

Brown's ship not holed by Rock

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2008-2-21

A Populus poll for [The Times](#) suggests that the public actually backs the nationalisation of [Northern Rock](#). This flies in the face of what the media and the Conservative opposition were telling us. Chancellor Alastair Darling's critics told us that the very word 'nationalisation' would make the public think of British Leyland and British Rail, the Four Day Week and high taxes. Instead it seems that the voters believe it was a tough but ultimately sensible decision.

As Times veteran political commentator [Peter Riddell](#) says:

Gordon Brown and Alistair Darling will be relieved. The public is calmer about the nationalisation of Northern Rock than some excitable opposition politicians, commentators and bloggers. The Government, and especially Mr Darling, are being given the benefit of the doubt over the affair.

It's another example of how the media (and some politicians) can only think in terms of historic analogies. So the Northern Rock debacle could only be understood in terms of how John Major wasted billions as his government crashed out of the ERM and so lost its reputation for economic competence. The deeper polling does suggest that Labour has lost its lead on public confidence in its management of the economy. But I suspect that has less to do with Northern Rock and more to do with the fact that we are all feeling the pinch as the global economy stutters. Whether we trust Gordon and Alastair will require more detailed and longer-term opinion polling and rather more imaginative journalistic analysis.

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