

David Davis: what, no scandal?

 blogs.lse.ac.uk/polis/2008/06/12/david-davis-what-no-scandal/

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 I was at the BBC when the news of David Davis' shock [resignation](#) started to filter through. Speculation was rampant prior to his [1pm announcement](#). There had to be a major reason for the shadow Home Secretary to relinquish his job. If you believe the opinion [polls](#) it looks as if he would have had the real job within a couple of years. As I listened in to the hacks and flitted around the political [blogs](#) on my mobile it was clear that this was a Big Story.

Of course, most bloggers and journalists were speculating about some sex scandal or financial fiasco. From the days of John Major up to the recent travails of [Caroline Spelman](#) politicians of all parties have been brought low by an inability to control their greed and their groins.

But David Davis, the bruiser of the Conservative Right who had battled his way through the system to challenge David Cameron for the leadership itself, had actually resigned over a matter of principle! Extraordinary. A modern politician who really believes in something and has jacked in the chance of power because he won't compromise?

Of course, some will say that he was recognising reality. His more libertarian stance on 42 day detention and ID Cards was not in line with the wider public. It is doubtful that a populist like David Cameron really shares his deeply held views on the subject. Davis realised that in the longer term he might not have survived long as Home Secretary. There is also a sense that this is a weird way to fight his corner. To resign and then fight a by-election is imaginative but odd and rather damaging for his party, just when it was started to destroy Gordon Brown. This is wonderful ammunition for New Labour in its attempt to paint Cameron as lacking in principles.

I was also surprised to see how this story didn't leak even though Cameron and even [Nick Clegg](#) were aware of it last night. The political blogs didn't get wind of it, but then neither did our esteemed press corps.

Both sectors have now gone into overdrive for what is a strangely refreshing tale of a man who has decided to take a stand.

Take a look at the comments on [Guido Fawkes' blog](#) if you want to know what right-wing Conservatives think. There's a fascinating split in opinions. Some think it is a masterstroke that will hurt Labour if it locks the Tories in to opposing ID Cards. But others are aware that both ID cards and 42 day detention are actually 'vote winners'.

The fact that the new shadow Home Secretary has just [promised](#) to repeal the 42-day detention law makes Davis' decision all the more puzzling. No doubt David Cameron will wish him well and have him on the benches behind him. But surely not back in the Shadow Cabinet?

[Conservativehome](#) are running a survey of their more mixed range of Conservative readers which should have some interesting (if unscientific results) by 6pm.

Fascinating to read Nick Robinson's very excited [blog](#) about this. Nick has Conservative roots but is BBC political editor and he has bad news for those optimistic Tories on the blogs who think this is all a cunning ploy to crush Labour:

"David Cameron has lost control of his strategy. This was not his decision. He was not asked for his agreement. He was informed late last night by David Davis that he was going to do this come what may. That he was going to resign and trigger this campaign. This is not a campaign that Mr Cameron wants, it is not part of his strategy and indeed, I am told by senior Tories who know Mr Cameron well, that this was David Davis' personal decision and will be his personal campaign."

Like Nick I find it hard to read this as anything but eccentric and something of a fizzle in the otherwise united Cameronite Conservative bedrock. But comments on Robinson's blog think that the BBC political editor is reading it wrong. This is typical of many Tories lauding Davis' stand:

*Nick what planet are you, and all the BBC people I've heard so far, on?
David Davis is to be applauded, as anyone who has looked at the public reaction to this will see.
Why, when we for the first time in a long time, a politician has some principle do you go ultra-cynical
looking for vanity, for party splits, etc. etc.? The whole media reaction to this has been pathetic. I
salute the man. May our hard fought liberties be saved, and the ones Labour have already gotten rid
of be restored!*

There's excellent links to comments on the political blogs at [The Times](#) which has a very neat reaction piece from Danny [Finkelstein](#) who is actually on holiday 1000s of miles away. And [Politicshome](#) has its usual blog-tracking service which is now bubbling with Davis commentary.

Already the Labour bloggers are plotting their tactics in this most unusual of by-elections. [Luke Akehurst](#) says:

"Maybe instead of Labour fielding a candidate in Haltemprice & Howden we should find a Martin Bell type candidate – preferably a recently retired senior police officer, or a survivor or relative of a victim of a terrorist attack, to run under the following 6 word candidate description: "Independent – for detaining terrorism suspects".

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