

# It's not Balls who is the liability - it's Osborne who ...

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One of the most unusual moments during the Olympics was when the main stadium seemed, as a person, to boo George Osborne when he took part in a medal ceremony. I felt sorry for the athletes involved; their moment was a little overshadowed in many ways, I am sure. But the moment was telling; such mass spontaneity is rare.

The sentiment expressed did, however, prepare us for the IPSOS Mori poll yesterday that revealed something equally extraordinary. Until recently it was assumed Osborne was an asset to his party and Ed Balls a liability to his. Now it seems it is the other way round. As many papers reported yesterday, and as summarised [here by the New Statesman](#):

*After the 2005 election, Lord Ashcroft famously published polling (Smell The Coffee) showing that voters often supported a particular policy until they were told that it had been proposed by the Tories (the psephological basis for "detoxification"). It seems that George Osborne now has a similarly toxic effect. A new poll by Ipsos MORI for the Evening Standard shows that voters back Osborne's deficit reduction plan - but only if the Chancellor's name isn't mentioned.*

*Asked whether "tackling the deficit and keeping interest rates low should be our top priority" (the Osborne position) or whether "we need more government spending on investment to kick-start our economy and a temporary cut in taxes to support growth" (the Balls position), 52 per cent said the former and 41 per cent the latter. But when the policies are associated with their respective authors, the coalition's 11-point lead becomes a Labour lead of 16 points. Only 37 per cent say they support Osborne's approach, compared to 53 per cent who support Balls's.*

I have to admit that I found that surprising when I first read it.

But I only had to recall the Olympics to think again. And as the toxic nature of Osborne's thinking becomes more obvious by the day perhaps the shift in perception is even easier to understand.

Cameron's jibes about Balls look even more hollow than usual tonight.