

Christmas message

I love Christmas. I like the turkey and the pudding, the tinsel and the trees, the carols and the stories, the pleasure of giving and receiving. Best of all is the way many people feel they should be kinder at Christmas, thinking more of others, reaching out to the lonely and trying to bring argumentative families together.

Today there is a great need for the spirit of Christmas in our politics and in the social media exchanges. Things became very heated in the recent election, with lies and nastiness the stock in trade of too much discourse. I always seek to see good in people, and to ignore the everyday petty jibes from those who disagree with me. If I push back, complain or seek a remedy it shows just how far the nastiness has gone. Some of my supporters think me naïve in not running negative campaigns about named critics, and in not calling out every dirty trick or lie. I would like to suggest that going forward more of us recognise that there are many valid points of view. Often the best way to make your case is to say what is good about it, not to seek to run down those who do not yet agree.

The opportunity at Christmas could be to get on with family members we do not like, or to bury the quarrel with the neighbour. It is better to have more friends and fewer enemies. That is the true spirit of Christmas. It is often possible to find ways of working with people that do not think they like you, by showing them what we have in common rather than playing up the disagreements. I want the greater happiness and prosperity of my constituents. I understand the minorities who do not agree with my points of view on some subjects and I will work to represent them to government when they have legitimate worries or complaints. I would just like them to understand I wish them well and do what I do because I think it is in the best interests of our country and community.

I want to wish you all a very happy Christmas, as I seek your help in improving the tone of our democratic disagreements. I am looking forward to the joys of a traditional Christmas whilst I also think about how we can spread a bit more Christmas cheer to those in need.

No delay to full exit at end of 2020

It is welcome and necessary for the government to rule out any further delay to our exit from the EU. The EU agreed to a Free Trade Agreement in principle. It is quite possible to produce one in time. If the EU thinks we will delay again they have an incentive not to agree anything.

A US/China trade deal?

Will they, won't they do a deal? The US side says there is a deal, it just needs to be written up fully. They suggest China will agree to buy more US food and goods, in return for the USA cancelling the threatened new tariffs this week and rolling back a little of the ones already imposed. China is not so sure.

The truth is since the tariff war began the arguments between China and the USA have broadened. There is the dispute about technology transfer and Intellectual property, the US Democrat led challenge to China on human rights, the issue of currency manipulation and the questions of state enterprises and unfair competition. None of these are easy to resolve, and all require trust and understanding that is difficult to conjure. The US needs to know how any new rules against IP theft or state subsidy would be enforced.

Mr Trump has highlighted the lack of symmetry or fairness in much of the world trading system. China is his main target, but he has also queried the higher tariffs on US cars in the EU than the other way round and has won a longstanding case in the WTO over subsidies to Airbus representing unfair competition to Boeing.

There are always some disputes going on around the world, but today tariffs and trade disagreements spring up in various places. There is the trade dispute between Korea and Japan with grievances going back to the last World War. There are trade frictions around Kashmir where they are related to the political tensions.

Freer trade is usually a good thing, but there are concealed within current so called free trade patterns injustices, subsidies and anti competitive practises. The present manufacturing downturn worldwide is often attributed to the so called trade war. In practice it is the widespread change of policy and attitudes towards diesels and partly to petrol vehicles that has done more to power the downturn than the imposition of new tariffs.

The Queens speech

Today I am giving you the opportunity to send in your ideas of what legislation the government should propose for the new Parliament

We know there will be priority for Brexit legislation , and the government has decided to bind itself in law to increases in NHS spending.

I would like to see a Constitutional Reform Bill. This would repeal the Fixed Terms Parliament Act which did so much damage in the last Parliament. An Act designed to keep elections to one every five years has instead allowed three in four years. It could legislate to reduce the number of MPs by 50 as promised before. It should limit the Speakers powers by requiring a government moved Money Resolution and Queens consent to legislation.

I would like a simpler and lower taxes bill to incorporate the various tax measures I have proposed.

I want to see better protection for armed services personnel against legal challenge, once cleared by an enquiry.

I favour new legislation on the BBC to decriminalise the licence fee.

Prosperity requires the right kind of government interventions

As soon as the Conservatives win a General election the pundits and the BBC are on telling us that government needs to adopt Labour's economic policies of a bigger state and more state intervention. If people thought that was the answer they could have voted for dollops of it given the Labour Manifesto.

What we need is intelligent government intervention where government can make a difference, and help or avoidance of harm for the competitive private sector who will generate many of the jobs and supply many of the goods and services. A Northern city may need better public investment in transport and education, but it also needs a surge of private sector led investment in the many new goods and services which power the modern economy.

To encourage a city outside London to perform more like London needs lower taxes and more freedoms to let people set up businesses and grow them We need more freeports and big enterprise zones. We need lower Income tax, fewer capital taxes and transactions taxes on business, and better education and training to create clusters of excellence and competitive energy.

Of course the Transport department needs a bigger capital budget. It also needs better management of projects and better choice of projects to get more value for money. The railway needs accelerated investment in digital signalling to increase the capacity of existing lines. It needs new short sections of by pass track to allow express trains to keep to timetable on mixed train lines. The road system needs better junctions, more roundabouts in place of traffic lights, and more segregation of cycles from vehicles for safety and easier cycling.

London stays richer with higher incomes thanks to the talent and entrepreneurial energies of so many people. You go to London to set up a business because you find the good people, the specialist suppliers and above all the customers. Northern cities can be helped to be similar magnets.