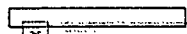


RELEASE IN PART
B6

From: sbwhoeop [redacted]
Sent: Tuesday, April 13, 2010 6:35 PM
To: H
Subject: H: If this poll holds, Labour has a majority. 1st debate thu. Sid

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From Times Online
 April 14, 2010

Tory lead narrows amid huge voter disenchantment, Times poll finds

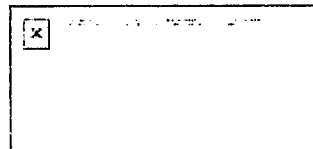


Image :1 of 2
 Peter Riddell

The general election race is tightening, according to a Populus poll for *The Times* that reveals deep public disenchantment with the campaign so far.

The poll, undertaken yesterday and this morning, says that more voters are now hoping for a hung parliament than either a Tory or a Labour outright victory.

Conservative support has slipped by three points over the past week to 36 per cent, while Labour is a point up at 33 per cent. The Liberal Democrats are unchanged on 21 per cent.

The polls tend to fluctuate by a couple of points either way, and these shifts are within the margin of error of the average. With other new polls pointing to a firming in Labour support, the party may have enjoyed a small boost from its manifesto launch. Tory strategists will hope to have achieved a boost from its manifesto launch today.

If the Populus figures were repeated in the general election in three weeks' time, and there is a uniform switch in votes, Labour would be the largest single party, with about 300 MPs, ahead of the Tories on 264 and the Lib Dems on 54. This would point to a Lab/Lib Dem coalition. But many analysts do not expect a uniform national swing.

The latest poll shows that 32 per cent of the public now hope for a hung parliament (as opposed to expecting one), against 28 per cent wanting a Tory majority and 22 per cent a Labour one. Lib Dem voters prefer a deal with Labour than the Tories in a hung parliament, by 44 to 31 per cent. The public is evenly split 40 to 42 per cent about whether they want Labour or the Tories in either a majority or a minority government.

The poll shows that the number expecting a Tory overall majority has risen by three points to 34 per cent over the past week. This only just exceeds the number expecting a hung parliament, at 33 per cent, down six points compared with a week ago. Overall, 57 per cent expect the Tories to be the largest party, against 29 per cent expecting Labour to be. The public is deeply sceptical about the honesty of the parties. Only 4 per cent think that they are being completely honest about their tax plans, 61 per cent partly honest. Only 6 per cent say they are being completely honest about cutting the deficit and 61 per cent partly honest. Some 7 per cent say that they are being completely honest about the extent to which they can fund their policies by cutting waste and 58 per cent partly honest.

Voters were asked to say which party had proposed eight key manifesto pledges. They wrongly identified four: reducing the increase in national insurance contributions (naming Labour not the Tories); allowing unsuccessful schools, hospitals and the police (the Tories, not Labour); tightening up takeover rules (the Tories not Labour); and requiring foreign workers employed in public services to speak fluent English (the Tories not Labour).

In only one case, the £150-a-year tax break, did more than half of voters (60 per cent) correctly identify the party making the proposal.

In most cases, the pledge will make little difference to people's votes, apart from three made by Labour: the foreign workers language pledge, doubling paid paternity leave and allowing the takeover of unsuccessful schools, hospitals etc. More than two fifths (43 per cent), including 50 per cent of women, say "none of the parties", or "don't know", when asked which party is putting across a convincing cases to voters. This compares with 25 per cent naming the Tories and 18 per cent Labour.

Just over half the public (54 per cent) plan to watch the first televised leaders' debate on Thursday evening. Men and middle class professionals are more likely to say that they will view. More than two fifths (42 per cent) expect David Cameron to win the debate, against 22 per cent for Gordon Brown. More Tories (70 per cent) than Labour voters (57 per cent) expect their leader to win.

Two fifths of the public (42 per cent, up one point on a week ago) say it seems like a change from Labour, but are not sure that it is time for a change to the Conservatives. Some 33 per cent, down one point, think it is time for a change to the Tories.

Populus interviewed a random sample of 1,525 adult voters on April 12 to 13. Interviews were conducted across the country and have been weighted to be representative of all adults. For more details go to www.populus.co.uk.

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