

Coalition Update: 30 August-5 September

The growing influence of the Lib Dems?

Go ahead, belittle Nick Clegg – but he is not nearly as weak as he looks (*Telegraph*, 31 August)

Prime Minister David Cameron's Liberal Democrat deputy has quietly emerged as the more successful Whitehall operator.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/politics/nick-clegg/8733139/Go-ahead-belittle-Nick-Clegg-but-he-is-not-nearly-as-weak-as-he-looks.html>

Clegg backs Cable in battle over bank reform (*Independent*, 1 September)

David Cameron is on a collision course with his deputy Nick Clegg over banking reform

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/business/news/clegg-backs-cable-in-battle-over-bank-reform-2347141.html>

Are the Lib Dems all at sea over the Vickers reforms? (*FT's Westminster Blog*, 2 September)

Jim Pickard speculates on the media strategy of Vince Cable and friends

<http://blogs.ft.com/westminster/2011/09/are-the-lib-dems-all-at-sea-over-the-vickers-reforms/#axzz1WoDXeTkk>

Why power is shifting to the Lib Dems (*Telegraph*, 3 September)

Nick Clegg has worked out how to use the Government machine - and that's bad news for the Right

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/politics/nick-clegg/8739718/Why-power-is-shifting-to-the-Lib-Dems.html>

New Coalition splits over schools, banks and health (*Telegraph*, 3 September)

Tensions within the Coalition were publicly exposed as Conservative and Liberal Democrat ministers clashed over key policies.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/politics/8739932/New-Coalition-splits-over-schools-banks-and-health.html>

Nick Clegg defeats bid by Michael Gove to let free schools make profits (*Guardian*, 3 September 2011)

Deputy prime minister trumpets Lib Dem success in ensuring education reforms do not just serve 'privileged few'

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/education/2011/sep/03/nick-clegg-michael-gove-schools>

The breakdown of Clegg's Cabinet alliances (*Spectator*, 5 September)

James Forsyth: "There used to be a time when some of the most important relationships in the government were between Tory reformers and Nick Clegg ... But those reformist alliances are now pretty much over."

<http://www.spectator.co.uk/coffeehouse/7216498/the-breakdown-of-cleggs-cabinet-alliances.thtml>

Conservative intra-party conflict and identity

New MPs kick off (*Ballots and Bullets blog*, 30 August)

Phil Cowley and Mark Stuart: As well as trouble from the old guard – many of whom have serious doubts about the Conservative leadership – David Cameron's whips therefore are also confronted by a hardcore of highly rebellious newcomers.

<http://nottspolitics.org/2011/08/30/new-mps-kick-off/>

Are the Conservatives Becoming Enemies of Conservation? (*Politicalbetting.com*, 2 September)

The demand for economic growth at all costs is going to mean some tough political judgements. Eventually it will reach the door of Downing St. Policy and ministerial decisions will be have to be made or unmade. David Cameron's own political identity and reputation is directly tied up into this debate. He was the one who urged the country to 'vote Blue, go green'

<http://www6.politicalbetting.com/index.php/archives/2011/09/02/henry-g-manson-asks-time-to-fell-the-tree/>

Andrew Grice: Cameron should resist the siren calls urging him to the right (*Independent*, 3 September)

Cameroons want him to reassert his modernising credentials, convinced that the Tories did not win an overall majority because his rebranding of the party did not go far enough. However, many Tory MPs are prodding the Prime Minister in the opposite direction. They welcome his response to the riots, a tough law and order line with a moral edge about "broken society". Hat tip: *ConservativeHome*

<http://www.independent.co.uk/opinion/commentators/andrew-grice/andrew-grice-cameron-should-resist-the-siren-calls-urging-him-to-the-right-2348417.html>

Tory moderniser or old fashioned Conservative? (*John Redwood's Blog*, 3 September)

"My heart sinks when we get back into this kind of discussion." Hat tip: *ConservativeHome*

