



Five days that changed Britain

A recent documentary on BBC TV 'Five Days That Changed Britain' described the negotiations between the Tories and the Liberal-Democrats, and the Labour Party with the Liberal-Democrats during the 5 days immediately following the British General Election in May, to cobble together a workable coalition. Amazingly, the talking heads who described their part in the proceedings (all the main players with the exception of Gordon Brown himself) revealed how monumentally bad their negotiating was; some might say they revelled in their own ineptitude.

Ed Balls admitted that the Labour team had no strategic plan, no understanding of objectives, no bottom line, and no outline proposal to make at their first face-to-face with the Liberal-Democrats. As a result, the meeting was an unsurprising shambles, from which the Labour side never recovered. David Cameron admitted that he was misled by reports that Labour had offered the Liberal-Democrats electoral reform without a referendum, which was not true. Nick Clegg didn't disabuse his new found friend of this mistake. As a result the Tories made concessions on electoral reform which were unnecessarily generous. We all watched these events unfold on TV – this was hardly the most secure or secretive negotiation! What were their researchers and informers doing to allow this misinformation to take hold and influence the outcome of the negotiation so fundamentally?

The timeframe played a big part in their discomfort. Greece was in meltdown, and Spain, Portugal, Ireland and Italy looked like they might follow. The money markets needed a speedy resolution of the electoral impasse in the UK to prevent the jitters crossing the English Channel. So the skill deficit of the politicians who made up the negotiating teams of the three political parties were exaggerated by their haste to 'do a deal' – one might think, almost any deal.

Politicians traditionally see themselves above 'training' – once elected to the House MPs believe they become perfect creatures with no need of further skills development. If only they had come to Scotwork.....!!

Stephen White, Scotwork UK

How confident are you that our New Zealand politicians are any better?