

The biz club in 2010 – ‘biz blog’

Welcome to the start of the biz blog for 2010 which will continue build on the New Years Resolution that “we will all communicate more.”

February 19th 2010 – Informal Political Luncheon (IPL)

Unfortunately the first luncheon of 2010 in January was postponed due to very inclement weather conditions so we kicked off the New Year with our February luncheon. Many supporters again braved the snow flurries to attend this luncheon held as usual at the Garden Hotel.

After a delicious lunch Geoffrey Pointon introduced Jeanne Douglas to the room and asked her why she supports the Conservatives. Jeanne has always voted Conservative and feels very strongly that it is time for a change of government. She is very active at the moment and will be out leafleting when the election date is announced.

Geoffrey agreed stating ‘the time for criticism is over basically we need to rally behind our member and get our party back in.’

Frank Simms was concerned that ‘that under Labour the UK had lost control of its destiny. He felt it was at risk and our triple A rating globally was very important.’ He also recognised that if the Conservatives get in they are going to inherit a mass of problems and that budgets would need to be set looking at the economy as a whole.

Derick Horsfall agreed noting ‘we need to cut down on public expenditure nearly 40% of it is unnecessary. However by cutting down because of contractual obligations we could in the short term increase costs.’

Frank Simms pointed out ‘that public expenditure has been set at such a level it can be over a 3-4 year cycle that we are tied into and so some things will not change overnight.’

The room then considered various European issues.

Geoffrey Pointon noted ‘Greece is the tip of the iceberg. Credit ratings are going crazy the real interest rates are rising sharply. We are heading for a difficult period and the average person does not realise what is going to happen in the economy and how it will impact them.’

Andrew Benson interjected ‘we may have a run on the pound before the next election.’

Frank Simms added ‘if the Euro falls at the end of the day Europe is a major customer of the UK.’ Looking at Ireland he said ‘they voted ‘no’ the first time and then ‘yes’ the second as they were having problems with their economy.’

Geoffrey Pointon added that ‘they are now paying the price for joining as most of their 18-24 year olds are leaving Ireland as they are unable to find employment.’ He added the ‘big players are Germany and France and they are going to exert enormous pressure on countries such as Portugal and Spain to come into line economically. The Euro experiment is going to be tested and it is possible that Germany will exit.’ He felt that technically

already it is not one currency as they are paying 4% more on the Euro in Greece than in Germany.' America he noted is coming out of recession better than most western economies.

James Lee added that 'America has a third of the world's natural resources so could close its doors to the wider global market.'

The debate then progressed to talk of the election and how might the Conservatives win.

Frank Simms said 'it is forecast that it could be a very low turn out which should be advantageous to the Conservatives.'

Tim Whorton spoke 'if you look historically every Labour government has ended with the country on the point of bankruptcy. Why are the Conservatives not attacking Labour at every opportunity? It is three months to an election. Why are we not driving home what is wrong?'

David Radford agreed 'the Conservatives are not attacking. Clearly we need Labour out. We have had 'tax and spend' for too long.'

Annabelle Meek added that 'we are not an effective opposition.'

Geoffrey Pointon said 'the heat will rise as they Labour party feel they are dying and they will push the debate.'

Andrew Benson felt 'that Labour would start playing the class card as the election approached.'

Derick Horsfall felt that 'the voters are apathetic as they see no differences between the parties and so no viable alternative to Labour.' A lot of people he felt would be influenced by the personality of the candidate and not the policy of the party.

Generally the opinion on the election outcome was somewhat pessimistic as it was felt that the average voter was not interested in politics and would for vote for a party that stated it would tax big earners like the bankers and not consider the wider implications. A quick round robin showed most attendees currently predicted a hung parliament or very low Conservative majority (10 was a popular number).

April 16th 2010 – Pre Election Bonanza Luncheon

Nearly sixty biz club supporters gathered to attend the last luncheon to be held prior to the 2010 election. Our two local MP's Alan Duncan and Edward Garnier found time to attend.

