

Coalition Updates: 13-19 December

The Coalition, the EU, and that veto

We must face down the 'phobes and fanatics (*Times*, 13 December) **££**

David Laws writes that the Coalition parties can find common ground on the increasingly urgent need to reform the EU, and both leaders must confront the obstacles to reform within their own parties.

<http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/opinion/columnists/article3256066.ece>

David Cameron challenged in Cabinet over veto (*Guardian*, 13 December)

In scenes reminiscent of the divisive AV referendum campaign, Chris Huhne apparently interrupted the PM in Cabinet to object to his decision to veto revision of the Lisbon treaty in Brussels, claiming he had no authority from the Coalition to do so.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2011/dec/13/cameron-challenged-cabinet-eu-veto>

Nick Clegg would have done better at summit because he is 'professionally trained EU negotiator', Chris Huhne says (*Telegraph*, 14 December)

More on Chris Huhne's recent anger at Cameron's tactics during the EU summit.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/politics/liberaldemocrats/8955361/Nick-Clegg-would-have-done-better-at-summit-because-he-is-professionally-trained-EU-negotiator-Chris-Huhne-says.html>

'An inept negotiating strategy placed in the hands of an inexperienced prime minister' – behind the scenes of Cameron's 'veto' (*Lib Dem Voice*, 13 December)

LDV's Stephen Tall argues that the chaos that followed news of the veto was more likely a cock-up than a conspiracy. Nick Clegg may have known what Cameron's hand would be going into the negotiations, but he probably didn't foresee how the PM would play that hand.

<http://www.libdemvoice.org/an-inept-negotiating-strategy-placed-in-the-hands-of-an-inexperienced-prime-minister-behind-the-scenes-of-camerons-veto-26198.html>

Cameron to offer Clegg a way back over Europe (*Times*, 13 December) **££**

Reports indicate that a conciliatory Cameron is prepared to give way over his demand that the new 'eurozone-plus' group of 26 does not use the institutions of the EU.

<http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/news/politics/article3256276.ece>

No 10 agreed to brief Clegg if UK faced going it alone (*Times*, 15 December) **££**

New information emerges on the events of the night of the Brussels summit; Nick Clegg's advisers were kept waiting much of the night for a phone call that never came.

<http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/news/politics/article3258622.ece>

Clegg is helping his enemies to annihilate his own party (*Independent*, 14 December)

Matthew Norman launches into an attack on the DPM for his poor handling of the EU veto crisis, accusing him of 'perplexing tactical ineptitude', especially given his past as an MEP and EU trade negotiator.

<http://www.independent.co.uk/opinion/commentators/matthew-norman/matthew-norman-clegg-is-helping-his-enemies-to-annihilate-his-own-party-6276504.html>

Conservatives worry about Clegg's increasingly petulant reaction to EU veto (*ConservativeHome*, 18 December)

Tim Montgomerie shares his view on recent events and how they fit into the Tory perception of Nick Clegg and the Lib Dems.

<http://conservativehome.blogs.com/thetorydiary/2011/12/conservatives-worry-about-cleggs-increasingly-petulant-reaction-to-eu-veto.html>

Opinion polling

EU – An opinion poll bounce with consequences (*BBC Politics blog*, 14 December)

Nick Robinson gives his opinion on the post-veto poll bounce enjoyed by the Conservatives, arguing that while it might be fleeting, it will probably have a significant impact on the political landscape.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-16175503>

Cameron's Europe bounce continues (*New Statesman*, 15 December)

The EU veto has led to a significant – and perhaps more than fleeting – swing in Cameron's favour in the leadership polls, which the *New Statesman* describes as 'often the best long-term predictor of the result of the next election'.

<http://www.newstatesman.com/blogs/the-staggers/2011/12/cameron-leadership-labour-poll>

Coalition 3.0

'We're at risk of being sidetracked by Euro obsession and vote reform' (*Evening Standard*, 16 December)

Lib Dem Foreign Office minister Jeremy Browne argues that the Lib Dems need to make sure their policies are relevant to the public's everyday concerns if they themselves are to avoid becoming an irrelevancy.

