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### **Election special: it's 2010, and it's not quite the same**

Election campaign is getting more and more heated up, as 6<sup>th</sup> May approaches, as leaders get more desperate, as leaflets continue to fly into your homes, as millions decide which way they

TV debates have certainly changed a lot for this election: suddenly, Britain has a three-party system, “three-horse race” , in the words from the leader of the Liberal Democrats, Nick Clegg, described after the first debate. On the other hand, David Cameron did not live up to the expectation of absolute advantage in the three debates, as Gordon Brown failed to gain grounds. Personally, I believed the Lib Dems would gain the most out of the debates, no matter how well or bad Clegg performs. This was a prediction made before the first TV debate. However, no one has predicted the huge impact brought by the debate, as Lib Dems overtook Labour and Conservatives in polls. As the other debates took place, the performers of the party leaders have automatically contributed to the changes in opinion polls. This, as many opposed to the idea of leaders TV debates have argued, British politics is leaning towards American Presidentialism, promoting personal image of leaders rather than party policies.

A year ago, most opinion polls are pointing towards a Conservatives’ victory in the election, as Labour failed to impress. The 2010 election seemed to be like any other ordinary ones with predicted results. Yet as Gordon Brown pushes the election date till last minute, as Britain stepped out of recession into recovery, public opinions changed. TV debates changed everything around and point towards a hung parliament. This rarely used politically term certainly heated up more discussions amongst the public, and increased the interest of voting, especially for first time voters. Leaders remained the focus of the election. If you ask ordinary electorates to name the Labour ministers, the Tories shadow cabinet, or at least a few Liberal Democrat MPs, they would struggle. Members of the public would find it difficult to distinguish parties with their policies, due to the fact that the major parties have moved closer and closer to each other in

recent years. Therefore, image and policies are just equally important in this election, and possible, many elections to come.

The power of the press and media is undeniably influential. In fact, they could have an impact on the final result. Look how Labour was dragged down and now looking hopeless of winning a majority after that “bigot” comment Gordon Brown made. Had this happened to Cameron or Clegg, the entire situation could be different. TV debates have once again confirmed the impact of the media, especially with the widespread information on the internet. The impact of the internet is impossible to fully accurately predict. The press also has a massive impact on the election results, for instance in 1992. In this election, the press is overwhelmingly pro-Conservatives. Daily Telegraph, Daily Express, Daily Mail, Financial Times, Times, Daily Star and the Sun all came out in support of the Tories, let alone regional papers like Evening Standard in London. The centre-left or liberal papers have withdrawn from Labour and joined the Liberals, like the Observer and the Guardian, leaving Labour with only one national paper backing them, the Daily Mirror. Even this paper is responding to some Labour’s ministers’ call for “tactical voting”, benefitting Lib Dems in some areas. Tories not alone have the support of the press, but the support of the rich. Devoted supporters like Lord Ashcroft heavily funded the Conservatives to put up their four series of billboards both promoting and attacking opponents’ policies all over the country. As we’re running up to the election day, the Tories seem to be making gains again, looking like they might be able to run a minority government.

Yet this remains a doubtful lead, as short term factors and events could change the popular vote dramatically, as the polls have shown in the past month. Moreover, voters are seeking a way out from the old two party systems, or even three party systems. Certain votes would be lost to Lib Dems and smaller parties, as the Green Party are hopeful to win their first ever seat in the Commons, UKIP and BNP looking to have a larger share of the votes. However, there are some certain factors in this election. For example, whoever takes power on Thursday, the next government would not be able to govern easily. They would have to make concessions, sometimes cross-party cooperation. I have made a promise to give away 30pounds if the Liberal Democrats have more elected MPs than Labour. This is due to the fact that the current, unfair and disproportional “First Past The Post” electoral system.

The election remains unpredictable, as the parties continue to attempt to persuade the public, desperate to get every possible vote. No leader could confidently say that he will be the next

Prime Minister, no party could say for sure that they have won it, and not everyone have made up their mind yet. Yet one thing for sure: this must be one of the, if not the most, exciting and unpredictable election in British democratic history.

#### Personal thoughts

I campaigned for the Labour Party in my college's mock election, as I would still prefer Labour the other two in terms of ideological grounds and the policies on the economy and public sector. Yet I would call for tactical voting for those of you who could vote, and live in constituencies where a vote to your less preferred party could prevent a Conservative MP from being elected. Do this if you support Lib Dem, if you support Labour, if you support the Greens, if you support any other parties, and you don't want a Tory government.

#### Prediction

Wild guess:

Conservatives with the most seats, Labour came closely on second, Lib Dem gaining seats yet far behind Labour.

Conservatives to run a minority government, or coalition with Lib Dem, which Lib Dem would probably refuse, Labour as the biggest opposition.

Source :

<http://no-ah-ultimate.xanga.com/726636425/election-special-its-2010-and-its-not-quite-the-same/>