Held at the stunning venue of Normanton Park Hotel, Rutland Water on a gloriously sunny day this was a very enjoyable event. Mark Coulam from the National Australia Bank Limited spoke to the assembled diner's prior to luncheon on the economic situation preceding the forthcoming election.





After a delicious lunch diners were served with some locally produced Quenby Stilton that Freddie de Lisle had kindly brought with him to the lunch for all to enjoy.

Guests were then given the opportunity to have two minutes to speak on whatever topic they chose. Much to the amusement of the attendees and with the election in mind in order to speak



guests were required to hold a small 'soap box' in their hands rather than have to stand on one! When the two minutes were up an air horn was

blown to move on to the next speaker.

Both sitting MP's spoke and were given some latitude on the two minute rule. Members were delighted generally to hear their optimistic forecasts about the outcome of the forthcoming election. A sentiment not shared by everyone.



Other topics included a minimum price for a unit of alcohol, government expenditure on advertising and the first televised leaders election debate candidate to name a few. All who wanted to speak were given the opportunity to have their 'two minutes' with the soap box in hand.

May 21st 2010 – Informal Political Luncheon (IPL)

The first post election luncheon of the new coalition government saw many new faces in the room. After lunch Geoffrey Pointon introduced Jo Balzer-Wright and asked her why she had voted at the May election.

Jo detailed how she had never previously felt the urge to vote and although she recognised that she should use her democratic right she had never felt enough strong conviction towards any of the parties to be drawn to vote. Jo said 'whatever party is in government we all moan and groan and so I have never been able to feel strong enough about my decision to vote. However as I am now older I feel that I have increased wisdom and have reached an age that I should be old enough to make a decision. So I have watched, listened and done some research and chose to vote Conservative but I would like to understand how the new coalition will work.'

The reference to the coalition caused the room to debate why there had not been a firm majority for the Conservatives.

Chris Emmett had recently attended a post election 'The New Parliament conference' hosted by ConservativeIntelligence.com that analysed the result of the 2010 General Election. Chris gave feedback to the room 'the good news is Gordon is out but the bad news is we seem to have a Dutch auction on our

constitution. Why did we not get a majority? In some seats simply we had the wrong candidate. The "big society" idea is a philosophy and not a door step vote winner. It put voters off as it takes time to explain and for people to get to grips with a political philosophy. Chris explained she believes in it as a philosophy but it did not resonate on the doorsteps as people believe they do not have time in their busy live to volunteer yet more time. The television debates – when you are 20 points ahead in the polls it is not the best idea to put your leader on television to give an opportunity for that lead to be reduced. When Northern Ireland (NI) and the loss of public sector jobs was spoken about by David Cameron in the television debates the NI vote was lost. That was enough of a loss for us not to get a majority. Many of his advisers were all from a PR background and did not have campaign experience. Put simply the campaign strategy was not right from the start.'

Robert Wills said 'most people wanted the Conservatives to win. We now have two leaders who are like minded people from similar backgrounds who will bring their party's with them. We need to support them. The last thing we need is another election. If this fails it could bring currency problems. We need to have optimism and the countries perspective needs to be for it to work.'

Les Breathwick replied 'that "optimism" may be fine, but in present circumstances "realism" is a better bet. In the long run, coalitions don't work, especially when they are (like the present one) very unbalanced in the sense that the LibDems are the younger, junior partner. The party leaders are too alike: Clegg is the luckier one in the sense that he brings with him a party which went downhill, at the election. The pity of it is that Cameron did not do a deal with Farage and win over the UKIP votes: the price to pay (a referendum on the Lisbon Treaty, which Cameron had already promised and reneged on) was not great, and might indeed, in today's climate of a collapsing euro, have been very popular with the electorate.'

Geoffrey Pointon noted 'we have not had a referendum since 1973. The Conservative party did say they would go for the vote but due to the Lisbon Treaty changed that view. What is happening in Greece may mean that view could again change. Throughout the election it did not seem that there was a clear strategy on this it was always changing.'

Chris Emmet 'the belief of the leader needs to be constant and consistent to the public.'