<http://www.thisislondon.co.uk/standard/politics/article-24022180-were-at-risk-of-being-sidetracked-by-euro-obsession-and-vote-reform.do>

Opinion: Individuality on EU is the start of the Liberal Democrat recovery (*Lib Dem Voice*, 14 December)

Blog post suggesting that the Lib Dems might be able to use the seemingly disastrous events in Brussels to their advantage by turning the unfolding EU crisis into a springboard for greater differentiation from the Tories.

<http://www.libdemvoice.org/opinion-individuality-on-eu-is-the-start-of-the-liberal-democrat-recovery-26212.html>

The Coalition will now change; the Lib Dems must ensure it does so for the better (*Lib Dem Voice*, 15 December)

In a similar vein, this blog post argues that the new phase of the Coalition's life-cycle must be characterised by 'public negotiation'.

http://www.libdemvoice.org/?p=26223&utm_source=tweet&utm_medium=twitter&utm_campaign=twitter

Nick Clegg claims PM's backing for bill to create elected Lords (*Guardian*, 18 December)

The DPM signals a return to the Lib Dem constitutional reform agenda with a pledge to introduce – with Cameron's support – a Bill for an elected House of Lords in the next parliamentary session.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2011/dec/18/nick-clegg-promises-reform-lords>

Clegg dials up differentiation (*New Statesman blog*, 19 December)

Rafael Behr notes the Lib Dems' renewed interest in constitutional reform, commenting that it might point the way to future collaboration with Labour.

<http://www.newstatesman.com/blogs/the-staggers/2011/12/lib-clegg-coalition-tories>

Deputy Prime Minister speech to Demos and the Open Society Foundation (*Liberal Democrats*, 19 December)

The transcript of Nick Clegg's speech in which he discusses the Liberal vision of an Open Society, contrasted against Labour's Good Society, and the Conservatives' Big Society.

[http://www.libdems.org.uk/latest_news_detail.aspx?title=Deputy Prime Minister speech to Demos and the Open Society Foundation&pPK=787e3f14-2b05-4a06-9469-1c9306da08e6](http://www.libdems.org.uk/latest_news_detail.aspx?title=Deputy_Prime_Minister_speech_to_Demos_and_the_Open_Society_Foundation&pPK=787e3f14-2b05-4a06-9469-1c9306da08e6)

David Cameron must now pass the Christopher Hitchens test (*Telegraph*, 17 December)

Amidst all the talk about what the new Lib Dem strategy might be for the latest phase of the Coalition, Matthew D'Ancona points out that the PM is working to change his own style for 2012 by striking a more statesmanlike pose and finding a convincing narrative for the government that goes beyond just cutting the deficit.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/politics/david-cameron/8963148/David-Cameron-must-now-pass-the-Christopher-Hitchens-test.html>

What chance a snap election?

Like it or not, the PM has never been stronger. He should exploit it (*Independent*, 13 December)

Ian Birrell argues that 'after an impressive start, the Liberal Democrats have been a crushing disappointment in government', and consequently David Cameron should seek to engineer an election and ride to victory on the wave of popularity his party currently find themselves experiencing.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/politics/david-cameron/8963148/David-Cameron-must-now-pass-the-Christopher-Hitchens-test.html>

Should David Cameron call a snap election? (*Telegraph*, 13 December)

Toby Young argues that while there may be a strong case for Cameron to call an early election, the arguments against doing so are also persuasive, and that, in any case, Cameron effectively signed away the right to call elections with the Fixed-term Parliaments Act.

<http://blogs.telegraph.co.uk/news/tobyyoung/100123679/should-david-cameron-call-a-snap-election/>

Election would finish us, Nick Clegg tells Lib Dems (*Telegraph*, 13 December)

Nick Clegg warned his MPs against playing with fire over the EU fracas, claiming that 'I don't want to be the last leader of the Liberal Democrats by provoking a general election today.'

