

Wokingham Arts Society Summer Exhibition

Last night I opened the Wokingham Arts Society Summer Exhibition at St. Paul's parish room.

The Exhibition is full of joyful oil and water colour painting, with some great ceramics and wood carvings. There is a lot of local talent that has captured the wonders of nature and the beauty of many places. Wokingham's pubs jostle alongside castles, seaside scenes, birds and animals and holiday destinations in the paintings on display.

I talked about the contribution art can make to our lives and thanked all involved in setting up such a good exhibition which we can share. Paintings are for sale if you want to go along and visit.

Mrs May damages the Union

It is entirely in keeping with Mrs May's calamitous handling of government that her parting gift as PM should include Northern Ireland legislation which stokes up controversy between Leave and Remain and is disliked by the DUP, the representatives of the majority in Northern Ireland.

She claimed to be a committed supporter of the Union yet her words and actions gave heart to those who oppose the Union. In Scotland she seemed to encourage the SNP, out to use Brexit to weaken the Union. She rarely made the case that Brexit is a UK matter based on a UK wide referendum. She took SNP objections to Brexit more seriously than the many Scottish voices who support Brexit.

In Northern Ireland Mrs May accepted the Republic view that the border is a problem against the view of her own allies, the DUP. She almost lost her government by agreeing to the Irish backstop in the Withdrawal Treaty without their consent.

So here is the irony. Mrs May claimed to be the champion of the Union yet she sided with the Union's strongest critics, Sinn Fein and the SNP, on the EU question. Mrs May put her loyalty to the EU above her alleged love of the Union, just as she put her enthusiasm for the EU above her democratic promise to get us out

The irony of the Remain Parliament.

Yesterday the Opposition parties and 17 Remain Conservatives voted for amendments to legislation to try to ensure Parliament has to meet in September and October to give them more time to try to delay or cancel Brexit. They call this taking back control and advocating Parliamentary democracy! It is of course the opposite. Labour and Conservative MPs were elected in 2017 on a manifesto for each party that promised to implement Brexit. Parliament voted by a large majority to send the Article 50 Notification of our exit, which means in European law we will leave on 31 October. I remember explaining to the Commons then that was the decision point, the moment Parliament legislated to leave. Now they wish to tear up their promises and refuse to take back control of our laws, our money and our borders despite the referendum.

I do not think even this discredited Parliament full of Labour MPs and a few Conservatives who have ratted on their promise to implement the decision of the people will find a way and a majority to revoke our exit letter. Short of doing that we will leave on 31 October, as promised by the likely next Prime Minister. We are due to leave according to European law. The UK Parliament cannot overturn European law, and only the PM can ask for a delay and seek agreement to changes to EU law to delay our official exit date.

The people made clear in the European election what they thought of the decision of the two major parties to delay our exit. They rejected both. They made it even clearer what they thought of Mrs May's Withdrawal Treaty, which got less than 9% support from the electorate in that election. The Conservative government must press on with preparations for our departure in October. Only such an exit can save this Parliament from driving itself even further from the electors it is meant to serve, and only such an exit can provide a platform for the two main parties to start to rebuild the trust of voters which has been undermined by the delay to Brexit.

The desperate idea this morning that a Remain majority should ask the Queen to override the PM taking us out is absurd.

Meanwhile Project Fear is in an extreme stage. Yesterday the OBR gave us a very pessimistic "scenario" – not a forecast – for a so called No Deal exit. If we just leave and have a Brexit bonus budget as outlined here we will grow faster next year as a result. All the time we stay in the EU as today with a combined monetary and fiscal squeeze we will grow slowly at best against a difficult world background for trade and manufacturing activity. The right fiscal boost, facilitated by saving our budget contributions to the EU, coupled with a more positive money policy could deliver considerably better growth than in the Euro area for us next year. The UK economy has proved very resilient considering the anti growth and anti enterprise policies being pursued.

Thank you Mr Barnier

Mr Barnier's refusal to re open the Withdrawal Agreement makes it clear. We leave without signing it, and offer a free trade agreement on the way out.

We do not need months of more uncertainty trying to unpick a small amount of the unpalatable things about the draft Withdrawal Treaty. We voted to take back control of our money, our laws and our borders, and must do so by 31 October.

A country's defence depends on industry as well as its armed services

There is substantial joint working between the defence industries, the Commanders of the armed forces and the government. With technology playing an ever more important role problems are analysed and resolved by manufacturers of equipment and programmers of software. As we enter the era of cyber warfare more of the combatants are civilian computer experts, or service personnel with special training turning up at an office or command centre well away from the adversaries.

It was always the case that to win a war the country fighting it had to produce sufficient weaponry, make available plenty of supplies to fighting personnel, and innovate to outwit enemy weapons and defences. In the two world wars of the last century large amounts of the country's production capacity had to be made over to war work to support the fighting personnel. The UK had to be much more self sufficient in food for home supplies, given the attempt of the Germans to sink inbound products coming by sea.

The UK in the second world war achieved amazing results at gearing the economy to war output. At the peak the country was manufacturing over 26,000 planes a year, and replacing millions of tonnes of sunk shipping. The navy was expanded massively from its peacetime lows. It added 553 new ships to the 332 that started the war, including 58 new aircraft carriers. There was a constant flow of innovations, from the world's first code cracking computer through jet planes to mobile harbours, bridges and an oil pipeline.

Today the UK needs to review its strategic capability to manufacture planes, ships and munitions. We trust there will not be another terrifying global scale war of the big powers, but even for interventions in lesser conflicts a country may not be able to pursue the course it wishes if it is dependent on

imported weapons or components. Mr Trump is demanding that the USA keeps the ability to produce all the steel it needs for military and other domestic purposes as a strategic industry. He is also keen to protect US intellectual property and the security of US communications systems as the best protection against cyber attack. It is time the UK was more insistent that UK weapons, tanks and naval ships of all kinds are made in the UK, and that we have the necessary capability to make the components for them.