

MPs in trouble

This Parliament has seen a surge of cases against MPs. There are now 18 MPs sitting as Independents because their parties no longer support them. 8 were Conservatives, 7 were Labour, 1 was SNP, 1 was DUP and 1 was Plaid. Looked at as percentage of MPs elected that means that 25% of Plaid MPs, 12.5% of DUP, 3% of Labour and 2% of SNP and Conservative MPs elected are currently suspended.

There are many differences in why they lost the whip. A few are on suspicion of criminal activity. Some said inappropriate things. Some behaved badly in their private lives though did not break the law. Some we are not allowed to know why Labour suspended them. Matt Hancock undertook a tv programme in the jungle.

The process for dealing with these very varied cases serves neither the public nor the MPs well. It is wrong for the public if an MP has broken the law or behaved badly but stays on for many months pending some action, in some cases barred from coming to the House. . It is wrong for the MP if it takes many months for Parliament to conclude the accusation was false. Whilst these matters deserve proper investigation it is in everyone's interest that decisions are speeded up.

Where the argument is over something the MP said or over actions that are not criminal the best judges are the electors at the next election. Where the accusations are about serious crimes the police and CPS are the judges of whether to bring a prosecution.

What difference to net zero and the economy would a Trump or Biden second term make?

As readers know I do not express views about who should win elections in foreign countries, nor usually comment on which potential government or President would be best.

It now looks very likely that Mr Trump will gain the Republican nomination and Mr Biden the democrat at the conventions in the summer. . Polls for the Presidential election itself show both Mr Biden and Mr Trump as relatively unpopular with the wider electorate. They also quite often show Mr Trump a little ahead.

It is therefore a good time to ask what would a second term Biden Presidency

look like and how would it contrast with a second term Trump Presidency?

With the current President we should expect him to continue with his economic policy based on the Inflation Reduction Act subsidies and the CHIPS Act. He will want to attract more semiconductor and digital investment to the US, and offer tax breaks and subsidies for green growth. He will be happy to see higher taxes on the very rich and on big business. He supports minimum tax levels globally on these groups.

Mr Trump will wish to renew his big tax cuts where some are due to expire, and will also wish to onshore more investment. He will renounce the Paris Climate Agreements and will promote more cheap oil and gas from domestic sources. He will cut green subsidies and regulations. This will make a big difference to the world policy of decarbonisation. With China and India continuing to boost fossil fuel output and use, joined by the USA, Europe will be lonely with its anti oil and gas policies.

The UK and Europe need to ask themselves what are they going to do about the drive to use more fossil fuel in India, China and many emerging market economies? It makes no sense to close our industrial plants only to import from high CO₂ producing countries. It seems very unlikely the world can hit its targets for 2030 for CO₂, as fossil fuel use continues to increase. Even under Biden the US has added to her output of cheap oil and gas. If the USA joins in with more fossil fuel it makes it even less likely targets will be hit. When are the international target setters going to confront the truth about India, China and other large emitters? Are they happy with President Biden adding to US oil and gas output? What would they do if Mr Trump becomes President and renounces the plans. ?

St George's day

Today we celebrate England. We also remember England's greatest writer, William Shakespeare. Both have given so much to enrich the world. England pioneered Parliamentary democracy and fired up the prosperity from industrialisation and freer trade. Shakespeare captured so much of the human condition that his plays are as relevant today as 400 years ago.

We live with asymmetric devolution in the UK. Labour's model gave devolved governments to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. They wanted regional assemblies to break up England, but voters rightly rejected these.

The EU always refused to recognise England, also wishing to break it up into unloved regions. Most of us in England have affinity to our town or village and to our county but not to a region.

I live in Wokingham. We do not feel we belong to "the rest of the south east" or to the Thames Valley or to Berks, Bucks and Oxon, in ways government

sometimes lays down.

This is all unfinished business. Today is a day to remember what is good and best about England, which has survived much in the struggles for freedom, democracy and prosperity.

[WPQ answer – 20mph zones](#)

The Department for Transport needs to get on with revising these guidelines. The Labour government in Wales now concedes they have introduced too many. There need to be some through roads that allow people to get to work or the shops at a reasonable speed, whilst ensuring there are safe paths, crossings and pedestrian areas for those walking.

Question:

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether his Department has issued recent guidance on challenging the imposition of 20 mph zones by local authorities. (15526)

Tabled on: 26 February 2024

Answer:

Guy Opperman:

The Department is finalising the details to the guidance update on setting local speed limits and in respect of 20mph speed limits, as announced in the Plan for Drivers. This will be published in due course.

The answer was submitted on 04 Mar 2024 at 14:15.

[Times Radio Interview](#)

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