

Those indicative votes

It was no surprise that there was no majority for any of the proposals put to the vote. That was highly likely and reminds us why Parliament works best when government proposes and Parliament approves or modifies.

Three of the options I supported were not put to the vote. One was a constitutional proposal to avoid this kind of Parliamentary chaos. The second was a set of proposals to ensure just leaving takes place with a range of sensible agreements on things that need agreement. The third was a general proposal which had plenty of names on it to reaffirm Parliamentary support for leaving the EU, designed to get majority agreement by reminding most MPs they were elected to get us out. Nor was there any ability to vote for the comprehensive free trade proposal I and others have been putting to the government. One of the problems with not putting some first choice preferences to the first vote is it leaves MPs feeling unhappy that even their first vote had to be a compromise with what they really want.

It was another opportunity for Parliament to vote down the bad idea of a second referendum and to vote down yet again the idea of staying in the customs union. It is true Parliament also voted against No deal, but as the Prime Minister often reminds us the only way to leave avoiding no deal is to name a deal we want that the EU will grant. Once again Parliament failed that test. It is a pity Parliament was not allowed to highlight leaving with a range of deals without having to sign the Withdrawal Agreement, which could unite many voters if not MPs.

Delay in Brexit

Yesterday I and a few other MPs complained about the delay in Brexit and asked what it is for. Under the terms of the Statutory Instrument we now leave on 12 April unless the government has gained approval for the Withdrawal Agreement by Friday night. We are told the government may seek another debate and vote on it on Friday. I will post my speech in the debate later this morning.

Contributions to this site

There are too many long ones which I do not have time to check.

Given new laws pending from the EU over repeating other media items I will delete things that have long quotes or cross references to other sites as I have no wish to get entangled in any copyright issues.

Parliament today is in danger of losing control

The decision to have a series of indicative votes on certain backbench motions chosen by the Speaker may not produce the happy consensus its proponents wish. To many in the country it will look like a group of Remain voting MPs canvassing support for delay, dilution or cancellation of Brexit amongst themselves. MPs can vote for any number of the approved motions so the numbers will be quite difficult to interpret. Will any of the popular ones in Parliament be compatible with the Conservative or Labour Manifesto, with what the EU might accept and with the overriding promise to implement the results of the referendum? If the options are mainly variants of staying in much of the EU, allowing MPs to vote for several of these options at the same time will give the impression of even more Parliamentary support for failing to implement Brexit.

The public think Parliament is out to delay or stop Brexit

A recent Comres poll shows just 3% of the public think Parliament is doing a good job on Brexit, with 78% judging it to be doing a bad job.

The public wants to get on with Brexit, and dislike the way Parliament is trying to slow it down or stop it altogether. When asked about delay, 41% want to leave with no delay, and 33% want to leave with just a short delay. Staying in as a permanent option has only 35% support, showing a good number of Remain voters now want to get on with it and accept the result of the referendum.

The public are very critical of both Mrs May and Mr Corbyn, and think the negotiations have gone badly. They blame both the government for poor handling, and Parliament for helping undermine the UK bargaining position by seeking to rule out no deal and demanding the UK makes concessions. 6% think the Agreement is a good outcome for the UK with 40% thinking it is a good outcome for the EU.

Opinion is shifting amongst young voters, where more are coming round to the idea of leaving. Amongst 18-24 year olds 36% now wish to leave with 43% wanting to stay. The rest are don't knows.

Yesterday the Telegraph published another new Comres poll. This showed 55% of the public thinking Parliament is trying to stop Brexit, and 54% think Remain MPs and the establishment have damaged the UK's negotiating position. Support for Leave amongst under 35 year olds is up by 7%, with bigger increases for older people.

MPs seeking to control the agenda in Parliament to hold a series of indicative votes should consider these findings carefully before voting. More than half the public think withdrawing our notification to leave would damage our democracy yet there are those in Parliament who favour this option.