

My question during the statement on the Shared Rural Network, 28 October 2019

John Redwood (Wokingham) (Con): How and when will my constituents in west Berkshire and Wokingham be able to get an advantage out of this excellent initiative? Will they need to do anything?

The Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (Nicky Morgan): No, they will not need to do anything. They will see the roll-out. Near, if not in, his constituency is, of course, a significant office of Vodafone, and we are grateful that it is part of these arrangements.

My speech during the debate on an Early Parliamentary General Election, 28 October 2019

John Redwood (Wokingham) (Con): This Parliament is once again misjudging the mood of the public. We were elected here to do serious things on behalf of our public. Conservative and Labour MPs alike were elected to see Brexit through. Three years and four months later, there is no sign of that. Instead, we have this discordant, argumentative Parliament that will do nothing. It will not throw the Government out of office and it will not allow the Government to govern. We owe it to the British people either to allow our Government to govern or to let the British people decide on a better group of MPs who can form a Government and do positive things for our country.

Andrew Percy (Brigg and Goole) (Con): Every constituency in my region voted at the 2016 referendum by a huge margin to leave the European Union. At that time, lots of my constituents, in some of the most deprived communities of this country, told me that they did not trust this Parliament to deliver it. They said, "We won't get it. They'll never let us leave." The five Conservatives out of the 10 MPs in my region might have voted to deliver Brexit, but is not the truth of it that the Labour MPs across my region, bar one or two examples, are never going to vote to leave the European Union, sadly proving right my constituents who said, "They'll never let us leave"?

John Redwood: My hon. Friend is right, but it is now about more than Brexit. It is about confidence in our parliamentary system to deliver orderly government that can do things for the people or to allow the public to decide who should be a better Government, because the House has no confidence in the

Government.

This Parliament needs to put through a Budget quite soon. Our economy needs a boost, and we need to know whether we can have the tax cuts as well as the spending increases, but I suspect that the Government fear bringing a Budget to the House because they think there will be no co-operation as they do not have a majority and this Parliament will not allow a majority to be formed.

This Government have recently brought a Queen's Speech to the House. It contains a number of good measures that I do not think were ideological or Conservative provocations to socialists and those of a more left-wing nature. They were chosen to build some consensus and address the issues that worry people. But again, I think the Government rightly fear that any one of those measures, if introduced, would probably meet with resistance and a lack of co-operation, in exactly the way that we have been experiencing with all these other measures.

But above all, this House needs to think what message it is sending to all our partners, friends and allies—countries around the world; the businesses that our businesses do business with; all those contacts we have around the globe. They see this country as a great beacon of democracy—a country of great experience in the art of democratic government; a country that has often led the world in putting forward and fighting for those freedoms and showing how they can improve the lives of those governed by them. But instead we are sending a message that we do not know what we are doing and can never agree about anything—that all we can do is have endless rows in this place, for the entertainment of people here perhaps, but to the denigration of our country and the undermining of its position.

How can a Government conduct international negotiations when everything they propose is undermined or voted against by the Opposition, because we do not have a majority? Above all, how can we get to the point where this House decides that it is good legislation to say that the Prime Minister has to break his promises—where it has turned the demand that he break his promises into something that this House calls an Act of Parliament? No wonder we look ridiculous. No wonder we cannot resolve Brexit. No wonder we cannot have a Budget to promote our economy. No wonder we cannot govern with aplomb in the interests of the British people.

The Prime Minister is right that if this House cannot do better, it must dissolve and ask the people to choose a better Parliament. Either we need to be a better Parliament or they need to choose a better Parliament as soon as possible.

“Let them take the bus” says Green

enthusiast

In recent discussions I have been having about the costs and timetable for getting to zero net carbon dioxide as various governments now want, I have been asking about who will be paying for the electric vehicles and the heat pumps it will take.

Millions of people in the UK on below average incomes will need to replace their cars and vans with electric versions. They will be expected to replace old gas and oil boilers with heat pumps and new boilers or with all electric systems. How easy will it be for them to afford the new machines and systems?

