

PRIME MINISTER

cc Mr. Wolfson

Mr. Alison

*S. Sherbourne*

Election Results

You may be interested in some of the more obscure psephological implications of the election results.

In the Conservatives' 397 seats the Alliance were second in 265, Labour in 125 and Nationalists in the remainder. Of the seats where the Alliance are in second place only 19 are vulnerable on a 5% swing to them but a further 47 (making 66 in all) would be vulnerable on a 10% swing. Of the 125 seats where Labour is in second place 51 would be vulnerable on a 5% swing (most of these were Conservative gains at this election) and a further 39 (90 in all) would be vulnerable on a 10% swing.

Of Labour's 209 seats the Conservatives are second in 162 seats and the Alliance in 45 seats. Most of the latter are fairly distant second place in Scottish and Welsh seats. Of the Labour seats 52 are vulnerable to a 5% swing to the Conservatives and a further 42 (94 in all) on a 10% swing. Only 5 are vulnerable to a 5% swing to the Alliance and a further 9 (14 in all) to a 10% swing.

Some of the implications of these figures are as follows:-

i) The Alliance now have over 300 second places. A further 5% swing towards them however from both parties will produce only a further 24 seats. A 10% swing towards them (which would give them about 36% of the vote) would bring them only another 80 seats. Their "take-off point" is therefore, on the basis of the voting in this election, even higher than had previously been thought.

ii) The fact remains nevertheless that increases in the Alliance vote would harm the Conservatives far more than Labour e.g. a 10% swing to the Alliance would produce 66 Conservative losses (almost enough to lose an overall majority) but only 14 Labour losses.

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iii) Labour would need a massive swing to win the next election. They need about 120 gains which would mean essentially winning virtually every seat in which they are now in second place. A 10% swing towards them would take them up to about 300 seats, still well short of an overall majority. No party has of course achieved a 10% swing since 1945.

iv) While it will be very difficult for Labour to secure an overall majority the relative vulnerability of seats in which they are second means that it would require a combination only of a 5% swing to Labour together with a 5% swing to the Alliance in the most vulnerable seats to deprive the Conservatives of an overall majority.

v) The election has demonstrated quite how strong Labour's "bedrock" of seats is. Their vote was the lowest as a proportion of the electorate they have ever secured when fighting all the seats. Moreover a further 10% swing away from Labour would still leave them with about 100 seats despite only having 17% of the vote.

My conclusions from this analysis are that Labour will find it extremely difficult to escape from the position they are in but that the combination of a small increase in the Labour vote and in the Alliance vote could produce a hung Parliament. The Alliance, if it survives, will find a "break-through" in seats extremely elusive but will harm the Conservatives far more than Labour. Finally, unless Labour falls apart it will, as you put it in the election campaign, not die because it has over 100 seats which it will keep in virtually all foreseeable electoral circumstances.

VF.

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