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## Gordon Brown desperate to turn attention to economy

The small business vote would be swung in favour of a party that clamped down on late payments, a survey of nearly 300 company owners has found. In its latest survey, the Bristol-based website FreeIndex found 50% of businesses said outlawing late payment is the policy that would make the most impact on their business and therefore swing their vote.

Martin Turner, Managing Director at FreeIndex, said the results showed the economy remained at the forefront of business minds.

“It is not surprising that late payment is such an issue for businesses,” he said. “After all, a company not being paid on time can cause serious damage, particularly to smaller businesses who have limited cash flow.

“In the current economic climate, and given the difficulties businesses are facing in borrowing, the ease of cash flow is even more critical.

“For a political party to win the vote of small businesses they need to focus on what is key to not only helping a business survive and grow, but also to attracting new ventures that might otherwise be put off from starting a business in today’s harsh economy.”

The Green Party is currently the only political party to be pledging to outlaw late payments, while a survey last week by FreeIndex showed 53% of businesses believe that Liberal Democrat leader Nick Clegg is the leader most likely to do the most to help their business grow.

The results come on the day the final televised election debate takes place, with the event supposedly focussing on the economy.

However, the campaign has been overshadowed by Labour leader Gordon Brown’s gaffe yesterday, when he described an elderly lady who had questioned him on immigration as a “bigot”.

His words were overheard as he was driven away because the Prime Minister had forgotten to take off his radio microphone, provided by Sky News.

Today, Mr Brown has said he understands people’s concerns about immigration and tried to steer the debate back to the nation’s finances by saying “yesterday was yesterday”. Meeting factory workers in Halesowen ahead of the debate on Thursday, Mr Brown was again challenged on immigration by an employee who told him it was “way too high”.

## FreeIndex Press Coverage



Mr Brown said: “I understand the worries people have about immigration, I understand the concerns about what is happening to people, neighbourhoods, and I understand the fears that people have.”

“But we have taken action with this new points system and net migration to the United Kingdom is now coming down.”

Lib Dem leader Nick Clegg, out campaigning in Birmingham, said the PM had apologised and explained himself and he did not want to comment further. Conservative leader David Cameron has been visiting Birmingham Children’s Hospital and discussing his party’s plans to create a £200m cancer drugs fund.

Asked about Mr Brown’s comments on Wednesday he said “the words speak for themselves”.