<http://www.johnredwoodsdiary.com/2011/09/03/tory-moderniser-or-old-fashioned-conservative/>

Pragmatism and consensus is the lifeblood of this Coalition - but do Conservatives really want Liberal Democrat activists to have a veto even on matters of conscience? (*ConservativeHome*, 5 September)

<http://conservativehome.blogs.com/platform/2011/09/stewart-jackson-mp-pragmatism-and-consensus-is-the-lifeblood-of-this-coalition-but-do-conservatives-.html>

The NHS

Lib Dem MP challenges the Prime Minister to a debate on the NHS (*ConservativeHome*, 30 August)

<http://conservativehome.blogs.com/leftwatch/2011/08/lib-dem-mp-challenges-the-prime-minister-to-a-debate-on-the-nhs.html>

Liberal Democrat talks to decide which way to jump on NHS reforms (*Telegraph*, 3 September 2011)

Nick Clegg is to meet with all Liberal Democrat MPs in an attempt to secure their backing for the Coalition's controversial NHS reforms.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/health/healthnews/8739621/Liberal-Democrat-talks-to-decide-which-way-to-jump-on-NHS-reforms.html>

Shirley Williams plunges NHS reforms into fresh turmoil (*Guardian*, 3 September)

Liberal Democrat peer in new battle over health and social care bill, while secret emails fuel privatisation fears for hospitals

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2011/sep/03/shirley-williams-nhs-reforms-turmoil>

Coalition unity

Coalition comes out fighting against 'catastrophic' Scottish independence (*Guardian*, 2 September)

Earlier this week the "Quad" – the coalition's policymaking quartet of David Cameron, George Osborne, Nick Clegg and Alexander – agreed on a "shift in gear" in Westminster on the independence debate. Both coalition parties are strongly unionist but they took the view that being forceful in their opposition to independence would antagonise Scottish voters and play into Salmond's hands.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2011/sep/02/coalition-opposes-scottish-independence>

Abortion

Health ministers to vote against abortion plan (*Independent*, 2 September)

Downing Street overruled the Health Department after protests from Nick Clegg, who made clear the Liberal Democrats would not "sign off" Government backing for the proposal. Although there will be a free vote on what has traditionally been regarded as a "conscience issue", Anne Milton, a Health minister, will write to Conservative and Liberal Democrat MPs this weekend saying that Health ministers will oppose the Dorries plan.

<http://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/health-and-families/health-news/health-ministers-to-vote-against-abortion-plan-2347918.html>

Anti-abortion bid in disarray as critics rally (*Guardian*, 2 September)

Conservative MPs were shocked by decision of the ministerial Health team to vote against Nadine Dorries' amendment, saying its statement of the government's preferred view was "unheard of" ahead of a free vote and reflected the state of coalition relations, with the Liberal Democrats "running the show".

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/sep/02/anti-abortion-critics-nadine-dorries>

Cameron is branded 'gutless' by Tory MP after caving in to Clegg over abortion (*Mail*, 4 September)

Nadine Dorries claims she was told by a Cabinet Minister that the PM dropped her amendment to save Coalition stability.

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2033505/Cameron-branded-gutless-Tory-MP-caving-Clegg-abortion.html#ixzz1X19JYcFE>

Miscellaneous

Downing Street in shock as PM's key advisers prepare to quit (*PR Weekly*, 2 September)

Two No 10 Special Advisers, Tim Chatwin and James O'Shaughnessy, to leave
<http://www.prweek.com/news/1089133>

MPs threaten rebellion over new electoral boundaries (*Independent*, 5 September)

Scores of party colleagues will suddenly find themselves pitched into battles to contest merged seats, while hundreds of MPs will be fighting such radically revised constituencies that previously comfortable majorities cannot be guaranteed.

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/mps-threaten-rebellion-over-new-electoral-boundaries-2349310.html>