

MPs talk to themselves as the public looks for change

This Parliament went to war with the people when it decided to delay Brexit. Labour and government supporting Conservative MPs who were elected to implement the referendum decision decided to support a Prime Minister who broke her word and begged for an extension of our membership of the EU. From that moment the two main parties went into freefall in opinion polls and elections. Both hit just 28% in the locals with no Brexit party on offer, and then slumped to 14% and 9% in the European election when there was a pro Brexit party many wanted to vote for. Never have the two main parties been so low in support and esteem.

You would have thought this would wake up all those MPs who promised Brexit and then spent the next two years trying to dilute or delay it, or even to reverse it. Yet listening to the continuing conversations in both parties there are many who still do not get it. They want to believe the European election was just a warning or a by election or a flash in the pan. They want to believe it will all be different when we get to a Westminster election. They should try reading the latest opinion poll. That shows the Brexit party clearly in the lead at 26%, with Labour on just 22% and the Conservatives on a near wipe out score of 17%.

All those currently jostling for the position of Leader of the Conservatives have to understand the magnitude of Mrs May's decision to lose the trust of the people by delaying Brexit. In February the Conservatives were still on 43% in the polls because people believed her when she said deal or no deal we would be out on 29 March. Polling made clear they did not like her Agreement which had already been decisively rejected by Parliament. Many Leave voters did not see the Agreement as leaving, whilst many Remain voters thought the Agreement worse than staying in, so the Agreement lacked friends. If Mrs May misunderstood this, she surely now must understand it. Her Agreement was the only thing she offered in the European election, and the Conservative party was the only party offering it. It went down to a catastrophic defeat. Many former Conservative voters wanted to leave without the Agreement, and were happy voting for just that policy when the Brexit party came along with it.

Any person wanting to lead the Conservatives to success from this disastrous current showing in the polls has to deliver a clean Brexit as soon as possible and apologise on behalf of Mrs May and the outgoing government for the needless delay. It is difficult to see how someone who stayed in the government and argued for the Withdrawal Agreement could convincingly pull this off. The new leader then needs to move rapidly to using the new freedoms, the extra money and the other advantages of being a self governing country again to show the wider nation that Project Fear was wrong and that there is a good and prosperous future for us once out.

Meanwhile Labour has not even got to the point of contemplating a change of leadership as its civil war between Remain and Leave continues. If it lurches

further to Remain and offers clearly a second referendum it will lose many of its remaining Leave supporters. It then has to go head to head with the Lib Dems and Greens in a very crowded political marketplace. Conservatives have a poor future if they do not win back lost Brexit voters. Labour has an even poorer future if it is a half hearted version of the Liberal Democrats.