

The government should not lurch right but get it right

There is a run of commentary urging the Prime Minister to avoid a lurch to the right. I agree with them that saying so called right wing things in the hope that people will come back from Reform is not going to work.

The government needs to carry through its stated policies of cracking down on illegal migration and making big reductions in legal migration as promised. It needs to cut taxes more and set out a path to lower tax rates after the election. It needs to tackle the productivity collapse in the public services and get more people into better paid work. It needs to actively promote growth.

The commentators should grasp that a lurch to the left is also a very bad idea. The pro EU Conservatives have in the past done Labour type damage to country and party. Edward Heath in office lurched to the left introducing price, wage and dividend controls, presided badly over a strike, put us into the European Community and duly lost the election. John Major pushed us into the European Exchange Rate Mechanism. This delivered a boom/ bust disaster as a few of us predicted . It led directly to a colossal electoral defeat when the full damage of this EU policy became obvious. It was only a worse Labour Boom /Bust in 2009 that got Conservatives back into office. Theresa May tacked away from the Brexit she was meant to deliver and devised a bad social care policy. She managed to lose an election, only clinging on with help from the DUP. She lost support of many Conservative MPs for wanting a Labour style sell out to Brussels.

Similar voices to those who lost us those three elections and three Prime Ministers are now urging Rishi Sunak to backtrack on lower taxes and lower migration, encouraging him to cosy up to the EU, regulate more things and be governed by the views of international lawyers. History tells us this is a bad course for Conservative leaders to follow.

Trade hits new records

Remain tried to make out Brexit was mainly about trade. It was of course mainly about taking back control, giving us the right to make our own laws, set our own taxes and spend our own money. They also asserted it would damage our trade to leave. They said we would not even be able to roll over all the EU trade deals we were part of. Treasury, Bank, much of the civil service and Remain parties pushed out these lies continuously. The Treasury famously summed up its conclusions by saying wrongly that leaving would " push the UK into recession and lead to a sharp rise in unemployment. " Their severe

shock scenario meant an extra 800, 000 unemployed and a 6% fall in GDP!

So what happened?

After the vote unemployment fell and the economy grew. Trade went up.

The UK did roll over all the EU trade deals into UK trade deals and in some cases negotiated improvements to them.

The UK went on to agree a trade deal with the Trans Pacific Partnership countries. The UK also at some needless political cost signed a trade agreement with the EU.

The government has recently released figures for what has happened to our trade since the vote and since we left. Our service exports have doubled since 2014 to non EU countries (2016 was a little up on 2014) and risen by more than a half since 2016 to the EU.

The UK is now the second largest exporter of services worldwide after the USA. We are now adding service sector chapters to trade deals which the EU was unwilling to do.

Total exports are up from under £600 m in 2016 to £862 bn in the year to February 2024. They are up by a third to the EU and by considerably more to the rest of the world.

[A divided party won the local elections](#)

Labour did well in the local elections. Being hopelessly divided on big issues did not stop its success. Its former leader remains banished. Some of the Corbynites remain on the Labour benches arguing for more Corbynite policies. The party is deeply split over the Hamas/ Israel war with some wanting a much tougher anti Israel line and some worrying about anti semitism . It is split over the Reeves wish to follow OBR austerity economics. There are many keen promoters over a speedier path to net zero shocked by the dumping of planned public spending to try to up the pace. All those who want to nationalise much more and tax much more are kept quiet or played down.

I point this out as a minority in my party argue that if all Conservative MPs supported everything the government does we would jump in the polls. They say divided parties cannot win. So how did Labour manage it? How did Margaret Thatcher pull off 3 great wins, when the Wets as they were then disparagingly called tried to undermine her continuously?

The way to win is to govern well. It is to allow robust debate about issues,

policies and out turns. A leader needs to listen, adopt the best ideas, and be prepared to make the case for his choices.

To win Rishi Sunak needs to get legal migration well down, cut taxes for all, curb excessive public sector losses, recapture lost public service productivity and resolve public sector strikes.

Most people do not believe there is a climate emergency

Most of us accept the science that says CO₂ is a greenhouse gas, and accept manmade CO₂ is an influence on the climate. Clearly, however, most people do not think there is a manmade CO₂ driven climate emergency, because if they did we would see jet travel plunging, car use falling, meat diets disappearing, heat pumps flying off the shelves and many other behavioural changes.

Instead polls tell us people are against dearer fossil fuel energy. They oppose higher petrol taxes, oppose schemes to make it more difficult to use cars and vans, oppose wind farms and pylons near their homes and are angry about climate protesters trying to block roads and attacking petrol companies. Only a small minority buy all electric cars.

Many voters would like government to limit UK CO₂ by enforcing a major reduction in migration numbers. We would like more home grown food to cut the food miles rather than wilding schemes to boost imports. We support promoting fuel efficiency.

Some say in a temperate climate like the UK a possible average rise of temperature of say 2 degrees might help agriculture, as would some increase in CO₂. There have been many changes in climate during earth history. Some think adaptation is a more affordable and practical response as and when change occurs. It is self evidently true that unless China, India and the US reduce their CO₂ output nothing we do can stop more rises in world CO₂. It is also obvious importing instead of making and growing at home usually increases world CO₂ so it is not a win. The Green party who promote climate crisis as their lead issue never get out single figures in the polls.

My Intervention on the Urgent Question – Port Talbot Steelworks

Sir John Redwood (Wokingham) (Con):

When will the Government do something about the very high energy prices in this country, which have been made high by regulations and taxes? Does my right hon. Friend not accept that any kind of steelmaking will be extremely difficult if we have uncompetitive energy, and is it not wrong to import such materials, because it will mean even more carbon dioxide emissions, as well as destroying jobs here?

David T. C. Davies (Secretary of State for Wales):

We have looked carefully at the losses that Tata is making, which have come about partly because of the age of the infrastructure. In fact, Tata has had to close down the furnaces at the Morfa coke ovens within the last few weeks. The UK Government are fully cognisant of the cost of energy at the moment, which is why Tata has already benefited from many of the schemes that we have introduced over the past few years, will begin to benefit from the British industry supercharger scheme shortly, and will benefit from the carbon border adjustment mechanism at the start of 2027.