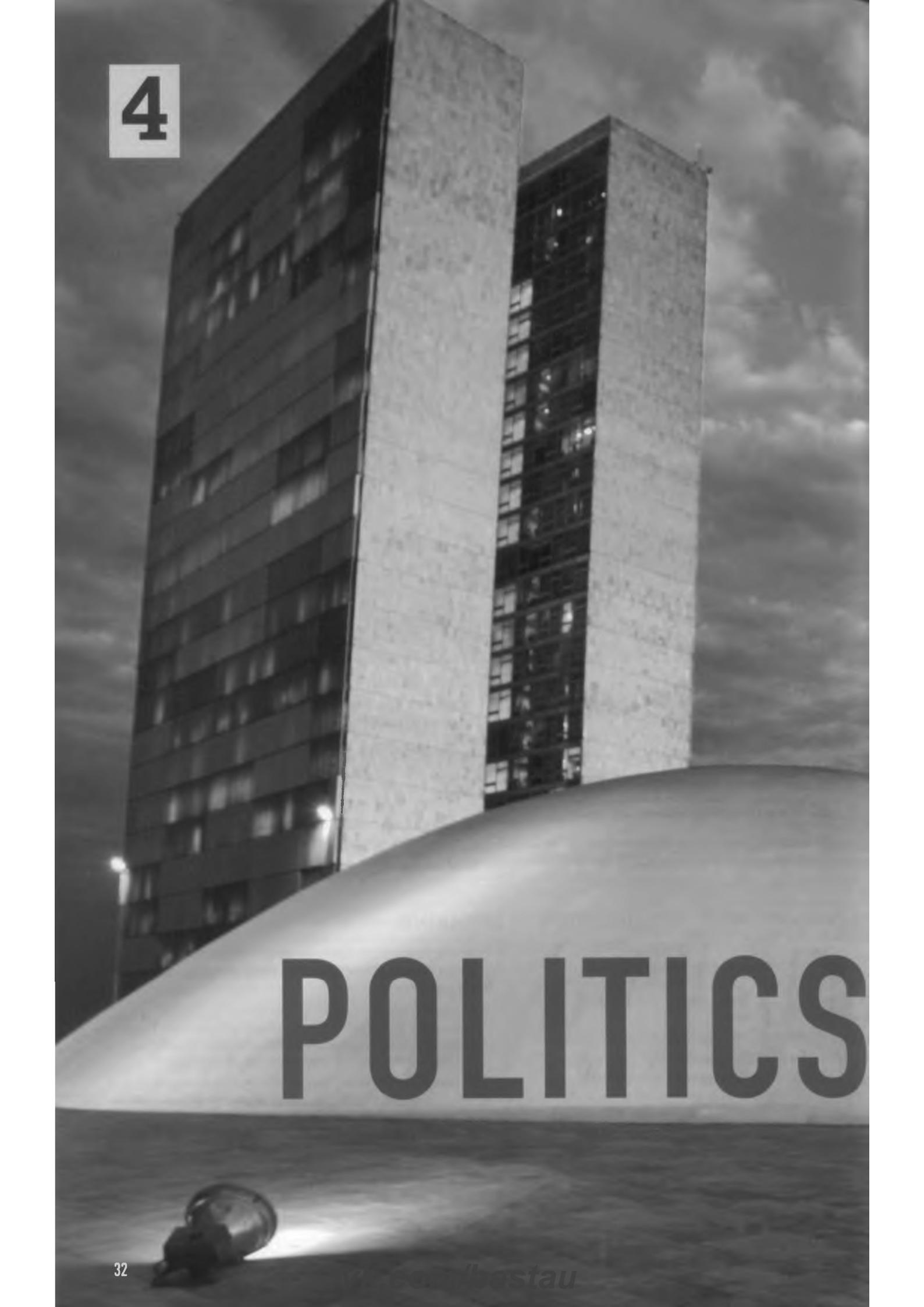
