

An election remains on the cards

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My belief that Andy Burnham is growing in confidence about his chances of electoral success has been reinforced by his comments made about the Greens yesterday.

He said in the House of Commons that local Green Party council groups have to either reject the motion passed by Green Party conference about Zionism being racism, or coalitions between the Labour Party and Greens in 18 councils in England and Wales might come to an end.

Let me be clear, I would not have voted for the resolution that was put to the Green Party conference, because I do think Israel should exist, and denying its right to do so makes no sense. The resolution presented a fantasy political outcome which has never been part of my political agenda.

That said, I think that Zionism can be, and very often is at present, a form of racism, and the fact that many Jews share this view reinforces that opinion. However, that does not mean that Israel needs to cease to exist and so, like many aspects of Green Party policy that are created by a tiny minority of members who can attend its conferences, this position is likely to be a misrepresentation of the views of the great majority of those who support the party.

That, however, is not the issue at hand. That issue is that Labour, which has supported genocide, and so has a position on the conflict in the area which I find deeply repugnant, is using this motion as a mechanism to separate itself from relationships with the Greens. I can only presume that this is not as a consequence of any principled position, because Labour appears to have none, but is instead the result of a growing confidence that it can recover votes from the Greens by doing so, with the risk of the collapse of coalitions controlling councils being taken because the Labour leadership thinks there is a bigger win to be had, which does, I presume, relate to general election prospects.

That confidence might be reinforced by the ITV exposés on Reform over the last two days, which appear to have been genuine journalism of a high quality, exposing how

profoundly racism and misogyny have penetrated the Reform hierarchy of power. I suspect this will not worry the white male voters over the age of 50 who provide the core of Reform's support, but it does let both Labour and the Tories draw lines to the right of them.

So, are the two single transferable parties growing in confidence about their prospects of retaining power by seeking to draw lines to both left and right? And are both now looking for a general election to reinforce their control of parliamentary power?

There is nothing in opinion polling which supports their prospects by doing so. What is more, indications are that party support is volatile at present, and an election campaign might reveal much which would change potential outcomes. Remember that Theresa May went into an election in 2017 confident as to the outcome, and only survived by the skin of her teeth. Assumptions now about what might happen in a ballot in a couple of months' time might be decidedly premature.

However, I get the sense that the manoeuvres are continuing. Labour's posturing with the Greens does come at a real cost, and I can only presume that they have calculated the associated risks and think them worth taking.

For both Labour and the Tories, an election now would be a considerable gamble. Reform is, however, battered and undoubtedly down, and that is where they see the real risk coming from.

The Lib Dems will probably survive as a protest vote in the areas where they conventionally take on this role.

The timing could not be worse for the Greens.

Meanwhile, in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, I very strongly suspect that nationalist parties would be delighted to see a poll. Plaid Cymru would do well in Wales, where its challenger is Reform. The SNP would undoubtedly increase its parliamentary representation, and unionism is not having a great time in Northern Ireland.

The electoral calculus is hard to appraise at present, but I still have a feeling that Burnham thinks he is riding the biggest wave he will ever get. I am not ruling out an election yet.