

My contribution in the Dissolution and Calling of Parliament Bill debate

Rt Hon Sir John Redwood MP (Wokingham) (Con): Opposition parties are struggling a bit with this idea of democracy, are they not? Taking back control was to have control by the people and for the people, and offering the people an early general election so that they could choose an effective Government when a Parliament was logjammed, hopeless and not prepared to govern with clarity and passion was the right thing to do. I just cannot understand why Labour and the SNP are still queuing up to defend the indefensible, and to say that because they may well be faced again with a situation in which they do not dare face the electors, they need some kind of legal rigmarole and manipulation of votes in a balanced or damaged Parliament to thwart the popular will yet again. "Never let the people make the decision," they say: it must be contained within Parliament, even when a Parliament has obviously failed, as it did when it could not implement the wishes of the British people over the great Brexit referendum.

I want assurances from the Minister that this new policy will protect the Crown—the Queen—from the difficult business of politics. I think the Minister's version of it is better than the version from the other place. Of course, it must keep the courts out. There is nothing more political than the decision about when we go to an election and when we give the people their power back and the right to make that fundamental choice. It is a choice that now can mean something, because we do not have to keep on accepting a whole load of European laws that we have no great role in making. Again, we need that absolute guarantee that we will have this freedom so that that can happen.

Those who say that they do not want the Prime Minister to have this much power have surely been in the House long enough to know that, while the Prime Minister has considerable power from his or her office, they are also buffeted and challenged every day by a whole series of pressures in this place and outside. If a leader of a party with a majority wanted an early election that their supporters did not want, I suspect that that would get sorted out without an early election. So we are only talking about what happens when a Government have lost their majority and the Prime Minister is doing his or her best to govern as a minority. We get the extraordinary position we got when the whole Opposition wanted to gang up to thwart the public making a choice, but did not want to govern. That was totally unacceptable, and the Opposition should hear the message from the doorsteps in the 2019 election. The public wanted a Parliament with a Government who could govern, so they decided to choose one. Those who sought to block it made themselves more unpopular, and they showed that they do not understand the fundamental point of democracy that, when Parliament lets the people down, the people must be able to choose a new and more effective Parliament.