

It's the big question here at the Conservative Party Conference in Manchester.

As the satirical magazine Private Eye might say, the world of politics was rocked last week by the bombshell that The Sun newspaper has withdrawn its support from the Labour Party and is now backing Tory leader David Cameron to be the next Prime Minister.

The story was illustrated by pictures of young ladies who were so excited that they forgot to put their clothes on - except for their blue knickers.

This has created a certain excitement amongst gentlemen of a certain age who had come to Manchester for a number of fringe meetings on defence. But they are faced with a dilemma between lust and loyalty at lunchtime today. And shadow defence ministers are on the horns of a dilemma too.

The First Defence fringe meeting is a well established part of the political calendar, with Shadow Secretary of State Dr Liam Fox, fresh back from yet another visit to US think tanks, billed as top speaker.

But The Sun's switch is partly based around their slogan "Don't they know there's a war on". So there is a hastily arranged Sun fringe meeting on defence today too - and so Dr Fox will be there, leaving the First Defence reins in the hands of his experienced deputy Gerald Howarth.

Purely in the interests of the historical record, Defence Viewpoints may have to look in too.....

The stands and stall are a constant source of entertainment at Party Conferences. This time, its spot who wasn't at Bournemouth and Blackpool.

Top of the list is the British Fur Trade Association. They probably feared they'd get burned out if they'd appeared on the south coast.

The Church Society claim they could only afford to attend one, and they're not in Manchester because the Tories are the least Godly party/most in need of being saved.

The Countryside Alliance are there of course, trying to get the hunting ban repealed, while outside the security cordon the anti-hunting lobby is in front of the cameras in fully fancy dress.

The Kennel Club are attracting attention by having real dogs on the stand - but only during delegates' lunchtime break.

The North West Aerospace Alliance is there too, partly understandable because this is their home turf, but they are the only permanent site of the defence industry. All the big players are in

attendance - BAE Systems, Thales, EADS, Finmeccanica, Northrop Grumman, Babcock - but only as attendees at the fringe meetings.

On which further reports will follow.