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/politics/liberaldemocrats/8954725/Election-would-finish-us-Nick-Clegg-tells-Lib-Dems.html>

Is a Lib-Lab pact in the offing...

Labour will make a big, open offer to the Lib Dems on Europe (*New Statesman*, 13 December)

Douglas Alexander gets the ball rolling on the prospect of a future Lib-Lab deal by calling for the two parties to work closely now to advance a positive vision of Britain in the EU.

<http://www.newstatesman.com/politics/2011/12/britain-europe-dems-british>

Labour reach out to the Lib Dems (again) (*Spectator blog*, 13 December)

The Spectator claims Alexander's comments symbolise Labour's new attitude to the Coalition – attacking the Tories while wooing the Lib Dems – and notes that while they won't have any immediate effect, Nick Clegg can't be certain that his MPs will ignore Labour's overtures for much longer.

<http://www.spectator.co.uk/coffeehouse/7481408/labour-reach-out-to-the-lib-dems-again.html>

... or perhaps a real 'Con-Dem' coalition?

Could David Cameron ditch Nick Clegg for the Democratic Unionists? Some Conservatives think so (*Telegraph*, 14 December)

James Kirkup speculates about the possibility of a future Conservative-DUP coalition. An impossibility at the moment, due to the parliamentary arithmetic, but perhaps a more desirable option for Tories if they end up closer to holding a majority after 2015.

<http://blogs.telegraph.co.uk/news/jameskirkup/100124035/could-david-cameron-ditch-nick-clegg-for-the-democratic-unionists-some-conservatives-think-so/>

The Lib Dems and the Autumn Statement (redux)

What Lib Dem members think of George Osborne's autumn statement (and the two measures they oppose) (*Lib Dem Voice*, 14 December)

The results of an LDV poll of Lib Dem members suggest that party activists are actually quite keen on a lot of the Chancellor's plan.

<http://www.libdemvoice.org/what-lib-dem-members-think-of-george-osbornes-autumn-statement-and-the-two-measures-they-oppose-26211.html>

Exclusive: 62% of Lib Dem members back Coalition's deficit policy & 60% back post-2015 cuts to eliminate deficit (*Lib Dem Voice*, 14 December)

A second LDV poll indicates that a majority of Lib Dem members are thoroughly relaxed about the prospect of going into the 2015 election with an austerity programme.

<http://www.libdemvoice.org/exclusive-62-of-lib-dem-members-back-coalitions-deficit-policy-60-back-post2015-cuts-to-eliminate-deficit-26210.html>

Lib Dem policy victories

Tackling empty homes is shaping up to be a Coalition success story (*Lib Dem Voice*, 13 December)

Andrew Stunnell MP claims the Coalition's empty homes policy is turning out to be a winning idea – and a Lib Dem one at that.

<http://www.libdemvoice.org/andrew-stunnell-mp-writes-tackling-empty-homes-is-shaping-up-to-be-a-coalition-success-story-26186.html>

14 Liberal Democrat rebels help defeat housing benefit cuts in the House of Lords (*Lib Dem Voice*, 14 December)

News that the government has suffered a defeat on its plans to cut housing benefit for people with spare rooms in their houses.

<http://www.libdemvoice.org/14-liberal-democrat-rebels-help-defeat-housing-benefit-cuts-in-the-house-of-lords-26224.html>

In defence of the Lib Dems (*New Statesman*, 15 December)

Prateek Buch responds to criticism of the Lib Dems' record in government and points to cases where they have helped to steer the government away from a purely Tory agenda.

<http://www.newstatesman.com/blogs/the-staggers/2011/12/lib-dems-government-ask-tory>

Inside the mind of GOD

The real-life Sir Humphrey who has survived four PMs (*Times*, 17 December) **££**

An interesting piece on the career of the outgoing Cabinet Secretary Gus O'Donnell and his take on how the Coalition works, amongst other things.

<http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/news/politics/article3261177.ece>