

Creating a stable government

The current position in the Commons should allow a stable government to be formed. There are 650 MPs. If you take out the 7 Sinn Fein MPS who do not attend, and the Speaker and three Deputies who do not vote, there are 639 voting MPs. 320 is a majority. The Conservatives have 316 (and 2 Deputy Speakers). There are 10 DUP members, and one independent Unionist who are likely to vote with the Conservatives. That gives the government a majority.

In the last Parliament we regularly won votes by 40 to 50, well ahead of the nominal majority. It is difficult for the Opposition to get all its parties to the same view and then to get them all to turn up to vote. As the main Bill to be in the Queens Speech this time is likely to be the Repeal of the 1972 Act and continuity of EU regulations in UK law, there will be some Labour Brexiteers who will vote with the government whatever contortions Labour is going through. Labour fought the election on a Manifesto pledging Brexit, and agreeing this meant leaving the single market. They are keen to see employment laws from the EU transferred into UK law. On these bases they need to vote for the government Bill.

If they do as they promised the Brexit bill will sail through. If they play politics and find ways to oppose, the government looks as if it has enough votes. There is no need for the government to propose lots of contentious legislation to make life more difficult.

The arrangement with the DUP will not be a formal coalition, and will not entail Conervatives changing their views on moral and religious matters. They will want to be more involved in UK politics and have a strong dislike of Mr Corbyn for his past views on Irish matters.