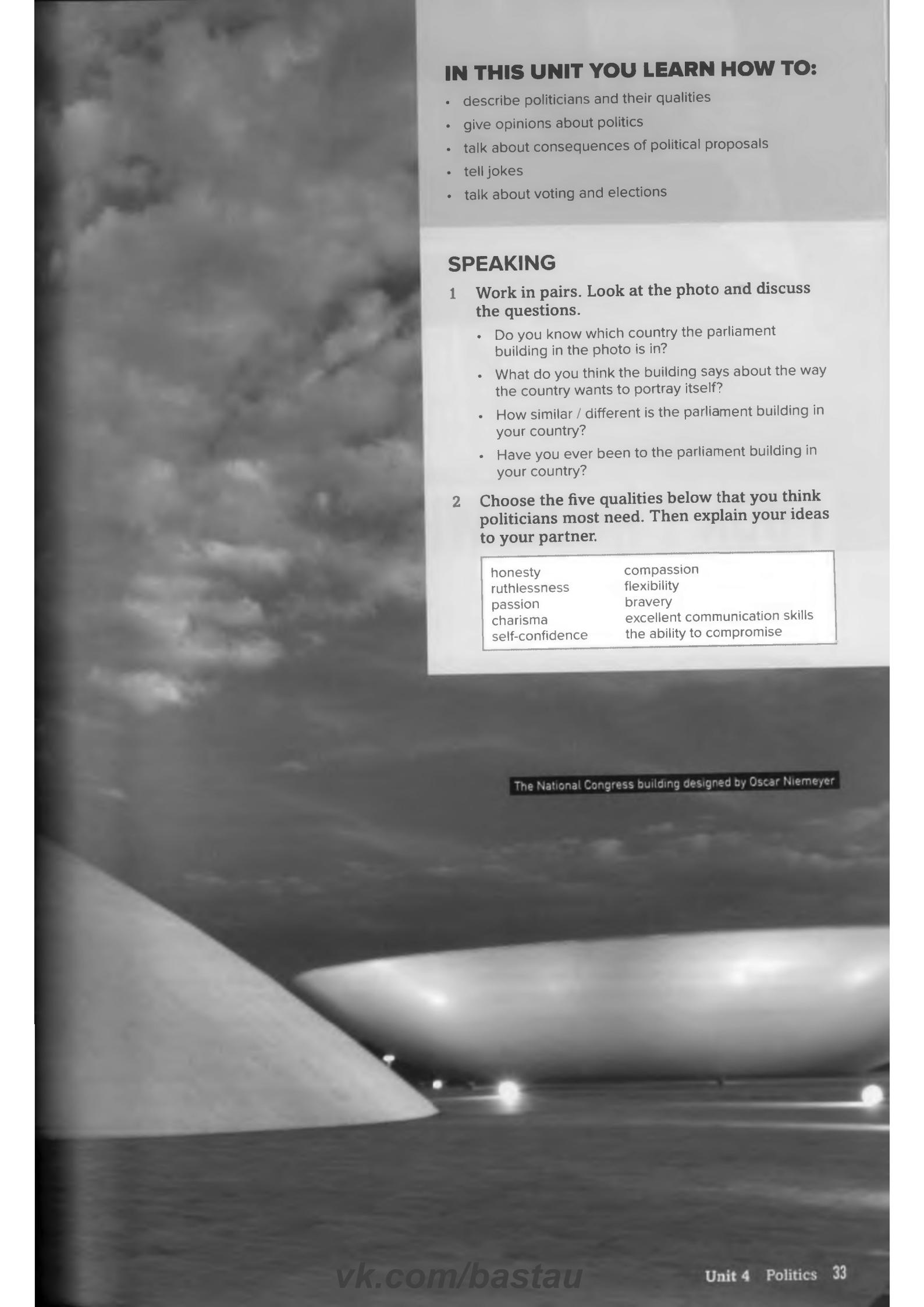


