



The rise of the smaller Political Parties: more options but still no real alternative by Mark Iddon

With only days to go before the **2015 General Election** (GE 2015), the three main parties are neck and neck with no particular party expected to gain more than 30% of the electorate and the distinct possibility of a coalition of parties forming the next government. With this in mind the main parties have begun stating what they will not compromise on if they are in a position to negotiate. A vote for a minority party was once considered a wasted vote even if it was out of conviction but that has changed in GE 2015. The smaller parties could take a more prominent role through forming an alliance with a larger party.

Is having more parties to vote for good for democracy and does the rise of the small party give us hope to have a government that is in tune with the aspirations of the electorate? Let us take a look at each of the parties to see how they measure up in terms of freedom, justice and economic progress in contrast to the main parties starting with the Tories.

The **Conservatives** have been the majority party in coalition with the **Liberal Democrats** for the last 5 years and were elected during a period of economic crisis as a party that would turn the economy around with their austerity policies. The economy has stabilised to a point and is no longer in downfall, however it is widely perceived to be stagnant and full on growth is not imminent. The Conservatives say that they are the party to bring about economic growth but in practice they seem to lack the political will to actually make things happen on the bigger scale. Two initiatives they inherited from the previous Labour administration were the High Speed Rail (HS2) link from London to Manchester / Liverpool and the building of a new airport in the South East or additional runway to Heathrow. These seem to have never ending reviews as to their viability and after 5 years seem no closer to realisation. Regarding freedom of speech we should also note their presiding over the Leveson enquiry and pandering to the Hacked Off campaign to increase regulation of the press as if present law and draconian Libel laws weren't enough to inhibit a free press.

The **Labour Party** are no doubt embarrassed that the Financial crisis of 2008 occurred during their tenure in office but they are happy to go along with the lazy analysis that it was a global phenomena outside of their control and down to the excesses of the banking industry operating without sufficient regulation rather than a crisis that is intrinsically linked to a capitalist economy. They are keen to distance themselves from the Tony Blair / Gordon Brown era of New Labour and anxious to suggest that they would carefully steward the economy and not spend excessively or make further cuts to services. Under a Labour administration we should not expect to see more than the minimal amount of investment in infrastructure and the built environment with little prospect of any real economic growth. They are also keen to refute the Tory allegation that they are soft on immigration by stating their commitment to greater security at border controls. We should not forget that under the last Labour government there was a prolific increase in statute law and regulations overseen by quango organisations. This is a party who are deeply mistrustful of the people and deeply hostile to any principle of individual freedom or self determination.

The **Liberal Democrats** are able to win sufficient parliamentary seats to gain credibility as a party but not inspiring enough to gain a majority. They have positioned themselves somewhere in between Labour and the Tories on a ground which has become an incredibly tight as the two main parties are also in a clamour for the same middle ground. They have managed to gain experience in office over the last 5 years by compromising on their policies and snuggling up to the Tories. The name of the party sounds appealing but these principles are not borne out in their policy aspirations. In practice they have stood by whilst some of the most illiberal Acts of Law have been passed through parliament such as the Counter Terrorism and Security Act (increased state surveillance) or the Safeguarding Vulnerable people Act (turning teachers into police informers) and the Leveson enquiry (increased regulation of the press). The above acts undermine liberty and public relations and reinforce the fear of strangers as well as further restrict the freedom of the press. A core commitment of the Liberal Democrat policy is that to the European Union of which they are reluctant in their opposition for a referendum for the people to decide in case they make the wrong decision. The European Union is a wholly undemocratic entity that undermines the sovereignty of the individual states and over rules the laws that are established by elected representatives. When given the opportunity to say why they should form the next government they talk about school dinners, support for the NHS and minor variations of the other parties on issues such as the spending on the military, immigration and housing development. The Liberal Democrats are slightly different in style but do not offer any real alternative and are every bit as contemptuous of the general public as the other parties.

UKIP are the new kids on the block and are different from the established parties in that they are less inclined to offer the mainstream views in polite politically correct terminology. They have a charismatic leader in Nigel Farage who in contrast to the health zealots of other parties is often photographed with a pint of beer and smoking a cigarette or cigar. This gives them appeal to many people who are sceptical of the career politicians but they lack an all round coherent policy with only 2 standout policy objectives in seeking independence from the European Union (EU) and limiting immigration. They correctly understand that Britain has lost its sovereignty in its relationship with the EU whose law supersedes national law that has been formed by elected representatives. However, they fail to understand how an increase in population can bring about more creativity and productivity if organised in a different structure from our present system. This has led many on the left to denounce UKIP as a racist party despite the fact that the only difference between the traditional parties is that UKIP would restrict movement between European countries if it did not have to bow to EU legislation.

The **Green Party** have had a more prominent role in this election campaign and appear as outsiders given that they currently have only one Member of Parliament. They promote themselves as a party with a humane outlook who care about the poor and needy, and also the future of the planet. They are sceptical of big business and are open in their attempt to limit growth and development. The underlying principle of green thinking is that humans produce and consume too much and should cut back and respect the limited resources of a finite world. They totally fail to understand the creative and productive potential of human beings to invent, discover, improve and make efficiencies on present methods of production to cater for the needs of a growing population. Not only are the Green's hostile to development but take an authoritarian approach in their denouncement of material excess from their moral high ground. They also have a risk averse approach to all forms of pioneering progress and discovery which effectively causes delay in progress and development, denying people the benefit of advancement. They are incredibly hostile to criticism and attempt to shut down those who disagree or ask awkward questions about the validity and scientific merit of their policies.

The **Scottish National Party** have become prominent following on from their near successful campaign to achieve semi independence from the UK through a referendum in 2014 which really spooked the Westminster elite. In an opportunistic bid to achieve greater power through potential electoral success at the expense of the Scottish Labour Party they have dropped their quest for independence in the short-term to gain a greater stake in managing their own affairs in Scotland. They appeal to those who are frustrated with the Westminster elite but don't really offer any inspiring alternative to the present system. It would be different faces but basically the same rules with minor differences in taxation and university tuition fees. We should also be mindful that they are proud of the fact that they have recently introduced the Offensive Behaviour at Football Act which they say will bring about tolerance of diverse identities. In reality it is a full-on assault on free speech and has led to criminal prosecutions for singing partisan songs at the wrong time and place. It shows that they do not understand the difference between speech and actions. They are only able to address issues through coercive and forceful measures, in an attempt to instil behavioural codes through authoritarian controls. It speaks volumes about their view of the public and what may lie ahead if the SNP continue to hold sway in the governance of Scotland.

While there appears to be a greater number of political parties to vote for on May 7th, there is no real alternative to the ones already on offer - just different management strategies. What

they all have in common is a diminished appreciation of the potential of human beings and no respect for enlightenment principles of universal knowledge, freedom, individual autonomy, progress, development and prosperity for a world fit for people of the 21st century.

It is not because I am disillusioned with politics that I have already posted my spoiled voting slip. It is because I think we deserve a better political outlook and through questioning, debating and making a case for freedom, progress, development and prosperity we can help bring about a new future oriented politics.