

Uniting the USA? Strong democracy needs good opposition and belief in the system

The President has boldly set as his main aim uniting a fractured and divided USA. He wisely accepts this will not be easy. Too many of his followers seem to think if they just insist more strongly on their views of the world and claim the electoral right to enforce them the country will come together behind a new left wing Democrat settlement. If they reinforce this with tough action against any who disagree, through court cases against certain types of speech and protests, and censorship on media and social media, they will impose a more disciplined conformity on an unruly country.

They need to understand some things about how normally healthy democracies like the USA work. They provide in the constitution for strong opposition to government or Presidential plans. There should always be a good democratic alternative government on offer, that has an alternative view of the more contentious or questionable policies pursued by the incumbents. A great democracy does not have 95% support for what the majority government does. It debates choices and options and exposes the chosen course of government to criticisms. Exercising majority governing power is a constant exercise in persuasion, listening, seeking improvement, compromising with the Opposition when they have a good point. A good Opposition know when to disagree and when to campaign hard against a policy or law. A good government gives ground when it is wrong but does not compromise its main aims, pledges and beliefs.

A successful democracy as the USA usually is has top level agreement between all the democratic parties over two crucial things – the system by which governments make and sell their decisions to elected bodies and the wider public, and the results of free and fair elections. There has to be a belief by the main elected officials that an election produced a fair and accurate result. In opposition parties need to believe they have sensible opportunity to make their case and to seek change peacefully. When the Commons has a government with a decent majority the Opposition accepts that government has a mandate to get through the main business from its Manifesto and from its statements of aim and principle. A good Opposition also makes it difficult every time government stumbles, wanders too far from its promises or principles, or offers incompetence instead of good administration. In the Commons an Opposition can only win a vote by working with governing party MPs who also think on that occasion the government is wrong, which can happen quite often. Opposition is there to question, to ask for second thoughts, to offer alternatives but not to stop government governing. Only the electorate can do that when they come in an election to judge the result, short of a major governing party split and collapse.

The tragedy of the USA in the last few weeks is the breakdown in trust or belief in the system by the main Opposition party. A large number of Trump voters think the results in a handful of key swing states were fiddled, but

their side has been unable to persuade the courts or the Senate of that allegation. As those institutions hold the reserve powers to order a re run or insist on a different electoral College result President Biden can fairly claim he won and passed all the checks and balances in the system. It leaves Trump voters arguing that the whole system is corrupt and out to get their man. This impression is not going to be stilled or calmed by the Democrat decision to impeach President Trump after he has left office. It will build the sense of grievance amongst many Trump supporters. If President Biden is to heal his country he cannot avoid tackling and talking about the issues around voting systems that perturb Trump supporters.

The Republican leaders have an important role to play. They need to show that they can now offer strong but sensible opposition to this new President. Going through his back history to try and find a way to impeach him as has become all too common in US politics would not be helpful. Setting out a positive alternative vision to the left's, and making it difficult in a 50/50 Senate to get through anything the Conservative half of the country disagrees with makes perfect sense. The Senate and House elections produced no landslide or big majority for a Democrat solution to US problems. Republican legislators need to show Trump voters they can use the power of opposition afforded to them to resist hated Democrat policies for their followers. For his part the President needs to show which parts of the Republican offer he thinks has some merit if he wants to build bridges. He needs to see just how divisive to Trump followers the Democrat position is on gun control, relaxation of abortion, bans on carbon fuels and completely open borders to name but four highly charged US issues .

[My Question to the Leader of the House](#)

Sir John Redwood (Wokingham) (Con): People voted to take back control so that the Government would use the new powers to make their lives better, so will the Government urgently make time available for the VAT cuts, the new enterprise zones, the freeports, the policies to increase our fishing fleet, the policies to boost our domestic food production and the so many other good ideas that Ministers should be queuing up to put through our House now we are an independent country?

The Leader of the House (Mr Jacob Rees Mogg): My right hon. Friend is not only right but he reads my mind.

