

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 Speaker's powers by requiring a government moved Money Resolution and Queen's 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.

[An economic policy for the whole country](#)

The first thing we need to spread growth and prosperity more widely around our country is a Central Bank in tune with current worldwide Central Bank thinking and concerned to promote growth.

From India to the USA, from Australia to Brazil, from Turkey to Mexico Central Banks have been cutting interest rates to stimulate more growth against a backdrop of world manufacturing recession.

In the last month the Fed has put \$150bn into markets to facilitate more productive bank lending, whilst the ECB is now creating Euro20bn extra each month to boost money growth. The Bank of Japan remains on full throttle Quantitative easing.

The UK has the slowest rate of money growth in the advanced world thanks to the Bank of England's do nothing policy. Time for the Bank to get with the mood of the country which wants more prosperity.

[Christmas elections should be a last resort](#)

The Prime Minister had no choice but to hold an election close to Christmas. The old Parliament had degenerated into an uncontrollable shouting match, preventing government and making us look ludicrous abroad. When you can not even pass a budget it's time to ask the people.

Necessity does not make Christmas a good time to be campaigning and I trust it does not become a habit. It was cold and wet for much of the time, with slippery steps and paths, more dangerous in the dark when the sodden leaves were concealed in the shadows. The Labour candidate in Wokingham had an unfortunate fall at the start of the election and had to struggle on crutches for most of the time. I felt sorry for her, as it must be so frustrating and painful when you wish to dash around to meet as many people as possible.

I had to hone my skills at carrying a bundle of leaflets in one hand, an umbrella in the other, and then working how to battle with the letter boxes near the ground with highly sprung backs and tough brushes. If you abandoned the umbrella the leaflets soon got ruined by the rain. It was necessary to locate the prevailing wind and park the umbrella where it could not blow away whilst tackling the more aggressively defended letter boxes.

We candidates are all volunteers, and I am not seeking any sympathy for us. We do not have to do it, but we did have to fight that feeling of wistfulness as we watched everyone else getting ready for Christmas. Through lit windows we saw the trees and tinsel appear. The outsides of some houses were joyously lit up by great light displays or illuminated Santas and reindeer, making it a bit easier to find our footing as we went from house to house. We returned to our homes converted into leaflet stores and canvass offices feeling a bit like the person made to stay on duty during the party.

For MPs rightly stripped of office as soon as Parliament dissolves it is perhaps the busiest season for official duties. They all had to be binned. The two wreaths I had bought to lay at local war memorials sit in the corner of my office. I had to cancel my attendance at the Winter Carnival, pull out of reading a lesson at a civic service, and was told politely I was not wanted at the schools' carol concert which is a highlight of the year in Wokingham Borough. There was no question of dropping in on nativity plays, charity events or other Christmas specials. I will return to Westminster on Monday to a pile of Christmas cards ordered well before the election which could not be signed or sent as they have on them the Portcullis logo and MP designation.

The public was generally understanding of visitors after dark as they sensed the importance of the election and the limited time for parties to get their message across.

I hope in future we return to spring or early summer elections. There is so much more daylight, it is a bit warmer, and the official calendar is less packed with must do events even allowing for the popularity of summer fetes. I like Christmas and it will great this week-end to be able to do some Christmas shopping and decorate my home. I will get Christmas done!