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The stakes in Glasgow East

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Created 2008-07-08 12:19

Tom Griffin (London, The Green Ribbon [1]): Labour finally selected its candidate for the Glasgow East by-election last night, former Holyrood Minister Margaret Curran [2]

Conservatives should be hoping that Curran succeeds in holding off the SNP, according to former Telegraph leader writer Richard Ehrman.

In the First Post [3] today, Ehrman argues that a Labour defeat could trigger a crisis that would put David Cameron in Downing Street before the Tories are ready.

Immediate power, with the economy declining by the day and their own policies still largely unformed, is not a prospect they privately relish.

Looking further ahead, more thoughtful Tories are also beginning to worry that if they win big in England at the next election and the SNP do likewise in Scotland, Alex Salmond will be well set for the referendum on independence which he has pencilled in for 2010.

The Daily Mail's Benedict Brogan [4] argues that such a catastrophic scenario is unlikely:

A wild result in a Scottish seat is unlikely to tell us something we don't already know: Gordon Brown is in trouble everywhere, even at home. But Scottish politics is different and the SNP are not the Tories. Labour MPs, those that haven't already disappeared on holiday, may just shrug.

Advisedly perhaps, Alex Salmond inclined towards Brogan's view in an interview with the Daily Record [5]:

He said he did not believe an SNP victory would bring down Prime Minister Gordon Brown.

But he said overturning Labour's 13,500 majority from the last election would force the PM to do more to cut fuel prices.

He said: "This by-election is time for Glasgow East to elect an MP who will send a shockwave to London and force action over rising energy costs."

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[1] http://tomgriffin.typepad.com/the_green_ribbon/

[2] <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/scotland/7493978.stm>

[3] <http://www.thefirstpost.co.uk/44800,opinion,the-tories-glasgow-east-dilemma->

[4] <http://broganblog.dailymail.co.uk/2008/07/actually-glagow.html>

[5] <http://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/scottish-news/2008/07/08/labour-by-election-candidate-margaret-curransounds-tv-challenge-to-snp-rival-86908-20635708/>