4



POLITICS



IN THIS UNIT YOU LEARN HOW TO:

- describe politicians and their qualities
- give opinions about politics
- talk about consequences of political proposals
- tell jokes
- talk about voting and elections

SPEAKING

1 Work in pairs. Look at the photo and discuss the questions.

- Do you know which country the parliament building in the photo is in?
- What do you think the building says about the way the country wants to portray itself?
- How similar / different is the parliament building in your country?
- Have you ever been to the parliament building in your country?

2 Choose the five qualities below that you think politicians most need. Then explain your ideas to your partner.

honesty	compassion
ruthlessness	flexibility
passion	bravery
charisma	excellent communication skills
self-confidence	the ability to compromise

The National Congress building designed by Oscar Niemeyer



I DON'T KNOW WHERE I STAND

DEVELOPING CONVERSATIONS

Giving opinions

1 Find six pairs of sentences with a similar meaning.

- 1 I'm a huge fan of the idea.
- 2 I don't really know where I stand.
- 3 I'm totally against it.
- 4 I think the negatives far outweigh the positives.
- 5 I can't pass judgement. I don't know enough about it.
- 6 It's a good idea in theory, just not in practice.
- 7 I am in favour. I just have some slight reservations.
- 8 I have some major doubts about it.
- 9 It's OK in principle. I just think it's unworkable.
- 10 I'm completely opposed to it.
- 11 It's not without problems, but on the whole I like it.
- 12 I'm totally in favour of it.

2 Work in groups. Use sentences from Exercise 1 to explain how you feel about the following:

- nuclear energy
- globalisation
- free health care
- putting up taxes
- increasing military spending
- raising the age of retirement to 70
- introducing a maximum wage
- your country hosting a major international event
- limiting the working week to a maximum of 35 hours
- banning cars from city centres

LISTENING

3 ► 11 Listen to two conversations about topics from Exercise 2. Answer the questions for each conversation.

- 1 What is the topic of the conversation?
- 2 Where does each person stand on the issue?

4 ► 11 Work in pairs. Look at these sentences from the conversations. Decide which are incorrect and then correct them. Listen again and check your answers.

Conversation 1

- 1 Some of these salaries are obscene.
- 2 It all just puts up prices.
- 3 They'd just detail it as part of their income.
- 4 They'd be able to find ways through it.
- 5 I'm just playing devil's advocate.

Conversation 2

- 6 Did you hear about this proposal to bid to hold the Olympics here?
- 7 Won't the Games earn a lot of money?
- 8 They always talk about them leaving a good facility.
- 9 We don't have a hope in hell.
- 10 It'd be a receipt for disaster.

5 With your partner, discuss the questions.

- Which of the opinions expressed do you have most/least sympathy with? Why?
- What are the advantages of playing devil's advocate? Are there any downsides?
- In what other ways might cities run up huge debts?
- Have you ever heard any stories about cities going bankrupt? Where? What happened?

GRAMMAR

Conditionals 1

Conditionals can be used to talk about general truths as well as both probable and imagined events now or in the future. They usually – but not always – introduce conditions with the word *if*.

6 Match 1–5 to a–e to make extracts from the conversations.

- 1 And what would you include in pay?
- 2 Even if they do manage to introduce this new law,
- 3 Imagine if we actually won it.
- 4 If they're earning that much,
- 5 As long as there's the official desire to make it work,
 - a it encourages other people to ask for more.
 - b It'd be a recipe for disaster.
 - c Supposing they were given a boat, or whatever, instead of money?
 - d then it'll work.
 - e it's basically going to be unworkable.

7 Work in pairs. Look at the extracts in Exercise 6 and answer the questions.

- 1 Which sentence describes something generally true?
- 2 Which sentences describe probable events in the future?
- 3 Which sentences describe imagined events now / in the future?
- 4 What tenses are used in the conditional parts of each sentence?
- 5 What structures are used in the result clauses?
- 6 Which other words apart from *if* are used to introduce conditions?

