

The terms for a SNP/Lib Dem/Labour coalition according to Nicola Sturgeon and friends

I do not predict UK election results where I am taking part. The SNP and Lib Dems do, and are predicting a hung Parliament. I see the polls as others do, and read that there could still be a hung Parliament where post election deals would decide how we are governed. I hope that is not the outcome, given the disastrous last months of the last Parliament where no-one had a majority.

Meanwhile some parties are telling us how they would behave if the electorate voted for another stalemate. Nicola Sturgeon has set out her terms to allow a Labour minority government to take office. She wants an early second referendum on Scottish independence, the removal of Trident submarines from Scotland and more money for the NHS. Jeremy Corbyn probably agrees with the second and third, and Labour would doubtless finesse the issue of another referendum in order to get Labour into government.

Jo Swinson seems to have abandoned her rhetoric of expecting a Lib Dem majority. Whilst playing hard to get she has made it crystal clear she would not want to help a minority Conservative government, so it only leaves one option of Labour into office. It might well not be a coalition, but just allowing them to win confidence votes would be sufficient for Labour to take over.

The push for a second Independence referendum in Scotland would be disruptive. It would establish the idea that governments only accept referendum decisions they like and make people vote and vote again to get a reversal. It would invite further uncertainty over Brexit, with the parties concerned wanting a second referendum on that as well. It would plunge the country into another two years or more of constitutional wrangling and confusion, undermine business confidence and get in the way of the new Parliament doing things to improve public services, grow the economy and pursue an strong and consistent foreign and trade policy.

Now is the time for a clear decision. We need a majority government to move on from Brexit and to remind the SNP they had their referendum and promised to accept its result.