

The extreme Centre

I see Mr Blair and others are out and about complaining that the centre is not strong enough. He thinks the centre ground needs reinforcing, as he dislikes the way it is assailed by Brexiteers of all persuasions, and by the Corbyn tendency in the Labour party. He still sees new Labour as ideal, as the perfect balance between "the extremes". It is high time this piece of self serving nonsense was exposed to some criticism.

The problems with New Labour were their three main extremisms.

They took an extreme view about UK intervention in Middle Eastern wars, believing we could use military force to create liberal democracies in various Middle Eastern countries. The public disagreed, and the results of their military actions despite much bravery and heroic effort by our forces were disappointing. They did not understand or manage the politics of the Middle Eastern countries well, relying too much on force.

They took an extreme view about the ability of the economy to withstand a huge build up in public and private debt and credit, before making an even more extreme judgement to bring some banks crashing down for no good reason. They told us they had abolished the boom-bust cycle, only to preside over the biggest boom-bust since the Great Depression of the 1930s.

They took an extreme view about EU integration and government. Whilst telling us each Treaty was a mild tidying up exercise with all the potency of the Beano, they signed the UK up to a comprehensive cradle of laws and controls making democratic government in the UK difficult. They always denied the public a referendum vote on their centralising tendencies, always denied their significance, and always claimed when challenged that EU laws were for the best regardless of what they said. Their EU actions led directly to the referendum which they helped lose.

Mr Blair needs to grasp that the world has moved on from New Labour. We now know their economic claims were false, as their era ended with major recession and banking crash. We know their EU policy was based on the lie that the EU was only of interest to Conservatives, and that nothing important was happening. We know their policy of favouring large corporations and encouraging cheap labour from the continent to take the low paid jobs they created was not popular with many voters.

Digital radios

There are a few cases of newer technology that is not as good as older technology. I need to mention digital radio.

Like everyone I was made to go out and buy replacement digital radios when they cut off the old broadcasting system. They said they would be better. I was supplied with a digital radio in my most recent car. They are worse than the ones they replaced, as well as being dearer. Nor was it environmentally friendly to have to ditch all the older radios which still worked fine all the time there was a signal for them to pick up.

There are places where my car radio now cuts out in the middle of busy areas because reception is poor. I used to get uninterrupted reception in these locations on the old system. The home radio needs to be switched on two to three times before it will work. It does not give you instant reception with a simple turn on/off button as the old radio did.

There is one room in the house where I cannot get good reception, and can only get some signal by balancing the radio high on a bookcase and adjusting the way it is pointing from time to time. When leaving the garage the car radio repeats itself.

In another room reception varies depending on where a person is in relation to the radio.

Whilst most modern technology is so much better than last century, digital radio is temperamental, poor quality and frustrating to the listener.

Another election?

I have seen no need for another election any time soon. The Conservative party has the endorsement of the electorate from 2015 for its Manifesto for a Parliament. All the time Mrs May is happy with that Manifesto, which she supported at the time, there is no lack of mandate. The government also has a major mandate from the referendum to get on with Brexit. There would be little benefit from fighting the referendum again by proxy in a General Election, where the polling shows the pro Brexit Conservative party is likely to win. If the Election simply confirms the referendum it adds little. Were parties against Brexit to do better it creates difficulties in implementing the wishes from the referendum. Anti Brexit forces would claim the public had modified their mind on Brexit. The pro Brexit forces would say the election result was mainly about non Brexit matters. It may not be clear in a multi issue election. Many people in the public just want their government to get and do the things that need doing, without any short term need for a new public discussion and vote about the direction of the country. There is plenty to do, and the government has plenty of ideas and Manifesto/referendum commitments to carry through.

Some of those who wish Brexit ill favour an early election. It might slow things down a bit, create new uncertainties. Some who favour Brexit want an early election, thinking it would lead to a good win by the pro Brexit

forces, making it easier to pilot through the Repeal or Continuity of laws Bill which the House must take up as soon as the Article 50 letter has gone. The government's critics delight in pointing out a favourable comment about the single market in the last Conservative Manifesto. That was of course superseded by the decision of the people in the referendum. Both sides in that campaign said leaving the EU meant leaving the single market, which electors then voted to do.

The case for an early election would have to rest on an inability for the government to get through this Parliament what it needs to get through to carry out the wishes of electors from 2015 and from the referendum. Alternatively Mrs May could seek a new mandate if she wished to make material changes to the 2015 Manifesto. I would be interested in your views.

The doctrine of the mandate in Scotland

In September 2014, less than 3 years ago, 2m Scots voted to stay in the UK, and just over 1.6m voted to leave. It was a convincing result. It was a once in a generation question, as the SNP agreed at the time.

Since then the SNP has never gathered anything like as many votes as the Independence campaign secured. The SNP managed 1.45 million in the General Election of 2015, and only 1.05 million in the 2016 Scottish Parliament elections. There is no evidence in either of those votes of more people deciding to back the SNP because they wanted to change their minds from the Independence referendum itself. It is difficult to see why the SNP argue their subsequent polling justifies asking the public again after such a short passage of time to re run the Independence referendum. It is interesting that since the referendum the SNP have not managed to get a significant number of their referendum supporters to back them again.

Mr Brown has decided to have another go at the argument over Independence and devolution, just as he did in 2014 and when in office. He labours under one simple misapprehension. Offering Scotland more and more devolved power he thinks will end the pressure for independence. The opposite seems to be the case. The more power the Scottish Parliament is given, the more the SNP demand. They were quick to dismiss his arguments yesterday when he blurted onto the airwaves. Mr Brown may believe it when he claims he saved the Union by getting Mr Cameron to offer yet more devolution. From my memory of the campaigns, it was the absence of good answers from the SNP to how the money would work out, and which currency they would be using, that helped persuade a majority to say No to the SNP offer. If every time the SNP demand more powers the Union Parliament grants them, you should expect the SNP to go on asking for more. It is also better than having to be accountable for

exercising the powers they do have, as they can always try to claim that they need the extra powers to be able to achieve something.

There does not seem to be any amount of authority that leads to the SNP saying they will now get on with using the powers they have got for the betterment of Scotland.

Meeting with Thames Valley Chambers of Commerce

On Friday I was the speaker at the Chamber lunchtime meeting. I spoke about the economic prospects, the opportunities for investment in infrastructure, housing, internet services and the digital revolution. I pointed out that many large companies are announcing good increases in profit and cashflow, and could look around to expand UK capacity as in many areas the economy is short of capacity and importing more than it need do as a result.

I was asked questions about how to motivate more young entrepreneurs, how to get more UK businesses to grow from medium sized entrepreneurial successes to large companies, the prospects for Wokingham secondary schools, the main investment needs of the Thames Valley and the odd political question on Brexit and the Scottish referendum. The answers I gave were in line with the actions and words I have set out on this site in recent weeks.