G Check your ideas on page 169 and do Exercise 1.

8 Work in pairs. Use different conditional structures to think of at least two responses to each sentence. Then compare your ideas with another pair. Who has the best ideas?

- 1 I'm not going to vote. What's the point? It's not like it makes any difference, does it?
- 2 They say they're going to make it much harder for people to get into the country.
- 3 I read somewhere that they're going to start privatising more of the health service.
- 4 He's been accused of lying about his expenses and claiming more than he should've done.
- 5 He can't go on holiday now, not with a crisis like this developing.
- 6 Smoking kills thousands every year. It should just be completely banned.

G For further practice, see Exercise 2 on page 170.

VOCABULARY Consequences

9 Complete the sentences with these verbs.

bankrupt	boost	devastate	lead
trigger	benefit	compound	discourage
reduce	undermine		

- 1 It might _____ people from working.
- 2 It might _____ the rich, but it'll harm the poor.
- 3 It'll _____ the economy and result in the creation of new jobs.
- 4 It could _____ the whole area and leave thousands unemployed.
- 5 It'd put an enormous strain on finances. It could _____ the city.
- 6 It's a bad idea. If anything, it'll _____ the existing social problems.
- 7 It might _____ an election earlier than they wanted.
- 8 It's bad. It'll _____ relations between the two countries.
- 9 It might help to _____ drug abuse.
- 10 It'll create divisions and _____ to tension.

10 Work in pairs. Think of one event that could make each of the things in Exercise 9 happen.

If they put up taxes, it might discourage people from working.

11 Use these verbs to rewrite four sentences from Exercise 9 so they mean the opposite. You may need to change more than just the verbs.

damage	encourage	resolve	strengthen
--------	-----------	---------	------------

CONVERSATION PRACTICE

12 Work in pairs. Think of two proposals in areas such as those in the box below: one that you would both like to see happen, and one – either good or bad – that you have heard is happening. Discuss the possible consequences of each proposal.

education	foreign policy	finance	health
housing	the economy	culture	transport

13 Work with a new partner. Take turns to start conversations about the proposals. You can use the phrases below to start your conversations.

I don't know about you, but I'm personally in favour of...

Did you hear about this proposal to ...?

7 To watch the video and do the activities, see the DVD ROM.

NO LAUGHING MATTER

READING

1 Work in groups. Discuss the questions.

- Where do you think the photo opposite was taken? What do you think is happening in the photo?
- Is film of politicians inside parliament shown on TV in your country? If yes, do you ever watch it?
- How do most politicians behave in parliament? What do you think of the way they behave?

2 Read the article about Prime Minister's Questions in the UK Parliament. Then work in pairs and answer the questions.

- 1 What happens in Prime Minister's Questions?
- 2 What does the author think of it?
- 3 What did you find most surprising / interesting in the article?
- 4 How far do you agree with the author's opinions?

3 Based on what the author says, are the sentences true (T), false (F) or not mentioned (N)?

- 1 The prime minister only attends parliament on a Wednesday.
- 2 MPs may exaggerate how funny they find the jokes during PMQs.
- 3 Satire was invented in the eighteenth century.
- 4 The main political parties share a similar approach to certain policies.
- 5 Satirical shows on TV encourage activism.
- 6 The author believes in the value of politics.
- 7 The Yes Men leak information that big companies would rather the media didn't see.
- 8 The author wants to abolish PMQs.

