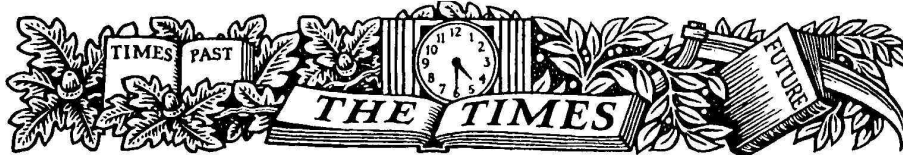


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## Political Bed Fellows

Party leaders should now go to sleep, perchance to dream of being prime minister

Given how close the polls are, you'd think it must be the voters who are the ones having sleepless nights, worrying up to the wire about whom to vote for. But it turns out it's the politicians who are sacrificing sleep in order to cram in as much campaigning as possible before Britons cast their vote.

David Cameron yesterday embarked on an all-nighter to flaunt his stamina, to show voters that he is a sort of human version of New York City — the politician who never sleeps. In the age of 24-hour TV news, and 24-hour supermarkets, why not also 24-hour politicians? But is skipping sleep so smart?

Great minds have benefited from nabbing forty winks. Leonardo da Vinci napped. So did Brahms; also Thomas Edison (although given his famed perspiration-to-inspiration ratio he may have had to launder his sheets quite regularly). Churchill was a proud and proselytising napper, telling colleagues: "You must sleep sometime between lunch and dinner... you will accomplish more."

It's not just that scientists have found that sleep improves performance, productivity and happiness; or even because researchers at the University of Warwick reported yesterday that sleeping less than six hours a night increases the risk of early death. It's that any politician who believes MPs should interfere less in people's lives should be attracted to sleeping more. You need only look at ideas hatched when people *weren't* sleeping (the euro; identity cards) to appreciate the many benefits of slumber.

So as the campaign ends, Mr Cameron, Gordon Brown and Nick Clegg should go back to their constituencies and prepare for bed. Muck-raking journalists often try to uncover whom MPs are sleeping with. Maybe they should switch to snooping into whether our MPs are sleeping at all.