

What would a Manifesto for the European elections say in the UK?

As someone who wants us to leave now and not fight the EU elections, I think the parties will struggle to write their Manifestos for May 22nd.

Presumably the Brexit party and UKIP will write similar documents urging a WTO exit as soon as possible. They should look forward to not having to take their seats or to giving up their seats after October 31st on the assumption we have then left the EU. Their problem will be differentiating their approaches from each other and avoiding splitting their pro Leave votes.

The Conservative party will presumably draft a Manifesto today based around Mrs May's Withdrawal Agreement. The problem with that approach is if her Agreement were to pass with Labour support anytime soon then the elections will be cancelled, as the UK's new status of in the EU without vote and voice would then kick in removing the entitlement or need for MEPs.

If the Agreement does not pass, this would leave Conservative candidates with a Manifesto made irrelevant by events.

If instead the Conservatives draft a Manifesto based on the proposition that the Agreement has not gone through, they follow a logical but politically dangerous path of hypotheticals. What then should it say? I would want it to say because there is no support for the Withdrawal Agreement we are leaving without signing it. That invites the response of "Get on with it, and spare us the election". Alternatively the Conservatives have to set out in the document how they might get talks with the EU retriggered even though the EU has made clear its refusal to re-open the Withdrawal Agreement. Likely tough responses from the EU make that a fraught approach.

Labour too has a difficult task in compiling a Manifesto. It faces all of the above problems facing the Conservatives over what to offer, with added grief from the factions wanting dilution or cancellation of Brexit within the party. If it includes a second referendum it is alienating all Leave voters who see no need to answer the same question again. If they leave out the second referendum they upset many of their pro Remain MPs and supporters especially in heavy Remain areas like London and Scotland. If they stick with their wish to enter a Customs Union they will be asked why they have failed to support Mrs May's Agreement which is a necessary prelude to a customs union solution according to the EU. They will also generally be asked why they have been such an obstacle to leaving the EU and why they rule out leaving without an Agreement which most Leave voters and some Remain voters saw as necessary leverage in the talks.

The Lib Dems, Greens and nationalists who want us to stay in the EU have the easiest task. They will presumably set out why they think the people were wrong to vote to leave and how they wish to reverse the decision. They can then go on to explain how they want to spend 5 years in the European

Parliament voting on EU laws, budgets and taxes. They will write off any chance of winning votes from more than half the public who want to leave or accept we need to leave in the light of the referendum result.