4 Complete the sentences with the correct form of the words in bold in the article. The first one is done for you.

- 1 There's still insufficient *representation* of women in our parliament. Only 15% of MPs are women.
- 2 The Black Power movement that _____ in the 1960s grew out of the civil rights struggle in America.
- 3 A lot of young people are very _____ with politics but just not with the traditional parties.
- 4 They're not trying to undermine the whole system. They're _____ pointing out where there is corruption.
- 5 He has a very _____ following so he always attracts big crowds when he speaks.
- 6 They're very concerned with ensuring the security of _____ systems such as passports.
- 7 It's an old book but still funny and relevant today. It's a _____ of war and life in the army.
- 8 They _____ lowering the tax because they said it would only benefit the rich.

5 Work in groups. Discuss the questions.

- Is there anything similar to PMQs in your country?
- Do British politicians sound similar or different to politicians in your country? In what way?
- Are there any satirical programmes or satirists on TV in your country? If yes, do you watch them?
- What funny videos, images or short texts are doing the rounds on the Internet at the moment?
- Do you ever tell or make jokes? If yes, who with?

LISTENING

6 ► 12 Listen to a joke about politicians. Decide:

- 1 how funny you think it is on a scale of 1–5.
- 2 what aspect of politics it's joking about.
- 3 if you think there is an element of truth about it.

UNDERSTANDING VOCABULARY

'Ways of' verb groups

The person telling the joke used some descriptive verbs that show the way something was done.

He arrives at the gates of heaven clutching his bags. = hold (tightly)

He strolls along the beach. = go / move (on foot with leisure)

He gazes at the beautiful sunset. = look (with wonder)

He gasps, 'But what are you doing ...' = say (in shock)

His old friends are ... chattering to each other. = talk (continuously)

The devil chuckles ... = laugh (quietly)

These descriptive verbs are usually used with the same prepositions and with the same grammatical patterns as the more basic verbs such as *hold*, *move*, *look*, etc. Sometimes recognising these patterns can help you to guess unknown words.

7 Work in pairs. Look at audio script 12 on page 201 and put the words in bold into groups according to their basic meaning.

8 Add these words to the groups you made.

grab	glare	creep	race	mumble
giggle	mutter	stare	stagger	scream

9 Work in pairs. You are going to tell each other a joke.

Student A: read the joke in File 11 on page 187.

Student B: read the joke in File 12 on page 188.

Replace the words in *italics* with more descriptive words. Then tell the joke to your partner. Decide how you would rate each one on a scale of 1–5.

Symbol of democracy is a joke



There are some who say that Prime Minister's Questions (PMQs) is a great symbol of democracy. Every Wednesday the head of our government is forced to attend parliament and answer questions from MPs. As MPs are representatives of the people, PMQs offers a direct line of access to the top where we, the public, can hold the government to account for their actions. That's the theory. However, the reality is somewhat different and actually symbolises much that is wrong with politics here.

What usually happens is this: the leader of the main opposition party stands up and asks a question about a new policy or about some recently released figures that show the government is failing. I say asks a question, but half the time it's just a joke at the prime minister's expense. The prime minister then essentially ignores the question and pokes fun at the leader of the opposition, who then has to ask another question or say something funny. All of this is accompanied by MPs on both sides shouting or laughing like hyenas as they compete to demonstrate loyalty to their leader.

“What has this got to do with politics or democracy? ”

Defenders of the ritual note that this type of humour has a long history in British politics. Records of politicians insulting each other in this manner date back to the eighteenth century. They also claim it engages voters in issues and represents the values of free speech. They even argue that such satirical humour prevents the emergence of dictators by using mockery and ridicule to reduce fear and build confidence.

While there may well be elements of truth in the historical claim, the bottom line is that what we are really seeing here is politics being turned into mere entertainment. The politicians actually pay professional comedy writers to write jokes for them, and the rest of the media love it because it fits neatly into



a five-minute slot on the TV news. This is not satire championing truth and exposing the corruption of power. It's more like kids in a playground throwing insults. The kids don't really mean it – it's just a game – and the same goes for the politicians. As 'opposing' parties have more or less adopted the same economic outlook, the only way to mark a difference is through this mock abuse.

