

Another day, yet another debate on Brexit

The government has decided to relaunch its deeply unpopular Withdrawal Agreement with new scares. MPs are being told there could be a General election, a big delay to Brexit, a no deal Brexit or revocation of Article 50, depending on who they are and what they most fear. The good news is most of the fears are contradictory and many of the more extreme Remain ones fanciful.

The government reports to Eurosceptics almost with pleasure the progress of the Letwin -Labour provisional coalition government which ran the highly successful debate and vote on options on Wednesday. This proved that if you give a lot of Remain leaning MPs a range of Remain leaning options they cannot agree on their preferred one. They tell us they could do worse things in the future. Surely the official coalition government can do a bit better and wrestle control of business back to itself? And why cant it use the privileges of government to prevent backbench legislation against government policy? It would help if the government dropped the bad Withdrawal Agreement which has created needless tensions with the DUP.

Today's debate and vote shows the government has been too clever by half. It decided to bring back the Withdrawal Agreement without the Political Declaration in the belief that it is the Declaration that annoys Labour MPs more than the Withdrawal Agreement. The government hopes Labour rebels will swell its vote. They also hope that by holding the vote on a Friday when many MPs are used to being in their constituencies quite a lot of its critics may not turn up.

The Political Declaration is referred to in the Withdrawal Agreement and is an integral part of the deal with the EU. Under the EU withdrawal Act they need to have a vote on both together, so today's vote does not provide legal support in UK law. Labour are on to this. The government also refuse to publish the Withdrawal Agreement Bill, presumably because it would show just how controlled by the EU we would be if we were stupid enough to sign it.

Some in the government think they can win on a Friday because they hope some opposition MPs will be missing. They will not be missing were the government to have to implement the Agreement by putting it into legislation.