

The Leadership of the Conservative party

Many members of the Conservative party are feeling let down that we are still not out of the EU. They warmed to the Prime Minister's approach that no deal is better than a bad deal, and accepted her assurance we would be out by 29 March 2019. Many Conservative MPs are unhappy about the plunge in the polls brought on by the news that we might be holding European elections after all, and by the fall in the general polls following announcement of delay in getting out.

There are moves to see if the question of the leadership can be revisited before the expiry of a year since the last confidence vote in Theresa May. Some MPs and some members of the voluntary party with their Associations are looking at what scope there is under the rules to test support again for the Prime Minister. It is reported that sufficient Associations have demanded the matter be examined by the party Board. Many MPs are sending letters to the Chairman of the 1992 Committee demanding action.

Mrs May herself has said she would resign as leader after the Withdrawal Agreement has gone through. She said nothing about what she would do if it did not. It is looking increasingly unlikely it will go through, as Labour have many difficulties with the Political declaration and the future partnership which is an integral part of the Agreement. As a result there is doubt about her intentions. Nor has she stated a definite leaving date were the Agreement to go through. Her wish to get it through with Labour votes is also unpopular with many Conservatives.

I do not favour the attempt to broker a deal for the PM to step aside in return for getting through a bad Agreement. I am urging the PM to lead us out on May 22nd, by cancelling the European elections. Under the Extension Agreement with the EU we would then automatically leave on May 22nd. We should offer further talks to secure more agreements on a range of things, led by tabling a free trade proposal, to start as soon as we leave.

If the Prime Minister did this the difficult problem of the European elections vanishes, and the Conservatives would go back up in the polls as Leave voters returned, grateful that we will be out on May 22nd. If she does not do this a very unhappy party will look for a legal means under its constitution to force a meaningful vote of confidence in the Prime Minister.