

GWR Train services

I attended a meeting on Sunday to hear the news about the cracks in the Hitachi trains which have led their removal from service pending reports and repairs. GWR rely on these trains for their longer distance and faster services. There is unlikely to be an early and quick fix. I asked if the old 125s can be brought out of retirement to fill in service gaps. We await details on how these new trains are going to be repaired and when that might happen. In the meantime Train users need to check the reduced timetables available. There will be refunds for cancelled services.

The will of Scottish voters

Nicola Sturgeon says if the PM and U.K. Parliament stick to their view there should be no Independence Referendum this Parliament we will be defying the wishes and will of the Scottish people. That simply is not true. In the constituency vote the SNP and Greens combined vote share was 49% meaning 51% voted for parties in favour of the Union. The Green and SNP vote share in the Regional section was 48.4%, with Alba adding another 1.7%. So overall averaging both votes supporters of the Union and no referendum marginally held the majority.

Opinion polls suggest a slightly larger majority for the Union in polls about a referendum vote. This is reflected in Sturgeon's wish to delay the Independence vote she wants, hoping the case for independence will sway more people. Her only criterion for wanting a ballot is going to be polls that imply a good chance of winning.

I support the PM's decision to oppose another vote. He can do so fairly on Sturgeon's own argument that we should take the votes cast last Thursday as the guide. He can do so because the last referendum was agreed by all parties at the time to be a once in a generation vote. He can do so on the argument that such referendums are disruptive so should only be accepted after a long interval of calm from constitutional upheaval. He can do so because there is a big majority for the Union in the U.K. Parliament.

GP appointments

I have had a number of complaints from constituents who have been

encountering difficulties with getting a face to face appointment with their GP, or getting any appointment at all. I am taking this up with the surgeries concerned. I also raised the general issue of access to GP appointments at the Friday MPs call with local Health Authorities, who promised to look into it and report back.

[If you want to win drop the bile](#)

Both Labour and Lib Dems specialise in negative campaigning. They abuse Conservative MPs and Councillors, making false allegations and twisting what we say or ascribing views to us we have never held. Their fellow travellers on this site often do the same. They imply no decent person can vote Conservative and claim an unfounded moral high ground. Indeed they seek to control and use language to rule out some decent Conservative values and questions. The BBC often backs up these ideas.

Yesterday on the Today programme a couple of voters from Hartlepool were put under pressure to explain why they voted Conservative, with the BBC seeking to suggest to them that somehow the culture of the party of Thatcher should have made that morally impossible! No mention that Margaret was our first female Prime Minister who won three huge General election mandates for her popular policies of cutting taxes, promoting wider ownership and recovering the UK from Labour's high inflation and economic crash which led to a trip to the IMF to borrow and to be told to cut spending . I do not recall Labour voters in 1997 or SNP voters more recently being made to explain themselves and being told they were wrong to vote as they did.

In this latest set of elections Labour caricatured their own campaigning technique by spending all their national media time on vilifying Conservatives and making a wild series of unsupported allegations, when people wanted to hear their approach to Cv 19 , economic recovery and getting wins from Brexit.

Keir Starmer rightly made Labour dress smartly and show some respect for our flag. You need however to live a brand. In the Commons Labour MPs still queued up to support the EU side in disputes, to back the needs of foreigners and overseas countries over the needs of U.K. voters, and above all to use Commons powers to develop their sleaze campaign instead of pushing a positive agenda.

Given the large number of people who voted Conservative a good starting point for Labour's recovery would be to accept that many people enter Conservative politics to serve the public and make things better. By all means have some good disagreements with us, offer better solutions or different aims, but do not falsely claim Conservatives are in it for wrong motives and want to harm the interests of the very people who helped vote us in. It is not helping Labour, as it is as dishonest as it is negative. A good opposition respects

their opponents and presses hard for improvements or changes that the public wants. Running sleaze campaigns and nothing else can boomerang against the party. It means they have nothing to say on how to govern better, and are vulnerable to counter accusations against the people in their own party who make mistakes or undertake criminal activity in public office.

It's the economy stupid

Labour would be well advised to take Bill Clinton's advice. A party's popularity has much to do with the state of the economy and with their own record at economic management. Labour's decision in these latest elections to launch a constant barrage of allegations about Conservative Ministers instead of setting out what they would like to do misjudged the mood and meant their candidates were associated with negative stories and carping attitudes.

The misjudgement probably goes back to Labour's persistent wish to impose a false view of electoral history on the country. Their belief is Tony Blair beat John Major after running a three and a half year campaign about alleged Tory sleaze. Much of it was cases of individuals sleeping in the wrong beds, with Labour claiming this was relevant thanks to a misinterpretation of John Major's Back to Basics speech in October 1993. Once Labour got in to power they decided to prevent any attempt to turn the campaign against them by claiming that in future these were all private lives matters that should not be part of politics.

If you look at the opinion polls you see that Conservative fortunes plunged from September 6 1992 when the UK fell out of the European Exchange Rate Mechanism and had to acknowledge its economic policies had failed and we were in a nasty recession. Until the ERM disaster the Conservatives had been around 40% and ahead of Labour. On 5 September despite obvious pressures against the policy in currency markets Conservatives still had a 4% lead with a 39% Vote share. By the summer of 1993, before the sleaze campaign began Conservative polls had settled down at around 31% and Labour were well ahead. By 7 May 1994 for example Labour had a 15% lead at 44% to 29%. Between 1993 and the 1997 General election little changed, and the final result was Conservative 31% and Labour 44%, a landslide win. No-one looking at these polls can come to any conclusion other than the destruction of the European Economic policy and the collateral damage it did lost the Conservatives around 10% of support which they never regained. The sleaze campaign did not shift the dial.

Similarly Labour lost in 2010 not because of the expenses scandal but because they presided over the Great recession. They did not stop the excess credit build up they were warned about prior to 2008, and then decided to blame and trash the banking system instead of injecting liquidity and

organising a work out of the problems. That is what they have to address in their thinking. People do not think Labour have a vision to back a recovery. All they hear is Labour running the country down and carping that Brexit was a wrong call. Many voters want the wins from Brexit. Why should Brexit UK vote in a Remain party who would then wish to prove their negative view of Brexit by following policies that were damaging instead of making the changes to deliver more freedom and prosperity?