

Funding the Future

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I watched the BBC Parliament channel for longer than was probably good for me last night.

May was humiliated. I could say ritually humiliated, since it was so predictable.

And then four things happened that should not have done.

First, she still claimed control of the parliamentary agenda.

Second, she proposed a motion for today that appears to pave the way for a third ritual humiliation for her proposed deal, because she still thinks that is what the country wants.

After which Andrea Leadsom refused to give any guidance on what length of extension to Article 50 parliament will be allowed to vote on.

And fourth, Jeremy Corbyn failed to seize the moment. He offered his own unicorn deal which has no chance whatsoever of being agreed by the EU when what he should have done was explain how the Opposition would get us out of the mess we're in, given that there is now no effective government.

To describe May's behaviour as diabolical is to be kind. Rarely has a person in public office appeared so deluded. She has only one duty left, and that is to resign. But I doubt it has even occurred to her to do so.

To describe Corbyn's behaviour as a spectacular own goal is to also be kind. He had a duty to offer options that can be acted upon now. As such he should have talked about an immediate plan of action, not his 'deal' for which no one has any more enthusiasm than they have for May's. So a long extension; a People's Vote and renegotiation with an open agenda were what he should have been discussing. But he too came with a closed mind.

Whilst Leadsom showed contempt for the House, which the SNP and some Labour backbenchers out of favour with the leadership were most willing to point out.

It was a deeply depressing experience because not only have we no effective government left in the UK, what does pass for government is seeking to destroy the country, quite literally. And whilst that is happening the Leader of the Opposition is not apparently able to put forward an alternative plan of action.

The country is now utterly rudderless.

With luck MPs will amend May's motion today so that a third vote on her deal is ruled out as emphatically as No Deal should be.

And then tomorrow one has to hope that they will vote for any extension of Article 50 that the EU might be willing to offer.

The last point is important. The EU know there is no chance of a Brexit deal before May 23 when EU parliament elections have to be held. The UK government, and it would appear Labour, are desperately anxious to avoid such elections even though they now appear to be essential. In that case I strongly suspect that the EU will offer at least a 21 month extension to Article 50 on condition that elections are held, always providing that parliament is given the option to leave early if it can agree to do so. That would be a clever move on their part. It is the move that might just save the UK from itself right now, when nothing else can.

We need time to sort out this mess.

Scotland needs time to decide what to do.

And in the meantime, the UK needs to stay in the EU. They are the closest thing we have to a friend right now.

But will Parliament be so wise as to go this way? Who knows.