And those comedy writers for PMQs are probably the same kind that write for the TV satirists, who the academic Russell Peterson says are undermining the value of politics. He argues that real satire adopts a moral stance – it has an agenda and seeks change – whereas most satirical TV programmes only seek balance. They aim to take the mickey equally out of all politicians based on character more than policy. As a result, all politicians are seen as bad and political engagement is discouraged.

But elsewhere it seems humour can engage voters. For example, a popular blog by the satirist Beppe Grillo in Italy led to the formation of a movement that gained 25% of the vote in the 2013 elections. And as can be seen from the exploits of the activist duo Jacques Servin and Igor Vamos – better known as the Yes Men – laughter can still pose a serious challenge to the rich and powerful. The pair have developed a technique they call 'identity correction'. Posing as representatives of entities they dislike – the World Trade Organization, for instance, or the ExxonMobil oil and gas company – they issue shocking, ridiculous press releases that exaggerate official positions in order to force back into the news stories that corporations would rather bury. Whatever your politics, surely such tactics serve as a braver, better symbol of democracy than a couple of comfortable middle-aged white blokes exchanging empty insults once a week.

Comments 146 | Add a comment | Share

CAST YOUR VOTE

READING

- 1 Work in groups. Discuss what you know about Switzerland. Think about the following:
 - its geography
 - its history
 - famous Swiss people – living or dead
 - its famous products, brands and services
 - its political system
- 2 Read an article about the Swiss electoral system. Find:
 - 1 three ways in which Swiss MPs are quite unusual.
 - 2 three examples of how Swiss people participate in politics.
 - 3 how members of the National Council and the Senate are selected.
 - 4 one reason that may explain why not many Swiss people vote.
- 3 Read the article again. Tick (✓) what you think are positive aspects of the Swiss system. Cross (✗) what you think is negative.
- 4 Work in pairs. Compare and explain your ideas. Discuss what is similar to / different from the system in your country.
- 5 With your partner, discuss what you think the words and phrases in bold in the article mean.

VOCABULARY Elections and politics

- 6 Use these nouns to complete each group of phrases below. There are two nouns you do not need.

consensus	figure	party	scandal	victory
election	MP	poll	strike	vote

- 1 a prominent ~ in the anti-war movement / a hate ~ / be seen as a ~ of fun / a very influential ~
- 2 the ~ takes place in May / call an ~ / rig an ~ / in the run-up to the ~
- 3 carry out a ~ / conduct a ~ among students / in the latest ~ / go to the ~
- 4 reach a ~ / establish a ~ / an emerging ~ / a broad ~
- 5 expose a bribery ~ / a sex ~ / be mixed up in a ~ / cover up a ~
- 6 stand as an ~ / lobby ~s / a right-wing ~ / an outspoken ~
- 7 a unanimous ~ / cast your ~ / a protest ~ / alleged ~-rigging
- 8 a narrow ~ / a landslide ~ / a hollow ~ / claim ~
- 7 Underline any phrases in Exercise 6 that are new for you. Write example sentences for each.
- 8 Work in pairs. Compare your sentences. Then think of one more verb or adjective that can be used with each of the ten nouns in the box in Exercise 6.



THE ELECTORAL SYSTEM SWISS STYLE

Consisting of 26 cantons, or member states, the country of Switzerland has a long tradition of democracy – some claim it dates back to the 13th century. It is also perhaps unique in the amount of power it **allocates** to regional and local institutions. Parliament only sits 12 weeks a year and MPs are paid modest salaries compared to **counterparts** abroad. Most have second jobs in the community.

In fact, this devolution of power extends to individual citizens. Even when the national parliament decides to change **federal** law, individuals can challenge the decision by collecting 50,000 signatures on a **petition**. This triggers an automatic **referendum**. Furthermore, anyone can propose laws by getting 100,000 signatures. Similar processes exist at a local level. People may vote on these single issues 15 times a year or more. The vast majority of votes are cast by post.

