

How To Win This Election: what the parties should do in the last full week

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2010-4-24

First, realise that things probably have stabilised – but within a range of variables that can still make the difference between Tory majority and Hung Parliament.

The Economy will be the main story – self-interest will be the main motive – so how do you connect your campaign narrative via the media to the wavering voters? At the same time remembering that you have to maximise your core.

Conservatives:

The communications disaster for the Conservatives has been the relative failure of Cameron – and Osborne. The Tories should be streets ahead but instead they are struggling to crush a lame Labour government with a uniquely unpopular leader. They are also failing to dismiss (from their point of view) an upstart imposter.

It's too late to unpick the mess of Big Society and the confusion over their tax plans but it may not be too late to present Dave and his team as a group to run Britain. Bring on Ken Clarke alongside Dave? And hope that the many good (Cameroon) candidates in the marginals will make the difference.

Labour:

Labour's Gordon Brown was a hapless political campaigner before the election so why the surprise that he has been such an unappealing electioneer? From Elvis to Mumsnet this has been a leaden campaign. Gordon has been sent on a tour to meet balloon-wielding supporters when he should have been confronting critics with his dour but deadly insistence that experience is what this country needs. 'Get real' was the one good line he had. The series of speeches by 'senior' colleagues is a good idea but comes too late. It's time to roll out the youth team and talk about a new generation of Labour renewal. Allow people to think that 'vote Brown get Miliband' is a possibility.

Lib Dems:

Clegg has only to keep going to 'win' this election. His main challenge this week is to convince the voters that he can handle economic issues. Step forward Vince Cable.

Of course, perhaps no-one will win this election outright. That seems to be where the polls are as we head into the last crucial week. So plan for a post-poll scenario and lay clues for the voters as to what will guide you. Paradoxically, this is where the one party that really wants a hung parliament might screw up. If Clegg can't give a clear message about what a hung parliament means then he may put people off voting for it.

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