Tim Wright 'we can't be all things to all men. If the Conservatives had supported a referendum in Europe then the press would have used that to indicate instability in the party and a split between the two sides "pro and anti Europe". David Cameron was electable as he is in government and the Liberals will add the "left wing" to the party it didn't have.'

Geoffrey Pointon asked the assembled diners 'what they thought would happen next?'

Jo Balzer-Wright replied 'they are like children fighting in a playground and so will bicker and not make real decisions. We need people in parliament with a true understanding of real life experiences who can bring that to government.'

Terry Forsey felt 'that the Liberals have done very well so far and would do everything they could to remain in government even if that meant compromising.'

Annabelle Meek agreed that 'the Liberals would continue to look after their own interests unless the Euro fails.'

Geoffrey Pointon asked 'The Germans have an opt out of the Euro. What then?'

Robert Wills agreed that the Euro could fail but thought that the coalition would go the distance.

Tim Wright also felt it the coalition would last. He said 'the Liberals have always been to the right of Labour. As the coalition develops they will become "left wing" Conservatives. It could even see an end to the Liberal party as we know it'

Both Jill Trendell and Terry Forsey felt the coalition would stay in government for three years. Jill was concerned that 'they may muddle along and did not see any direction for them as the two leaders both had large egos.'

Robert Wills said 'it would be a disaster to "muddle along" as we have economic challenges that need to be met.'

Tim Wright said 'they will be forced to sort out the economy and the deficit as they are not in a position to control it.'

David Radford felt that 'when the Conservatives feel the country is behind them they will push for an election.'

Robert Wills said 'the electorate will make them pay at the polls if they move to an election and the people don't want it.'

June 25th 2010 – Informal Political Luncheon (IPL)

Geoffrey Pointon welcomed all to the luncheon and announced the start of the biz of the year award for 2010. An updated events list was distributed which now included the inaugural Stamford event planned for 1st October at The George Hotel.

Jane Smettem a new attendee was asked to speak to the diners and address the question "Am I a doubting Conservative". Jane said 'a doubter "yes" over the years I have found it hard to always support the Conservatives. I was a great fan of Maggie but I found it hard to support all of her policies particularly what happened to the miners and I was disappointed that her government failed to tackle education.. I again doubted when John Major was in power who was left a great legacy but did not take us forward and I doubted to the extent that I even voted for Tony Blair....."once, that was enough!" I also doubted a wholesale commitment to free markets. The road to free marketism is littered by mistakes and needs tempering round the edges.' "Do I doubt now?" I didn't think David Cameron had it in him but he

has impressed and it is now a case of definitely giving the Coalition the benefit of the doubt and they have my whole hearted support.'

Geoffrey asked the room if they agreed. 'Does the new government need our support?'

Derick Horsfall replied 'Yes. The two parties have come together and have both sub-served their own politics to get the country back on track. Whereas Labour is still focusing on politics rather sorting out the crisis we are in.'

Chris Emmett said 'I would like to agree with Jane and think we will all collaborate. The danger is during this time it gives Labour the opportunity to regroup, get a leader and win the next election. It is looking like the left wing Libdems will migrate to Labour in time and with them will follow their voters. We should have gone for a minority Conservative government and had another election in 6 months time.'

Fuad Hamzeh agreed with Chris stating 'history shows a minority government has gone on to win a landslide victory after 6 months.'

Peter Tasker said 'I think a minority government would have been unrealistic and lasted only weeks. The coalition gives David Cameron the chance to establish a "central government". If the coalition lasts longer than a year it is likely that the left focusing Libdems will disappear to Labour and Nick Clegg may then move to the Conservatives. If this happens we will get just two party politics.'

Andrew Smeaton raised 'the electorate have spoken and should not be disregarded. The country went to the vote and chose anyone but Brown; ultimately we got the best end result. It is likely that a number of Libdems will migrate to Labour. However we need sufficient coalition MP's to carry this agenda through and we should support it.'

