

WHY IS HE SO **DESPERATE** FOR A NO VOTE?



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Why David Cameron is desperate for a No vote on May 5th

- David Cameron's speech on AV this week shows he and the Tory Party are desperate for a No vote in the referendum on May 5th.
- The Conservative Party are mobilising behind a No vote because they know a Yes vote is against the interests of the Conservative Party.
- This week William Hague emailed every Tory member and activist pleading with them to make their priority getting out a No vote in May. And the Daily Telegraph has reported that Downing Street are now getting involved in the financing of the No2AV campaign, quoting a Downing Street source saying: *"We are helping with the money."*
- It is easy to see why the Tories are throwing the weight of the Tory party machine behind the NO campaign. In the words of a leading Tory, they are fighting for a No vote because AV is an "anti-Tory" system.
- British Election Survey modelling shows that the Tories would have lost seats in every election but one since 1983. A spokesman for the No campaign, Tory MP George Eustice, conceded on Newsnight this week that AV would cost the Tories seats.
- This is why not one Conservative MP is backing the Yes campaign.
- The leading Conservative grassroots website, Conservative Home, this week spelt out why a No vote in the May referendum would be gravely damaging for the leadership of David Cameron and make him a "lost leader".
- It said he would be "blamed for making it impossible for a Conservative Prime Minister to lead a Conservative Government ever again." It also said he would be "blamed, above all, by Conservative MPs for putting their seats in peril."
- The people funding and masterminding the Tory campaign are leading Tory figures. Its chief fundraiser is a Tory Party funder, Lord Rodney Leach. Its Chief Executive is Matthew Elliott, Chief Executive of the Taxpayers Alliance. And its Finance Director is Charlotte Vere, a former Tory candidate.
- This week Labour leader Ed Miliband pledged his support for the Labour Yes campaign, saying *"Cameron chooses to stand with the status quo against political change."*
- The No campaign are perpetrating the myth that a Yes vote will mean permanent coalitions. This is not true. As recent research from the Institute for Public Policy Research shows, coalitions are no more likely with AV than with First Past the Post. And, in Australia, which has had AV since 1918 they have only had two hung Parliaments whilst in the UK we have had four under First Past the Post.

AV is the “anti-Tory system”

- David Cameron is leading the Tory Party against AV and throwing the weight of the Conservative Party machine behind the No campaign. The Conservative Party are mobilising behind a No vote because they know a Yes vote is against the interests of the Conservative Party.
- This week William Hague emailed every Tory member and activist pleading with them to make their priority getting out a No vote in May: “*William Hague today sought to mobilise the Tory rank-and-file behind the campaign to retain first-past-the-post Westminster elections in the forthcoming electoral reform referendum.*” (*Press Association, 16 February 2011*)
- The Daily Telegraph has reported that Downing Street is now getting involved in the financing of the No2AV campaign, quoting a Downing Street source saying: “*We are helping with the money.*”
- The people funding and masterminding the Tory campaign are leading Tory figures. Its chief fundraiser is Tory Party funder, Lord Rodney Leach. Its Chief Executive is Matthew Elliott, Chief Executive of the Taxpayers Alliance. And its Finance Director is Charlotte Vere, a former Tory candidate.
- It is easy to see why the Tories are throwing the weight of the Tory party machine behind the No campaign. In the words of a leading Tory, David Davis, AV is the “anti-Tory” system.
- British Election Survey modelling shows that the Tories would have lost seats in every election but one since 1983. A spokesman for the No campaign, Tory MP George Eustice, conceded on Newsnight this week that AV would cost the Tories seats.
- This is why not one Conservative MP is backing the Yes campaign.

