

The message from the electorate was clear: they said &l...

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Paddy Ashdown has produced one of the best quotes of the post election period, inadvertently, by saying something like “The electorate have spoken but we’re not sure what they’ve said yet”.

I think Paddy’s wrong. Having now had the chance to sleep on this for a night (something I hope the party leaders have also done) I think that within the constraints of the current electoral system the electorate have delivered a very precise message.

That message is in three parts.

First they have said enough of Gordon Brown, and rightly so. He played a role in creating this mess. he helped bankers achieve the inglorious debacle of 2007 / 08 by bowing to their altar and failing to regulate them enough. They demanded he pay the price for it, and so he should.

Second, they looked at the alternatives, and said a resounding “no thank you, very much” to both of them. This is vey obviously true of the Tories who should have walked this election and did not. A year ago I cannot have been alone in thinking of Labour wipe out. Indeed, I know I am not because I had many such conversations in the Palace of Westminster. And they have utterly failed to deliver.

But so too of the Liberal Democrats. Many who did vote for them did so as a protest, anti-Tory vote. I was one. But after the shock of realising Clegg was competent gave them such a boost in the polls nearly three weeks ago people looked at what they had to offer and realised it was the same neo-liberalism that is not liberal at all, unless you’re a banker of course. A party that can embrace the likes of [Giles Wilkes](#) as chief economist of its major party sponsored think tank — a man whose career has been in spread betting and whose commitment to conventional economic thinking is absolute — is neither progressive or likely to deliver change unless it suits the wisdom he and his fellow Orange Book free market fundamentalists espouse. And people perceived that of the Lib Dems — after all, Vince Cable, much as I admire him is a deficit hawk - and the electorate said no to that. And rightly so.

As for the Tories, yes they voted for them in droves in my part of the world. Without a doubt a donkey could win for them in Norfolk South West, but that's not the whole story. In Tooting they didn't. Good for Sadiq Khan — a man I was once a school governor with when we were both a lot younger. And they didn't in many other places. Scotland swung against them. The reality was — and this is one of the perversities of the existing electoral system, I accept - they voted just enough for them, and absolutely no more.

Which brings me to the third message of this election. People voted for a weak government. They even voted for a weak Tory government. One that can't deliver its form of electoral reform. One that cannot even, in all probability, call another general election because a viable alternative government could be formed within the make up of the existing parliament. One that will with the Lib Dems (who will pay a high price for it) seek to impose the cuts the market says must happen. And which the people of the UK don't want because they instinctively and correctly know those cuts aren't needed. In other words, the minority Tory government with Lib Dem support to deliver cuts that they sincerely hope will fail is what people wanted.

People have been frightened into thinking that we must appease the markets. They don't like the idea. Instinctively they know that appeasing markets created the current mess and cannot see how appeasing them further will solve it.

People have instinctively decided that if anyone it to do this it should be the Tory party — because they don't trust Gordon Brown to solve a problem he helped create.

But people know this is a poisoned chalice. They have given that chalice to the Tories — always the nations poisoner: the party that has always destroyed wealth, ambition, jobs and prospects for ordinary people. I name Margaret Thatcher in evidence.

And extraordinarily they have given the Tories enough rope to get on with hanging themselves in the process. They can form a government. The Lib Dems will, I am sure, let them present a Queen's Speech and budget and won't vote against it. No one in that case will believe a single Tory who says they cannot do what needs to be done: they will be able to do what they want, bar electoral reform — which they say is a low priority anyway.

And the truth is people know this is going to fail. But they know it has to be attempted before the groundwork for rejection can be established, markets can be faced down and an alternative platform for government, that will embrace real reform, a rejection of neoliberalism, and a genuinely progressive society can be presented to an electorate. And they know that when the time is right for that the Tory government they have elected can be pulled down. And it will be.

So yes, the people spoke, loud and clear. They said “a curse on all your neoliberal houses”. And “a curse on all your cuts”.

They said to Labour “get your house in order”.

To the Tories they said “To you the poisoned chalice and a generation out of office”.

And to the all white, all male Lib Dem team “you’re not the change we were looking for” — consigning them to the backwoods again from whence they came, I am sure.

Between the lines they added “Get your act together Labour — because we need a real Labour Party again.”

And they also said “We don’t trust the judgement of markets, nor politicians who can’t stand up to them, or those who propose cuts when they refuse to reform banks and tax the rich to pay for the mess from which they have benefitted”, but we need the evidence of failure to prove we’re right”.

Of course, I could be wrong. But I don’t think I am. I think that’s the only message that can be read into what’s happened.

And give it two or three years (not less than two, not more than three) and we will have another general election, and a strong government. A strong Labour government in office in this country. But it will be a genuine Labour government shorn of Blairism, shorn of the likes of Hoon, Byers and Hewitt, shorn of a belief in market fundamentalism, and instead inspired by a belief in the people of the UK; a belief in social justice; a belief in wealth generation; a commitment to a Green New Deal; a desire for genuine progressive taxation and a real commitment to the poorest in this country, a mandate to take on our banks, and with an authority to lead as a result.

That’s the possibility this morning offers.

That’s the prospect a minority Tory government makes likely.

I can live with that. As a democrat I can live with the card that has been dealt by the electorate — and even so remain committed to electoral reform.

Some may be down in spirits at this moment. I’m not: not at all. The electorate may have delivered what this country both deserved and needed: the last Tory government for a generation.