Phillip King added 'in reality we lost the election. We should have had a clear majority but mistakes were made. Labour were underestimated. The Unions were very committed especially in the Northern Heartlands. It would be great to be in government by ourselves but we have to compromise as it is a coalition. The markets must see the UK as a good bet. If we had a minority government the debt cost to each of us would have gone up as we would not have been strong enough. I agree that left wing Libdems will migrate to Labour. Grass roots Libdems activists have already gone as they feel Nick Clegg has sold them out and Labour membership has increased as a result. If more Libdem MP's move sides then the majority to govern will no longer be there. Looking ahead the comprehensive spending review with a minimum of 25% cuts in the public sector excluding those that have been ring fenced will bring high levels of unemployment. This along with the pension changes will see public unrest and disharmony.'

Geoffrey Pointon asked 'does this mean an overload of public concern could bring the coalition to an end?'

Phillip King replied 'it will test the coalition. The Libdems have not been in government for years and now have to face that responsibility and criticism.'

Anner Fehnert said 'cuts have been made to housing benefit. This is not supporting the people at the lower end of the scale. They will feel the cost of the cuts and vote again this will encourage them to want to vote for Labour.'

Chris Emmett said 'ring fencing does not work when you are in huge debt.'

The debate focused on what will happen to the coalition and Conservatives going forward.

Les Breathwick said 'apres moi le deluge– and agreed that the coalition could bring an end to the Libdem party. Politicians priorities are with their own jobs above all else. David Cameron made a hash of the election and I wonder if that was because, consciously or subconsciously, he wanted a deputy that he can offload his mistakes onto.'

Peter Tasker 'it can be seen already that the backbenchers are very upset. I doubt they will bring down the coalition but they will make themselves heard behind closed doors.'

Frank Simms noted 'everyone has a choice and David Cameron made his but had very little on offer. I feel it could be the end of Conservatives as we know them. I also believe we did not win but lost the election and agree David Cameron wants to keep his job and so Nick Clegg is in position as the "fall guy". Over the next five years we do need to make this work. We will lose the next election unless the Conservative party start to recognise the real issues at grass roots level.'

Les Breathwick said 'we had disputes in the late '70's that brought Maggie to power. If we get social unrest and people out on the streets we will have problems. The change in social demographics as regards pensions is an important issue and is not fully recognised by the party.'

Andrew Smeaton said 'David Cameron decided to go over the party to engage with the country. We have a once in a lifetime opportunity to re-engage with the people on politics. I hope the budget has encouraged people to go out and earn money and decide how they want to spend it.'

Chris Emmett 'we can't get people to engage and support us when we are taking away 30% of what they earn. Maggie before the miner's strikes had stockpiled coal and made sure the police backed her. David Cameron has shown a lack of judgment as the police services are not ring fenced and their support will be crucial if we have social unrest.'

Fuad Hamzeh added 'I travelled to 27 marginal seats during the election. People did not wholly support David Cameron they just disliked Gordon Brown more and this was what influenced their votes. These were not Conservative supporters and with Gordon no longer leading Labour we cannot rely on their votes.'

The debate then focussed on Europe and the Euro.

Les Breathwick felt 'it can't survive in its current form.'

Phillip King agreed.

Geoffrey Pointon then asked 'if it does not survive and Lisbon has to be changed to accommodate it. Will we see a referendum?' He added 'If Lisbon is significantly changed then I feel that it could split the Conservative party.'

Chris Emmett felt 'if this is the case then UKIP will see more support.'

Phillip King added 'all areas of expenditure are under the spotlight. He £10 billion a year to Europe will become an area of focus. If the public/press pick up on this then there will be no choice as it will become a topic that has to be dealt with.'

Jane Smettem thought 'that there were big themes at work at the moment and we will see a big shift in how our democracy will work. Our current system does not directly give people a voice. Changes can be seen happening in Europe and I don't believe it will just be left to fall apart. There is too much political capital invested and now it is not just a case of France and Germany, it is new Europe and Old Europe, a huge economic & political area.'

A quick poll in the room found all were in favour of a referendum on Europe but that they did not feel it would happen as the politicians do not want to hear a 'no' vote.'

Next Event

Informal Political Luncheon at the Garden Hotel on 27th August