ASI poll: public doesn't want to pay for political parties [1]

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There's been a lot in the news lately about the prospect of the taxpayer funding political parties. Sir Christopher Kelly's committee on political funding recommended it last week, and there are reports that the Deputy Prime Minister is privately in favour as well. I can't think of a worse idea ? it would massively entrench the current political class, apart from being pretty revolting to actually have to pay people to lie to us. An Adam Smith Institute-commissioned poll by ICM Research, released today, shows that the vast majority of the public agrees. We asked:

> "Do you think that political party funding should come mainly from taxes or do you think it should remain as it is now, with funds from party members, businesses, trade unions and wealthy individuals."

The results were as follows (with the answers to the same question in 2002 in brackets):

> Party funding should remain as it is now 71% (58%)
> Party funding should come mainly from taxes 16% (26%)
> Don't know 13% (16%)

In other words, the public were against the proposals in 2002 and are even more against them now. Well, good. If politicians want to persuade us to vote for them, let them do so using money they've raised through voluntary donations, not coercive taxation. Subsidies for existing parties would act as they do in the private sector ? protecting them from new competitors and locking us in to the same parties we're stuck with right now indefinitely. I can't sympathise with the idea that politicians are like children, who can't be blamed for their own corruption ? I want a stick to be used against wrongdoers, not a carrot to bribe them into good behaviour. Of course, free money is attractive, but with any luck, polling results like this should put this silly idea to bed for good.

ASI Senior Fellow Tim Ambler writes on this poll at ConservativeHome here[3].

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