

Compass warning

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The [left of centre think-tank Compass](#) has noted:

The Labour party is not just facing electoral annihilation in only eight months time; the people the party seeks to defend don't just face years of bleak Tory government: the very prospect of re-election, ever, now stands in jeopardy. This is not just because of the scale of the likely defeat and its nature. Much more worryingly three unprecedented factors could come into play if the Tories win:

- First, an incoming Conservative government has pledged to cut the number of parliamentary seats by 10%. This will hit Labour hard because the biggest reduction will be in Labour strongholds such as Wales and industrial and urban areas which have seen population flight. One electoral expert has predicted that of the 65 seats that will go, a conservative assessment would be that 45 of them are Labour.

- Second, the likelihood of the SNP winning a vote on Scottish independence increases considerably with the election of the Tories in Westminster. New polling conducted for Compass shows that 34% of the Scottish electorate will be more likely to vote for the SNP promise of an independence referendum by the end of 2010. This could be enough to see a Yes vote go through. There are currently 59 Westminster seats in Scotland and 41 of them are Labour. They would all be lost.

- Finally, an incoming Tory government is very likely to introduce new party funding rules, which will break the link between Labour and the unions and further destabilise a party heavily in debt and its declining membership base.

These three factors could then combine to ensure that an already intellectually and organisationally weak party fails ever to recover.

The answer — to save democracy from the ever encroaching threat of a [very pernicious form](#) of Tory takeover? PR. Labour has to do it. A majority have to have their say. We might never have that chance again.

I am reminded of a comment Alvin Rabushka, creator of flat taxes [made to me](#):

The only thing that really matters in your country is those 5% of the people who create the jobs that the other 95% do. The truth of the matter is a poor person never gave anyone a job, and a poor person never created a company and a poor person never built a business and an ordinary working class guy never drove economic growth and expansion and it's the top 5% to 10% who generate the growth for the other 90% who pay the taxes to support the 40% in government. So if you don't feed them [i.e. the 5%] and nurture them and care for them at the end of the day over the long run you've got all these other people who have no aspiration for anything more than, you know, having a house and a car and going to the pub. It seems to me that's not the way you want to run a country in the long run so I think that if the price is some readjustment and maybe some people in the middle in the short run pay a little more those people are going to find their children and their grandchildren will be much better off in the long run. The distributional issue is the one everyone worries about but I think it becomes the tail that wags the whole tax reform and economic dog. If all you're going to do is worry about overnight winners and losers in a static view of life you're going to consign yourself to a slow stagnation.

This seems to me to be what the Tories believe — and they want to claim the right to govern for that group alone.

PR stops that.

That's why we need it. Now.