

The Struggle for Britain

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Yesterday was a weird day. For the UK. For Parliament. For Europe. For democracy. For the rule of law. I could go on. All were challenged. Some will survive.

I was sad to watch events from afar. I had intended to be on the People's Vote march: my continuing inability to shake off a bug suggested that unwise and issue continues. But maybe taking a day out where I just observed on occasion was a good idea: a blow-by-blow account was not a good way to see the day.

It is easy now to see Johnson's agenda. The ERG gave it away. It was to blackmail on the basis of a cliff edge to get the appalling agreement we are now offered through and to then allow leaving without a deal within a year or so. The desire to be non-compliant, whatever form of words was used, was made clear when the Benn Act letter was sent unsigned with an almost certainly illegally signed side letter asking that it be ignored. That the so-called Agreement, the negotiation and the next stages are all charades being pursued to enable a far-right crash out agenda is now apparent. Johnson has no place left to hide.

The choice is now between the NHS and US health care.

Worker rights or US-style employment arrangements.

Care for the environment or no future at all.

Concern for the whole country or the interest of tiny minority, some of whom control too many of our newspapers.

One person had a good day. Keir Starmer shone out from the Labour benches. He was reasoned, considerate, fair to all sides of the House, and tore to shreds the Tory claims - which, despite his invitation that they do so, they did not defend. You could just say it was a lawyer's speech. It was more than that. It was excellent politics. I admit that for the first time I am persuaded that he is the leader Labour now needs. He made a political case for saying no to this deal.

Some others intervened to good effect. Ian Blackford appeared to deliver the Scottish case well, and appropriately. In fairness, for once Sammy Wilson's anger on behalf of the DUP was appropriate: no-one is at their calmest when they realise they have been badly betrayed. The chance of the lost Union was laid out for all to see. And Sir Oliver Letwin, the most unlikely of Tory rebels, continued to earn a place in history for this, even if little else he has ever done deserves a favourable note.

Others, from Theresa May onwards, made even bigger fools of themselves.

But what did it mean?

I suggest several things. First, the departure of Bercow is to be deeply regretted. Parliament needs him for a lot longer yet. He made the wrong decision to go.

Second, there will be no election as yet. I am well aware that Johnson will get a boost in the polls from claiming he has a deal. Labour would be foolish to ignore that.

Third, there is a more pressing objective for Labour. Corbyn has to listen to McDonnell, Starmer, Thornberry and others and go for a second referendum. That is the election to be won. Then a general election can be held. And Remain could win this vote now.

Fourth, the bitterness of the UK wide politics of this is only at a start now. Big money is not getting its way. In the death throes of neoliberalism, when any innovative capacity it ever had has gone, the monied class were desperate for deregulation as their last opportunity to exploit for their own gain, and this Brexit deal gave them that. Now it is being taken away from them. They will unleash all the weaponry, fair or foul (I fear), that they can in an attempt to secure their way. We are now in the Struggle for Britain.

I sincerely hope our politicians - those with wiser heads and the willingness to act in the national interest - realise this.

They need to work together. They need to reach out too: to big business, to unions, to wider society and spell out what this is all about, all over again.

Brexit is not about taking back control for people in this country.

Nor is it about controlling migration.

And it's definitely not about healing wounds.

Or asserting national identity.

And the idea that it's about democracy is ridiculous - or a second referendum would be the Brexiteers' choice.

This is instead all about deregulating so that the spivs and speculators who now fund

the Tories and the Brexit Party might have the choice to exploit the state to pay themselves out of state funds for supposedly supplying the services that people want, which services will be reduced in quality or quantity to pay for the cut that those supposed financiers will loot from the population at large. This is what Brexit is about. It is about finance going feral.

This is now clear. This parliament has to stop it by delivering a People's Vote. It's clear Johnson had not planned on that option happening. He got it wrong. This parliament has to build on that. And he has to be completely defeated - by the people of this country as a whole - to ensure that he and those he represents never again get the chance to ruin the four countries within our Union. I am sincerely hoping they are up to the task.