There are great opportunities: the new financial services regulation, which will encourage innovation and competition; the faster and more agile clinical and regulatory regime that is going through with the Medicines and Medical Devices Bill; a revolutionary approach to gene editing, on which the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs is consulting; freeports, on which the Treasury is consulting; and looking at public procurement

differently.

We are really taking back control and seeking the advantages, but I hope that my right hon. Friend will join in this enterprise and send a list of all his good ideas to every Minister so that we know there are more ideas bubbling away.

[Berkshire West CCG Covid Vaccination Update](#)

Twelve Covid vaccination sites covering the whole of Berkshire West are now up and running. There is a phased approach from 21 December.

Please do not call the GPs surgeries or hospitals directly, you will receive notification from the NHS when it is your turn to come for an appointment.

Name of PCN	Name of site	Site address	Practices participating at this site	Wave
Tilehurst PCN	Tilehurst Village Surgery	Tilehurst Village Surgery, 92 Westwood Road, Reading, RG31 5PP	Westwood Road Surgery, Tilehurst Village Surgery, Grovelands Medical Centre	WAVE 1
Wokingham North PCN (2)	Wargrave Surgery	Wargrave Surgery Victoria Road, RG10 8BP	Wargrave Practice, Woodley Centre Surgery, Parkside Family Practice, Loddon Vale Practice & Twyford	WAVE 1
Wokingham South PCN	Swallowfield Surgery / Swallowfield Village Hall	Swallowfield Medical Practice, The Street, Swallowfield, RG7 1QY	Swallowfield Medical Practice & Finchampstead	WAVE 2
Wokingham North PCN (1)	Woodley Centre Surgery	Woodley Centre Surgery, 1st Floor, 6 Headley Road, Woodley, Reading, Berkshire, RG5 4JA	Wargrave Practice, Woodley Centre Surgery, Parkside Family Practice, Loddon Vale Practice & Twyford	WAVE 2
Reading West PCN	Circuit Lane Surgery	53 Circuit Lane, Reading RG30 3AN	Western Elms & Circuit Lane Surgeries, Tilehurst Surgery Partnership	WAVE 3

Name of PCN	Name of site	Site address	Practices participating at this site	Wave
University PCN	University Medical Centre	9 Northcourt Avenue , Reading , RG2 7HE	University Medical Group	WAVE 3
West Reading Villages	Boathouse Surgery / Rosewood Hall	The Boathouse Surgery, Whitchurch Road, Pangbourne, Reading, RG8 7DP	Pangbourne, Chapel Row , Mortimer & Theale	WAVE 3
Earley Plus PCN	Chalfont Surgery / Salvation Army Hall	Chalfont Surgery, Chalfont Close, Lower Earley, Reading, RG6 5HZ	Brookside Group Practice & Wilderness Road Surgery	WAVE 5
Wokingham East PCN	Wokingham Medical Centre	23 Rose Street, Wokingham, RG40 1XS	Wokingham Medical Centre, Woosehill Medical Centre, Burma Hills, New Wokingham Rd Surgery	WAVE 5
Reading Central PCN & Whitley PCN	Eldon Square Surgery / Garden Hall	9, Eldon Square, Reading, RG1 4DT	Abbey Medical Centre, Chatham Street surgery, Eldon Road Surgery, Pembroke Surgery, Russell Street Surgery, Reading Walk-In-Centre, Longbarn Lane, South Rdg & Shinfield Medical Practice, Milman & Kennet Surgeries, London Street Surgery, Melrose Surgery	WAVE 5
Caversham PCN	Emmer Green Surgery	4 St Barnabas Road, Emmer Green, Reading RG4 8RA	Balmore Park & Emmer Green Surgery	WAVE 6
A34 PCN, WEST BERKSHIRE RURAL PCN & KENNET PCN	Newbury Racecourse	Racecourse Rd, Newbury RG14 7NZ	Eastfield House, Strawberry Hill MC, The Downland Practice, Burdwood Surgery, Falkland Surgery, Hungerford Surgery, Kintbury & Woolton Hill Surgery, Lambourn Surgery & Thatcham HC	WAVE 6

Hospital Hubs

Wokingham Hospital Hub – started 14.12.20

Royal Berkshire Hospital Hub – started 4.1.21

My contribution to the debate on High Speed Rail (West Midlands – Crewe) Bill

The case for HS2 before the pandemic hit was made on the basis of the need to expand capacity. I always argued that there was a quicker and cheaper solution for capacity, and that was to digitalise signalling, introduce more short sections of bypass track and improve engineering around the main stations. By those means, we could have got a 25% or so increase in capacity much more quickly at a fraction of the cost, leaving over money to improve local services and the use of the existing railway, and for other purposes.

