

COLCHESTER did what the Labour Party didn't – they confirmed the polls.

It would have been Wycombe's day, if only things had gone like the general election.

The Essex side had been top for most of the season and had a vital goal-difference lead going into the final showdown.

Barrow beating Colchester was like the Natu-

ral Law Party taking on the Tories in Beaconsfield.

The writing was on the wall for Wycombe Wanderers as the depressing scoreline filtered through from Colchester.

Afterwards, fans were claiming, through gritted teeth, they had known all week that Wanderers would not go up.

How, then, do they explain the unmistakable perfume of hope hanging

met with silent disinterest. "What's the FA Trophy?" people seemed to mutter. "Been there, done that. We're up for the big one now."

Dropped

Even dapper commercial manager Mark Austin was showing the tension, saying fans had supported the team "magnificent", a la Jimmy Greaves.

A Wycombe goal within 12 minutes brought uproar, mayhem. A man near me dropped his thermos flask.

And into the lull crept news that Colchester had also scored. Four minutes later, they scored again. Six minutes after that, Barrow had a man sent off. The perfume was turning to stench.

At half time, both Wycombe and Colchester were 2-0 up with their oppo-

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in the air before the match? More than 6,000 people did not want to watch glorious also-rans turning on a little consolation magic. The multitude wanted a full-blown miracle.

Tannoyed best wishes to Witton for their big Wembley final tomorrow were

nents down to ten men. How little separated them right to the end.

I don't remember much about the second half. I think Wycombe scored more goals and I vaguely remember Martin O'Neill popping out to wave a tinny trophy and disappearing fast.

Never has victory tasted so much like defeat. The polls were right this time. Wycombe, like Labour, will have to do it all again.

Just for the record

WANDERERS' 94-point tally surpassed the previous Conference record of 93 set by Runcorn in 1982. Scarborough's 91 points in 1987 is the highest total previously needed to win automatic promotion to the Football League.

Second is the highest Blues have ever finished in the Conference, and 30 wins in a season is their best effort. Their average home crowd of 3,648 is the club's highest in the Conference, and includes five gates over 5,000, including last Saturday's record of 6,035. They recorded more away wins, more wins and conceded least goals in this season's Conference, and finished 21 points clear of third placed Kettering.