One person responded to my query by saying buses and trains will all go electric thanks to taxpayer and public sector financed investment. People can then take the bus and dispense with the car they said.

They seem to have in mind a them and us world, where the better off will still be able to afford the new vehicles and the all electric systems, whilst many others will in their view no longer have personal transport. Let them take the bus, is a paraphrase of their position.

This is a poor answer at best, as surely the many should have access to higher living standards and greater convenience. It is no answer to the needs of the small business person who needs a van to get to each appointment, taking the tools and spares needed for the assignment. Everyone from plumber to builder, from delivery business to mobile service provider needs personal transport tailored to their work. Many families need a car to get food back from the shops and to take the children to school as well as to get themselves to work.

For those places wanting zero net carbon as they call it by 2030 it will be soon that people need to spend the money on completely transforming their domestic heating, and to start thinking about new vehicles for the end of the next decade. We are talking about a colossal joint investment, where those just managing on current incomes will find it difficult to find the cash for potentially large expenditures.

I also see there is consumer resistance to some of these changes even where there is no direct additional cost involved. The electricity companies are urging people to allow works in their homes to change over meters. People with busy lives find it difficult to book out a day to supervise the work, and many are apprehensive about works in their home when the current system works just fine. The absence of any perceived personal benefit from the new meters has put lots of people off. Some circulate rumours the firms strenuously deny that there is some ulterior motive on future tariff and supply interruption that the new meters might bring. It will need a stronger case as to the benefits to get more people to allow these installations,.

Discussion with Supt Nick John, Local Police Area Commander, West Berkshire

On Friday I welcomed Superintendent Nick John to his post of Local Police Area Commander, West Berkshire and thanked him for the work of the local police force in the constituency. We discussed illegal encampments which had caused some worries and problems over the summer, and I said that I would be grateful if the police can continue to work closely with the Council and residents to tackle these promptly where they cause nuisance.

I also raised issues of violent crime including knife crime, internet fraud against vulnerable people, drug dealing and abuse, especially where it involves schoolchildren.

I look forward to the Thames Valley Police benefiting from additional police personnel to help tackle this on a nationwide basis.

I will pass on cases and general worries of the community to Supt John and I look forward to working with him and his team.

Anyone for an election?

It is unlikely this Parliament is about to vote to dissolve itself and hold an election. The massed ranks of the Opposition parties, usually so keen for an election, are shy about meeting electors on the doorstep and giving them the chance of change. The SNP and Lib Dem offer is tactical and linked to trying to stop Brexit. They are busy lobbying the EU to keep us in The EU for longer as a precondition for any election.

Labour after months of demands for a poll now say they wish to take so called No deal off the agenda first. They now say that could take them to December 2020 to be sure of that. They might as well say they do not want an election before the Thames freezes over. Given their strong belief in Global warming they should feel safe for a few years with that pledge.

Boris Johnson told the rallies and meetings before he became Leader that he did not want an early election. He assumed he could deliver Brexit on 31 October.

Now he is desperate for one, given the impasse in Parliament and the way his majority has disappeared.

A General election could break the logjam in this rotten Parliament if electors are in decisive mood. Were the vote to splinter too much with four or five parties in contention, we could end up with another hung Parliament which could perpetuate the block over Brexit and the difficulty in forming a government with a majority that can do things..

One of the most common messages I currently receive is Cromwell's speech when dissolving the Long Parliament. This much purged Parliament wished to perpetuate itself after the death of the King and the advent of the Commonwealth. Presumably my correspondents think they see similarities to today.

There are however very important differences. Cromwell arrived with 40 soldiers to close the Parliament down, using the force of the New Model Army against Parliament. He did not plan a new Parliament, but planned a personal autocracy as he became Lord Protector.

What we want instead is an election to try to change the personnel of Parliament. The gap between what this Parliament wants about Brexit and what voters want is too great. Worse still, many MPs were elected to see Brexit through only to go back on their word and do everything in their power to delay or prevent Brexit.