

The collapse of Labour

Mr Corbyn must have been forced into a corner over a second referendum. He had wisely held out against it and sort of kept his party together and his poll ratings up. He then gave in just after 8 MPs left mainly over deselection, unpleasant treatment from their party and anti-Semitism. We read his advisers thought a second referendum would be the way to stop more dissenters. That is not necessarily the case, as MPs leaving seems to have more to do with the style of the party, the threat of deselection and a wider range of issues than the EU. It does mean, however, he will lose a lot of Leave voters who stuck with the party in 2017 in the belief that Labour now supported exit.

I have not met or heard from any Leave voters who think we need a second referendum. The campaign to hold one is of course a movement of Remain voters who cannot accept the verdict of the People's vote. The Remain MPs spend their time slanging off Leave voters by saying we were too stupid to vote properly or patronising us by saying we were misled or not given the true facts. Allying himself to this group drives a new wedge into his party, alienating Leave voters and putting many MPs in a difficult position having promised their Leave voters Labour backed leaving. Given the way they treat us Leave voters it is difficult to see why any of us would want to change sides and join them. A second referendum looks like a hopeless mission. Even this Parliament should vote it down. Were one to be held why wouldn't Leave win by a bigger margin, given all that Remain has said about us, and all the false forecasts they have come out with? The hardline Remain MPs are remorselessly negative, run down our country, think the UK can do nothing for itself, and take the EU's side in any negotiation. These are not becoming characteristics for those who wish to represent most UK voters.

Labour has not defined the question for its referendum, but have said it will include Remain, so it is a re run of what we have already voted on. The only question to be resolved is do they want a proper WTO exit as an option, or would they seek to deny Leave voters even that? The last thing Leave voters could accept is a referendum between staying in as a full member and staying in some limbo land with a pretend Brexit under the cosh of a Withdrawal Agreement and in due course an Association Agreement.

The immediate polling is dire for Labour as a result of all this. It looks as if they have plunged well below 30%, with a worse result if the so called Independent group becomes a party that contests elections. That group could poll into double figures, damaging Labour and the Lib Dems but not polling enough to hold the seats of those MPs who have decamped to it. Any party which ignores the wishes and views of 17.4 million voters will struggle for support.

Where do the new investment and jobs come from?

The Brexit bears love blaming any factory closure or lost job on Brexit when it is usually industrial change or company misjudgement. Every western country is witnessing the collapse of the High Street, and most are seeing distress in their car making businesses, given the huge pace of legislative and technical change. These same people do not balance their commentaries by looking at where all the extra jobs and investment are coming from. It is coming, of course, from the new winners.

Since the Brexit vote the UK has attracted substantial new investment and jobs, with net employment well up and unemployment down. How different it proved to be compared to the false forecasts of the Treasury, Bank and IMF. One of the sources of those jobs has been the major US tec giants. Apple has announced a 500,000 square foot new headquarters in the new Battersea development. Google is taking a new 650,000 square foot facility at Kings cross. Amazon has a new HQ at Shoreditch and is making substantial investments around the country in new distribution facilities. Facebook has set up a new London engineering hub. A host of new technology companies have clustered in parts of the UK, finding the skilled workforce, market and access to finance they need to grow.

The UK economy will do better once we have left if we spend the money we save and if we enact laws and taxes that are good for business and for people who want to get on in the world by setting up businesses and employing others. Chagne is happening at a fast pace. A successful economy will need to embrace the digital revolution. The EU is fighting it with regulations and austerity economics.

Innovation and flexibility are at a premium. Who will run the AirBnb of car leasing? Who will produce autonomous vehicles? Who will discover the new mix of services and some retail that will underpin a modern High Street? Who will adapt more old buildings of the pre digital era to contemporary uses? Who will develop and sell more labour saving robots and tractors to pick fruit and plant seeds? As we leave the EU we can do things better and recapture lost markets with new ways of doing things.

I am trying to get Ministers in this government to see the huge opportunities and to start planning for them. At least Liam Fox yesterday announced a series of penal tariffs imposed by the EU on things we don't make or produce for ourselves will come off as soon as we leave, making some items cheaper.

Wokingham Town Centre

I walked around the town on Sunday to see progress with the redevelopment and did some shopping. The new stores on Peach Street were well supported. I understand there are several more in the later stages of contract negotiation. It is a good centre for shops, food and drink and leisure activities.

Why the Withdrawal Agreement is bad for the UK

I have been asked to spell out more details on the features of the WA other than the Irish backstop which make it a bad deal.

The first point is it contradicts the Conservative Manifesto and 2017 government policy of negotiating the Withdrawal issues and the future partnership together. You must stick to this to get leverage from concessions made on Withdrawal to benefits in the future partnership. Nothing should be agreed until everything is agreed. It is why we have got a bad Withdrawal Agreement, and are being set up to get a bad future partnership as well.

The second is the provision to pay them very large sums of money, stretching for many years into the future. No sensible person would sign an agreement which allows one side to send bill after bill for years after we have left, claiming we owe them money under many general heads set out in the Withdrawal Agreement. The Treasury estimate of £39bn is likely to be far too low. Some of the future liabilities stretch forward a hundred years, relating to payments to people not yet born who might come here before the end of the transition period. Paying to belong until 2020 opens up more future commitments under the 2019-20 budget, with liabilities until 2028. The settlement on the European Investment Bank is mean to the UK. Every conceivable future liability for the EU is recorded with as much liability as possible attaching to the UK under various clauses.

The third is the institutional architecture for the Agreement. Until we do leave the UK faces the full panoply of existing and additional EU law enforced by the EU's own court. The UK in transition will have no veto over big new advances in EU controls, and no ability to form qualified minority blocking groups to stop an unfavourable law passing under qualified majority provisions. The EU would be at liberty to legislate in ways that harmed our economic interests and helped theirs and we would have to comply. We would even not be able to prevent the imposition of new taxes on us.

Disputes over the money or over the laws fall to be resolved by a joint

committee. In the event of there being no resolution, an independent Arbitration panel decides the matter. However, if at issue is the interpretation of EU law – which is likely in most cases – that is settled by the European Court of Justice who instruct the Arbitration Panel what to say! Who ever thought the UK should accept such a one sided arrangement?

The fourth is the State Aids provisions and applicability of Competition law. This will give the EU the right to authorise state aids to attract business away from the UK, with the right to block us doing the same back.

The fifth is the continuing influence the EU will have over our welfare and benefits system.

There are many other features of this Agreement which are one sided, as it is a thorough piece of work by the EU determined to take as much of our money as possible for as long as possible, and keen to keep as much legal control over us as possible.

The Agreement does not even live up to its name and billing. It is meant to just be about the past and so called withdrawal costs and issues, yet a big chunk of it including the Irish backstop, protected trade names and other issues is about the future trading arrangements and partnership. The UK negotiators should have pointed this out and insisted on dealing with all the future issues at the same time, as the government promised to do in 2016-17.

Public meeting at Three Mile Cross

I would like to thank Hilary Pollock for organising a well attended public meeting in my constituency to review progress on Brexit. We talked for a couple of hours and covered the main topics including, trade the border, democracy, the Withdrawal Agreement and the current Parliamentary situation. There is a video of my speech which I will seek to make available this week.