

The government and the Union of the UK

Rishi Sunak took a gamble in Scotland. He decided to use the powers of the Union Parliament to challenge a piece of SNP legislation wanted by the Scottish Parliament, because it intrudes on reserved matters to the Union Parliament. It also happened to be unpopular with many Scottish voters, and with two of the three SNP challengers for the job of First Minister. His was the first successful challenge to a then dominant Nicola Sturgeon who used the job of First Minister as a constant campaign platform against the Union. Subsequent events led to her resignation, to a bad leadership contest and a series of as yet unanswered questions about SNP party funding which are doing them huge damage. It looks as if the Union will emerge stronger in Scotland for this chain of events. The PM tells us he is a Unionist and he can be pleased with what has happened and the stance he took.

So it is even more surprising that faced with the opportunity to support Unionists in Northern Ireland he chose the opposite course and sided more with the EU and the Republic of Ireland when it came to resolving issues over the temporary Northern Ireland Protocol. This Protocol contained its own clauses looking forward to future amendment or termination and invited a better answer to be wrapped into the Future Trading Agreement between the UK and EU. The UK anyway had passed a Bill through the Commons to fix the matters unilaterally if the EU continued on its course of refusing to deal with the serious worries of the Unionists.

I am still trying to get some answers to very simple questions about the Windsor Agreement. I am told I cannot table a question again to ask which EU laws apply to Northern Ireland. Why is this a secret? We were told 1700 pages of law would be disapplied. Which pages? Why has this list not been published? We were told only 3% of EU law remains. So if they know the percentage they must know the laws. How was the percentage calculated? Can we see the lists and the way they assessed the volume of total law? The Union needs defending in all parts of the UK.