The Swiss have a federal parliament with two bodies – the National Council and the Senate – which choose the government. The Senate is formed by the individual cantons electing two

representatives each, irrespective of population size. The 200 MPs in the National Council are elected via a complex form of **proportional representation**. Each canton is allocated a number of seats according to population, ranging from 34 (Zurich) to one (Uri). The political parties provide lists of candidates for each canton, which are sent to the electorate. Voters can vote not only for the party but also for specific candidates. They can even make their own list.

The number of seats each party gains in any canton is determined by the percentage of party **ballot papers** returned. The specific people who are then chosen for each party depends on the individual votes cast for each candidate. Because of this system, individual representatives maintain a direct relationship with their voters, often rejecting the **party line**. Special interest groups often **lobby** voters to support MPs favouring their cause.

Coalitions are the norm in Switzerland as parties don't gain an absolute majority, with the result that a tradition of **consensus** has become established. This may partly explain why voter turnout is often less than 50% of the electorate.



LISTENING

- 9 Work in groups. Answer the questions below about these events.

an election for a student council	a referendum
a general election	a strike ballot
a local election	a talent show vote
an opinion poll	a vote in parliament

- 1 In which of the above do you vote for a person or party? In which for a law or action?
- 2 Who votes in each case?
- 3 Which ones have you voted in and why? What was the outcome?
- 4 Which one of the above is the only event you don't directly vote in? How is it sometimes connected to voting?
- 5 Can you think of any other times you might vote?
- 6 Have you ever stood for election or campaigned in a vote? When? What happened?

- 10 ► 13 Listen to five people talking about events from Exercise 9. Match each speaker (1–5) to one of the events.

- 11 ► 13 Listen again. Match each speaker to one of the following. There is one that you do not need.

Which person:

- a mentions a broken promise?
- b talks about vote-rigging?
- c talks about voter turnout?
- d talks about standing for parliament?
- e expresses surprise at something?
- f is defending an unpopular decision?

People in Glarus, Switzerland continue their 700-year tradition of open-air voting

GRAMMAR

Conditionals 2

Conditionals can be used to talk about:

- 1 general past truths.
- 2 imagined events in the past.
- 3 imagined events in both the past and the present.

- 12 Match the sentences from the listening (a–e) to the functions (1–3) in the box. Then work in pairs and compare your ideas.

- a *It helped the programme's ratings if they had a kind of hate figure.*
- b *I might not have minded so much if the calls were free, but they're making a fortune on them.*
- c *If they hadn't been so reluctant to negotiate, we would not be taking this action now.*
- d *If they'd called on another day, I wouldn't have taken part.*
- e *It's unlikely we would've abolished uniforms if we didn't have a body like this.*

- G Check your ideas on page 170 and do Exercise 1.
- 13 With your partner, decide which option is *not* possible. Then discuss the difference in meaning between the two possible options.

- 1 If the parliamentary vote goes against the government next week, *it could trigger / it'll trigger / it triggered* an election.
- 2 The government should've done more for the middle classes if they *want / wanted / would've wanted* to win the election.
- 3 If they complain, *tell / I wouldn't tell / I told* the boss.
- 4 If I'd heard something, *I'd told / I would tell / I would've told* you.
- 5 If it hadn't been for him, *I wouldn't be working / wouldn't have been working / would never have got a job here.*

- 14 Think about the past and present results of the following things. Write two conditional sentences about each. Then work with your partner and compare your ideas.

- the result of the last election
- the impact a famous figure has had in your country
- an important moment in your life

G For further practice, see Exercise 2 on page 171.

SPEAKING

- 15 Work in groups. Discuss the questions.

- What's voter turnout like in your country? Why?
- How do you think democracy could be improved?
- Which elections were significant for you personally / your country / the world? Why?
- Have you heard of any scandals? What happened?
- What would be your proposals if you stood for a school body / a local election / parliament?