Conservative seat share under FPTP and AV

	AV	FPTP
1983 (BES/JC)	391 (-6)	397
1987 (BES/JC)	381 (+6)	375
1992 (BES/JC)	328 (-8)	336
1997 (BES/JC)	70 (-95)	165
2001 (BES/JC)	140 (-26)	166
2005 (BES)	171 (-27)	198
2010 (BES)	284 (-23)	307

1983-2005 BES/JC Estimates derived by John Curtice from British Election Study data, reported at http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/8506306.stm

2010 BES Based on detailed analysis of large-scale British Election Study data on second preferences, by Paul Whiteley and David Sanders, reported at <http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/politicsandpolicy/?p=4965>

- As the table above shows, the Conservatives were likely to have lost seats under AV in all but one election since 1983. Academic research from Dr Matt Qvortrup also argues that *'in every election since 1997, the Labour Party would have gained more seats under AV than under First-Past-the-Post'*.
- The leading grassroots Conservative website, ConservativeHome, argues that David Cameron's leadership would be irrevocably undermined if the AV referendum is passed and that he would become a 'lost leader'.
- Specifically it argues that David Cameron will be "blamed for making it impossible for a Conservative Prime Minister to lead a Conservative Government ever again" and would be "blamed, above all, by Conservative MPs for putting their seats in peril".

Ed Miliband: Why Alternative Vote gets my vote

My belief in a better politics is the reason why I support the [alternative vote](#) and will back the yes campaign in this [coming referendum](#). The easy and politically expedient route would be to find an excuse to abandon my support now. But I won't.

I respect the views of my Labour colleagues who are for retaining first past the post. But I disagree with them. Why? Fundamentally, because AV offers an opportunity for political reform, ensuring the voice of the public is heard louder than it has been in the past. And given the standing of politics that is an opportunity we should take. It is a system that combines the direct representation of first-past-the-post with one that will make the votes of more people count.

We should be in no doubt. If Britain votes yes in May's referendum it will be a vote to challenge the status quo.

The very fact of having to gain the majority support of the voters will increase political accountability. AV will also force parties to admit where there is agreement between them, prising open our confrontational system so that similarities sometimes become as important as differences. It could be the beginning of a transformation in political debate.

For years the public have wanted to change the tone of politics. A vote yes is a vote to begin this change. Exaggerating disagreement in order to create false black-and-white choices under first-past-the-post has only added to a particular style of politics that turns off the electorate.

What about the objections to AV? It's not a proportional system, true. But no system is perfect. Its advantage is that it retains the essential link between one MP and one constituency. Breaking that link would be a mistake.

What about the objection that this is entirely irrelevant to the concerns of most voters? Yes, it is not at the top, or even near the top, of many people's lists of concerns. I cannot claim that voters in my constituency, or any other that I have visited, often raise the relative merits of AV versus first-past-the-post or any other system.

It is why I have always said that my top priority in a referendum held on the same day as the [May elections](#) would be those elections, since they provide the chance for a verdict on the Conservative-led government's vicious assault on many of the things we value. That remains so.

But how we make our politics more relevant to the concerns of the public is at the heart of the AV debate and should be the question underlying a whole programme of political reform.

This referendum should be just the first step to strengthen democracy by making it more representative of the people it serves. The disconnect between people and politicians that was so palpable in that angry year before the last election will not be bridged by a new voting system alone.

That is why I think that the next step should be reform of the House of Lords as well. I want to see a fully elected second chamber, as we and the Liberal Democrats called for in our manifestos – and I call on the government to bring forward those reforms as quickly as possible. David [Cameron's use of the Lords in the past few months – packing it with peers](#) to vote through his constitutional changes – shows again why that is so necessary.

Nick Clegg should make clear that he still supports a fully elected second house rather than another Conservative-inspired compromise. Certainly, I believe MPs – both Labour and Liberal Democrat – should be given the chance to vote for what was in their manifestos.

Can the AV referendum be won? If it is, it will be no thanks to this government. Clegg can't effectively campaign for it and Cameron won't. [In the Downing Street rose garden they promised a new politics](#), but less than one year on Cameron chooses to stand with the status quo against political change, and Clegg cannot credibly stand for change because of his broken promises. This government can't deliver change in our politics when Cameron is unwilling and Clegg is unable.hwy

And yet the public will get their say, and I will fight for a yes. I will join with those of all parties and none who want to see the public's voice heard more loudly in Westminster.

AV is no panacea for our political ills. Our political system needs bigger reform. But political change is sometimes about making small steps on the road. AV is a step worth taking. It's why I am urging a yes vote in the referendum.

Source: The Guardian, 17 February 2011