

Maybe you cannot keep asking the same question in Parliament

The Speaker's ruling was a good one on the government's Withdrawal Agreement. It has twice been decisively rejected. On the second occasion the government tabled additional documents and argued it was an amended proposal, but many in Parliament thought the changes did not amount to much. As I wrote at the time, ask the same question and you probably get the same answer. From this clear ruling it seems the government cannot now table the same Agreement and vote again on it before the end of this week when the PM goes to the European Council.

If she goes to the Council and gets some material change to the Agreement then she could return to the Commons next week and seek another vote. Meanwhile the ruling should also have implications for some other hardy perennials that this Parliament likes to go over and over again. Several times we have voted down staying in the customs union. We have voted down a second referendum. We have voted down the Cooper-Boles-Letwin idea of taking over the Commons agenda to legislate for Brexit delay. Perhaps now these cannot be put again either.

It is also true that the Commons approved a motion against leaving without an Agreement. That however contradicts the legislation the House has passed, where the legislation will take precedence unless amended.

I am urging the Prime Minister to go to the Council at the end of this week and tell them we were leaving without signing the Withdrawal Agreement. I am asking her to table a free trade agreement and to invite them to talks as we leave the EU in accordance with their timetable. I do not see why the UK would seek an extension to Article 50. So far Ministers have been unable to come up with any plausible reason why the EU should grant us an extension.