Now that we have had the pandemic, as we move to the recovery phase, which we hope will be quite soon, we have to accept, as the right hon. Member for Warley

(John Spellar) and others have mentioned, that the nature of work and the use of the office will change. We may well find that the intense pressure during the Monday-to-Friday morning and evening peak, as a result of people tending to start work at 9 and tending to leave for home at 5 or half-past 5, will diminish. We may well find that people will want much more flexible use of their railway—that they will not travel every day, and will not necessarily be going at peak hours. One of the big problems that the railways face—capacity on journeys to main towns and cities at peak—will be changed or relieved by that.

We are due, from the Government and the industry representatives that advise them, their interim thoughts on what the shape of the railway and railway demand might look like in two or three years' time, assuming that all has gone well with vaccination, and that there is a pretty good, robust recovery. We should not assume that it will be recovery to the same work and railway travel patterns that we had before.

I hope that we will make more intelligent use of the railway for freight, because there is still plenty of scope for that if we can get better at single-wagon marshalling, and can make better use of the railway for the relatively longer distances that freight often has to travel to get from ports to all parts of the United Kingdom. That would be a possible use of the capacity that we already have. I dare say that there will also be plenty of promotional schemes for leisure and tourist travel. The fact remains, however, that the use of the railway for work will change very dramatically. I do think this whole project needs appraising in the light of that, and that we are owed a proper plan with the latest forecasts, which must be very different from the forecasts that the Government were using when they first put this proposal to the country and to the House.

[Aiming to cut the food miles and boost UK production](#)

Question:

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to protect marine conservation areas from illegal fishing by large trawlers. (136424)

Tabled on: 12 January 2021

Answer:

Victoria Prentis:

As an independent coastal state, the UK has full responsibility over how it manages all of our fisheries. All vessels fishing in our waters have to be licensed by a UK Fisheries Administration, and abide by the licence conditions and relevant legislation. We are also committed to ensuring an effective and robust enforcement system. To ensure appropriate arrangements to enforce fisheries regulations are in place to protect our waters, including marine protected areas, the Government has put in place a significant increase in the number of personnel and surveillance assets dedicated to fisheries protection, which includes offshore patrol vessels supported by aerial and radar surveillance. This strong presence will deter against any fisheries infringements.

The answer was submitted on 20 Jan 2021 at 16:39.

Question:

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what Government (a) grant and (b) loan assistance is available to people wishing to expand capacity of vegetable and fruit growing under suitable cover to extend the growing season and protect from weather damage. (136427)

Tabled on: 12 January 2021

Answer:

Victoria Prentis:

The Government has provided some limited grant support for indoor horticultural growers through the Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE) for the purchase of innovative lighting, heating and irrigation technology. Funding continues to be available to producer organisations who implement operational programmes in the Fruit and Vegetable Aid Scheme.

From autumn 2021 my department will launch the new Farming Investment Fund, providing grants to farmers, foresters and growers to enable them to invest in the equipment, technology and infrastructure that will help their

businesses to prosper, while improving their productivity and enhancing the environment. My officials are working with stakeholders and others on the detailed design of the scheme.

The answer was submitted on 20

The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs has provided the following answer to your written parliamentary question (136425):

Question:

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will ban supertrawlers from fishing in UK waters to help protect fish stocks and the marine environment. (136425)

Tabled on: 12 January 2021

Answer:

Victoria Prentis:

We are reviewing our policies for these vessels operating in UK waters including marine conservation areas. Any action needs to be evidence-based and in line with the UK/EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement.

The answer was submitted on 20 Jan 2021 at 16:41.

Jan 2021 at 16:45.