

# Did the right wing press defeat Miliband? No. [12 reasons and counting]

[blogs.lse.ac.uk/polis/2015/05/12/did-the-right-wing-press-defeat-miliband-no/](http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/polis/2015/05/12/did-the-right-wing-press-defeat-miliband-no/)

2015-5-12

Generally, I've been surprised how few people have blamed the right-wing press for Labour's defeat. Almost no MPs and few commentators. [Roy Greenslade concocted an elaborate theory](#) that said that somehow paper support for Ukip did for Labour and my colleague [Bart Cammaerts put the case that the right-wing press does frame the agenda overall](#). Though even Bart points out that there is bugger all evidence that it has any effect on voters in the real world.

I agree that we have a partisan press that is too right-wing to reflect society. It doesn't help that right-wing owners are prepared to put money into the business because they think it has influence even when it doesn't make them much money.

But here's a few bullet points off the top of my head that should tell Labour supporters to stop getting angry with the newspapers and get on with finding a leader and some policies that might command popular support:



1. There is a left-wing press – people have a choice
2. If people were so left-wing they would buy the Guardian or Mirror
3. There are balanced broadcasters – all the research says that most people get their political information from them
4. There are even liberal, left broadcasters – have you seen Channel 4 News lately?
5. Newspaper sales are falling. There is social media. It mocks the right-wing press. It gives all the Left a voice. Loads of real people are on it too. It's not the right-wing press' fault if you live in a self-affirming bubble where you confuse your twitter feed with the real world.

6. Most rightwing newspaper owners want to make a profit. That's why the Barclay Brothers put pressure on the Telegraph to be nice to advertisers like HSBC. They won't support causes that lose them readers.

7. Generally, the press is behind the public curve on issues like nationalism, immigration and euroscepticism. Certainly, the broadcasters were too, a BBC inquiry said so. These are real opinions born out of their experience not a newspaper-induced fantasy.

8. Accept it. the pollsters completely distracted you. They made you think that Ed Miliband had a chance. I kept tweeting about how I couldn't believe that the Tories weren't doing better. In fact they were, but the polls didn't show it. Whatever the reason, even if it was a last day decision, the fact is that people fundamentally did not trust Ed, did not understand Labour's policies and did not think the party could run the country. Judging by the reaction of most Labour MPs since the election, they were right to think that.

9. Labour's campaign was awful. The right-wing media were gifted endless open goals. Ed was left out there on his own under the illusion that less-bad ratings in the TV 'debates' meant he had a chance. Where was the rest of the Shadow Cabinet? That stone? Says it all.

10. And finally, if you accept that the right-wing press can conjure victory for a hapless, hated Tory party then you are going to confirm the boast of people like the editor of the Sun and Paul Staines (Guido Fawkes) who have worked so hard in the cause that they believe in. Don't give them the satisfaction! They have campaigned – like Kevin McGuire, Owen Jones, Polly Toynbee etc on the other side – in a cause that they passionately believe in.

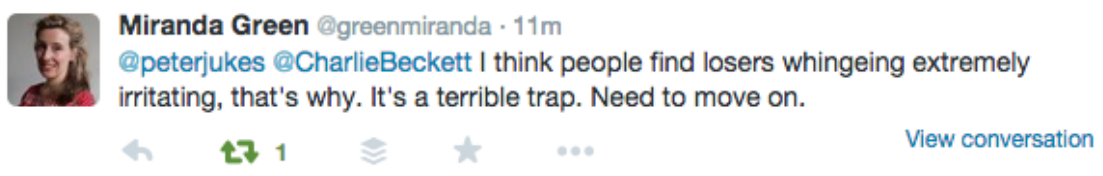
11. I am glad we have a partisan press – and non-partisan broadcasters – it's a rich and often ugly mix. But while media matters, and you should keep fighting the media battle, don't think that it makes more of a difference than economics, education and real politics.

[PS. 12. The SNP rose up with almost no press support – they even claim the broadcasters were against them. Certainly the English newspapers reviled them. They did OK didn't they? – Correction: I stupidly forgot that support for the SNP from the Scottish Sun]

Post-script:

A lot of people on twitter are asking why the papers would be so partisan if it didn't swing election? Also many claiming that the specific stories about the SNP 'threat' might have swung voters. Firstly, I don't doubt that the papers are partisan and in league with CCHQ and that the owners think that they have power. But I don't think they do swing elections – including this one. 'Scare' stories only work if people think they are justified. The SNP story was justified. Sturgeon made it clear that she would seek more left-wing policies across the UK. Labour's denials were not believed. The reality is that people didn't want a more left-wing Labour government.

I agree with Miranda Green's comments on those who seem to think that the voters are stupid enough to be brain-washed en masse by a few newspaper headlines:



- Copyright © 2014 London School of Economics and Political Science