

How to interpret today's vote...

Simple comparisons

Size of the rebellion:

- Any rebellion of over 65 cross-votes will be the largest domestic rebellion against Blair since 2001.
- Any rebellion of over 67 cross-votes will be the largest domestic rebellion against Blair since 1997.
- Any rebellion of over 72 cross-votes will be the biggest rebellion at the Second Reading of a Government Bill since 1945.
- Any rebellion of over 75 will be bigger than that faced by any Labour government up to 1974.
- Any rebellion of over 110 will be the largest domestic rebellion against the whip faced by any Labour Government.
- Any rebellion of over 139 will be the largest rebellion against the whip of any Government since the dawn of modern party politics.

Size of the majority:

- A majority of less than 17 will be the smallest on a whipped vote since 1997.
- A government defeat will be the first on a whipped vote (excluding the two free votes on Select Committee membership in 2001) since the Blair Government was elected.
- A defeat will be only the fourth time since the beginning of the Twentieth Century that any government Bill had been lost at Second Reading – and only the second time that a Government with a working majority had lost a Bill. The Rent Restrictions Bill in 1924 and the Reduction of Redundancy Rebates Bill were lost by minority Governments. Only the Shops Bill in 1986 has previously been lost to a Government with a secure majority.

The three previous largest revolts at Second Reading since 1945

- 1 April 1947. Second Reading of National Service Bill. 72 Labour MPs voted against and between 30-40 abstained. Bill passed by 386-85, with Conservative support. (Subsequent Third Reading saw 37 MPs voted against, and almost half absent from the vote).
- 14 April 1986. Second Reading of the Shops Bill. 72 Conservative MPs voted against and between 15-20 abstained. Bill fell by 296-282.
- 7 May 2003. Second Reading of the Health and Social Care Bill saw 65 Labour MPs vote for a Reasoned Amendment against the Bill. (31 voted against on Second Reading itself). The Bill passed with a majority of 74 on Second Reading (180 on the Reasoned Amendment).

Votes at the Second Reading of the European Assembly Elections Bill on 6 July 1977) saw 126 Labour MPs vote against, but there was an explicit free vote, extending to a suspension of collective responsibility. Votes on a similar, reintroduced Bill in subsequent session, saw 74 Labour MPs vote against, although again this was a free vote for backbenchers.

Previous large Labour rebellions prior to 1997 include:

- In 1924, 73 Labour MPs voted against the MacDonald Government over the right of strikers to claim unemployment benefit. As a proportion of the parliamentary party, this still remains the largest revolt by members of the PLP.
- In 1929, 64 Labour MPs voted against their party over the appointment of Lord Hunsdon, a prominent opponent of the General Strike, as the first Public Works Loan Commissioner.
- April 1947 saw the largest revolt against the Attlee Government: 72 Labour MPs voted against the National Service Bill.
- The 1964-1970 Parliaments saw seven rebellions of over 50, the largest of which took place during the Justices of the Peace Bill (with 75 Labour MPs voting against their whips).
- Between 1974 and 1979, there were a total of 45 rebellions involving 50 or more Labour MPs, with one vote on agricultural rent reform seeing 110 MPs vote against their whips.

Notes

*Philip Cowley is a lecturer at the University of Nottingham and author of *Revolts and Rebellions: Parliamentary Voting Under Blair (Politico's, 2002)*. He is available on 0115 8466230 or 07790 763928, or by email on philip.cowley@nottingham.ac.uk.*

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