

Second referendums are not a good idea

When the UK Parliament rightly granted Scotland a referendum on whether to stay or leave the UK I asked the SNP to tell me if they agreed the result should be binding and would settle the matter for at least a generation., They said they did. I agreed.

Had my side of the referendum lost, I would have kept my word. I would not have demanded a second vote, but would have helped get on with the task of organising Scotland's departure. That was the deal. I have always said we only want volunteers in the UK Union, and if a significant bloc of voters in one part or country demand a referendum on exit it is right to arrange that. It is not right to question the verdict of a referendum, or to create a neverendum, with successive votes on the same thing until the losing side get a win. These constitutional referendums do create uncertainty and divert attention from the important day to day management of the public sector and economic policy.

The SNP seem to love referendums but they keep losing them. They lost both the Independence referendum and the EU referendum. They now want re runs of both. The Lib Dems helped win the Independence referendum but lost the EU referendum. Surprise , surprise, they just want a re run of the one they lost. They want that so much, however, they would doubtless do a deal to put Corbyn into power with SNP support to get a second EU referendum. That could include having to accept a second Scottish Independence referendum.

Such a development would make a laughing stock of our democracy, create substantial business uncertainty and weaken our position in foreign negotiations. Jo Swinson did let slip that she would not accept another Leave vote anyway, so she only wants a second EU referendum if it gives her the result she wants. Ironic they still have the word Democrat in their title.

The main reason second referendums do not work is they undermine the point of the first one and so undermine the whole idea of a referendum. If Parliament will not implement the decision once taken despite promises that the people will decide, what is the point of them? If we had a second Indy or EU referendum and it came to the same answer the losers would still complain. If either came to a different answer the new losers would have every right to ask for a third to have the best of three.

I just hope the public want there to be an end to all this in this General election. A majority for a government that will implement the wishes of the first EU referendum and resist a second Scottish referendum is what is needed. More referendums on the same subject would undermine our democracy and good government at home and abroad.