

Whatever happened to...

This week Politics takes a look back at some of the political stories that have disappeared completely from the political agenda this year

...IMPEACHING THE PM?

By Andrew Mickel
Political Editor

Just over a year ago an ambitious and imaginative plan was launched to impeach Tony Blair over going to war in Iraq. Set by Plaid Cymru MP Adam Price, it planned to resurrect a medieval law that hadn't been used since the time of Trafalgar.

Once passed, a committee of MPs would be set up to examine the Prime Minister's actions in going to war, as it alleged that he was in serious breach of constitutional principles.

At the time, the impeachment plan had wide and varied support, from George Galloway to Boris Johnson. As

an unusual plan it was guaranteed air-time on all news programmes, and support from an electorate that was still hostile to the action in Iraq.

It was labelled a 'no-hoper'. Given the reaction it provoked in Parliament, this wasn't just rhetoric

But even when the plan was launched, the massive publicity overshadowed the fact it was unlikely to pass. The chairman of the foreign affairs committee labelled the plan a 'no-hoper' and a 'political stunt'. Given the reaction it provoked in Parliament, this wasn't just rhetoric.

The Lib Dems were divided on whether to support the order, and the Conservatives were told not to support it. More importantly, rebel Labour MPs were unlikely to sign it, as it would mean risking their place in the party, but also how important the party was.

Still, the campaign did build some slow momentum. The Scottish Nationalists joined Plaid Cymru in the bid in April of this year. But still the plan only had the support of a couple of Lib Dems, a handful of

Conservatives MPs, and crucially, no Labour votes.

What was once headline news was therefore reduced to an exhausted political stunt. Last month, only the *Daily Post* (North Wales' daily paper) noticed that the impeachment plan was dropped. Without Labour support the plan simply ran out of parliamentary time. Instead, Plaid is working on a plan more likely to win cross-party support, to throw the PM out for 'High Crimes and Misdemeanours'.

Although the impeachment plan is still being held as a possible plan in future, it has been proven as nothing more than a political stunt that has done nothing to benefit the anti-war movement.



BLAIR: Unimpeachable



ADAM PRICE: Man with a plan

...INTERNATIONAL GOODWILL?

By Andrew Bladon
Political Correspondent

Over the past 12 months the world has been posed with some significant natural disasters, beginning back on Boxing Day 2004 with a tsunami crossing the Indian Ocean and taking almost 200,000 lives, the second biggest in history.

Iran, Indonesia, Pakistan have suffered devastating earthquakes, and Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans have meant this year has had many natural disasters. What has international goodwill done to alleviate the situation?

For the victims of the Asian Tsunami, Oxfam raised over \$466 million, their biggest donation ever, with 90% coming from the public. Governments also pledged to match this along with a further \$96 million and a freeze on the affected nations' debt. The earthquake that hit Pakistan on October 8 hasn't generated the same level of international response but this shouldn't overshadow what has happened between India and Pakistan.

The actions of civil society, not seen since the 1965 war against India, have united the nation and they

will have significant political implications. Within hours of the devastating quake, doctors flew from Karachi and Lahore to set up medical camps in the worst hit areas. The President's Relief Fund has received an estimated US \$100 million in donations, and private citizens donated twice as much.

This year the UN launched a record appeal of £2.7 billion from countries across the globe targeting victims of war, famine and natural disasters. This money is collected from political and charitable donations, which is then distributed across the most needed parts of the world. The UN has slowly been increasing this target, especially this year with the number and scale of natural disasters in 2005.

While political donations may be rising and becoming a significant part of aid relief the majority of the contribution still comes from citizens, and the privately raised money through charities and disaster relief organisations. However, it is the more relevant political donations of food water and army support that the government must take credit for, and the speed that they can get to the disaster.

...THE LIB DEMS' CHANCES?

By Andrew Rennison
Political Correspondent

Through no fault of my own, I voted Lib Dem last May. For this, I blame every other major party running for office, Kennedy's boys being simply the lesser of many evils up for election.

Labour has no integrity, the Greens, no credibility, and the Tories, nothing at all. Without Kilroy, UKIP lack any comedy value, and an Englishman voting for Plaid Cymru is probably illegal. Thus, my big black 'X' landed on the Lib Dems.

'Still, can't be all bad' I thought, 'they'll tax rich people, and recycle all my pizza boxes'. Indeed, there was a veritable hoopla surrounding Charles and his yellow men those seven months ago, and upon gaining his 62 seats Kennedy pledged to be a 'real alternative' to Blair's withering army.

So what has become of my spring-time pledge of allegiance? Well, in truth, not a sausage.

Far from shifting up a gear ready to usurp second place from the Tories,

the Lib Dems have settled into a familiar third, occasionally shouting something mildly socialist whilst bickering over whether Charles is too ginger to fight the next election.

The opportunities to kick Labour square in the gonads have not been wanting: Blunkett, ID cards, Iraq to name a few – any of these issues are just asking to be set alight with Liberal matchsticks.

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But when I turn on the news, parliamentary tradition remains: Blair gets up, puts on his Serious Face™, and defends his own stupidity. Howard then rises to spit accusations and rhythmically bare his fangs at poor Tony. And finally, Charles takes



KENNEDY: Back in the days of punch-drunk success

his turn, politely scolding Labour, like a hopelessly nice man trying to be angry.

Far from a 'real alternative', the Lib Dems seem content to just make up the numbers. Why?

The General Election gave them a mandate to progress, with the highest rise in voting share of any party. Lib Dem policies tend to appeal to the young, particularly regarding education, tax and Iraq, and with Britain's youth they should have a vibrant momentum with which to push on. But they haven't.

Sadly, the buck has to stop with Charles Kennedy. Anyone who ever chairs *Have I Got News For You* is fine with me, but, being brutally honest: a nice, friendly, Scottish ginger person will never ever lead this country. A foolish, dark-haired Scottish person maybe, but not Charles.

Though this point was much debated at their recent conference, the party has not mustered the cold blood needed to oust such a nice man. But they've got to; otherwise the last shred of half-decent mainstream politics will die a premature death.