

## Why did Labour lose?

I rarely write about the Opposition parties, preferring to concentrate on how government can do better.

We will, however, hear a lot about Labour's future as they embark on choosing a new leader. Our constitution thrives best with a strong Opposition that looks like a government in waiting, so what Labour does will matter. For this reason I am interested in your thoughts on what they might do next. It was interesting that the biggest array of freebies ever offered in an election did not tease out more supporters.

Their first self appointed task is to work out why they lost so many seats in 2019. They have been all but eliminated in Scotland where they used to be dominant, have been largely excluded from the South outside London and lost many seats in old heartlands in the North and Midlands. They are an urban party with a strong dependence on the capital.

The last election was two elections at the same time. There was a Leave/Remain battle. The Lib Dems tried to make it an election to revoke our departure, and the Conservatives stressed the need to get Brexit done. Labour was scarcely part of this contest, as they sought to present a range of Remain tilted opinions as a new policy whilst saying they were also a home for Leave voters. Their spokesmen and women were unconvincing on the biggest issue of the day. Anyone desperate to keep us in the EU would vote Lib Dem and anyone keen to leave would vote Conservative.

The second election was about economic and social policy. Labour led this debate with a comprehensive offer of much more state control and "free" goods and services for people, against a Conservative targeted offer of spending increases on the NHS, schools and police. Some in Labour claim to have "won" this battle of ideas, yet the polling evidence suggests otherwise.

Those who think Labour's twin problems were Brexit and the personality and past record of their Leader cling to the hope that otherwise their ideas were popular. Instead the more free offers Labour launched, the more people felt their policy was unaffordable. The answer that only the rich would pay did not add up, and was contradicted by their Manifesto itself with the ending of the marriage allowance.

It appears the voters rejected not just Labour's Brexit stance but also their economic offer. People remembered what happened with past Labour governments spending and nationalising too much. Tomorrow I will look at what they could or might do next.

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# The power of Brexit

Early one recent morning when I was walking to my Parliamentary office a taxi driver stopped to tell me how pleased he was we would at last implement the referendum. He is training to be a teacher. He told me he was so fed up with Establishment and media bias and all the efforts to reverse the decision. He represents the passion and the decency behind the Brexit vote. He wanted to thank me but I felt I needed to thank him for holding true to the opportunity the vote offered.

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# Happy Christmas

I'm taking the day off. Feel free to write in if you wish.

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# Christmas Eve

Will Santa come for me?

May you all feel the excitement of Christmas.

( Here's one I prepared earlier)

WILL SANTA COME TONIGHT?

"Will Santa come? Will Santa come tonight?" "He might. He might.

If you are good, he might."

"Can I stay up and see?"

"No. He will not come for you or me If we do not sleep . He's too busy to meet us all."

"And will he come for us? If you go to sleep – he does not like fuss."

Tonight, by the lights of the tree There is, at last, some grown up time for me.

The cake is iced. The wine is spiced .The carrots diced.

The pudding's steamed. The brandy butter creamed.

The turkey prepared awaits. And yes, I did clean the plates.

The tree is up, the table laid, the cards are out , though the credit card's unpaid!

So shall I soon with gifts a plenty mount the stairs to deliver twenty?

Do I dare to tread the stair?

And will it creak? And will it creak? When can I take a peek?

I need to know if they slumber before I arrive with my lumber.

If they are still awake what dreams will go? What heart might break?

Or do they know? And is their belief just all for show?

So tonight by the magic tree there is need of more time just for me.

I will wait – and struggle to keep open my eyes

And wrestle with the morality of eating Santa's mince pies.

My adult mind is full of Christmas chores

The cooking times, and the cards through neighbours' doors

The parties with do not drink and drive in my ears

So the night does not end in tears

Drinks that might have been – but not that cheap red

Which would give me a headache as soon as I got to bed

I was once a child too excited to sleep with a torrent of thoughts about what I might be given

Hoping that it was a toy beneath the wrapping – should I peep? –

Not more socks or hankies, preferably something to be driven

So could Santa still come for me? Drowsily I dream as if I were eight Hoping that Santa would not be late

Like every little boy there is of course a much wanted toy

So will Santa come tonight? He might, He might. If you sleep well and if you believe

Only if you believe. And only if in your family Love fills the hours you will be spending.

It could be the true Santa on the stair

Or it could be someone from an empty chair.

So will Santa come? He will. He will.

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## More money for social care

The government is now consulting on its draft local authority finance settlement for 2020-21.

An important part of this is £1bn of additional social care grant, and up to an extra £500m of social care money from increased Council tax.

Both Wokingham and West Berkshire have received poor social care grant settlements in recent years, so I look forward to some of this proposed increase coming our way.