

Why a second referendum would be a disaster

Voters were told we would make the decision on leave or stay. We were told it was a once in a generation opportunity to make this decision. This was all in the government leaflet and in the Hansard record of the Referendum Bill debates. So any second referendum would be a clear violation of past promises, bad for trust in government and politics. No-one thinks the establishment would give a second thought to a second referendum if they had won for Remain. They would have been biting and scornful in turning down any such requests from unhappy Leavers. Many of us would have accepted the result as we did for the prior one we lost where we did not ask for another for the first 20 years or so. It was only when the so called Common Market people voted for had visibly morphed into a monetary union with a planned political union on top that we sought a referendum on this fundamental change of character in the EU.

The most likely outcome of a second referendum is another win for Leave, which would presumably do nothing to appease those who lost last time and now demand another go. Were the second to narrowly reverse the first, then Leave would rightly feel cheated and would ask for best of 3.

Campaigners say we need to vote now we know the terms of exit. The truth is of course we do not have a clue what the terms of an agreed exit will be, and might not know them for 2 or 4 years were something like the Withdrawal Agreement to resurface or were there to be a delay for more talks.

Second voters also cannot agree the question to put. It is insulting to put the same question again, telling 34 million people they did not know what they were doing last time and they have to have another go. Justine Greening and others propose a three way question – do you want to just leave, or to remain, or to have a negotiated exit. What is the third one? How can this bring the country back together again, when the winning proposal may only have 34% support? That would be a huge invitation for continued unhappiness and more debate over what a three way vote actually meant, and why the majority was thwarted.

Some say they want a vote between some negotiated agreement and remain. That means most Leave voters are disenfranchised because our preferred model is left off. Some say lets have a contest between a negotiated departure and no deal. That is the least offensive one. It is a new question. It cannot take place before there is an agreed option. It would annoy Remain enthusiasts as their option is not on the table, so it is difficult to see the point of it. Meanwhile the law says we leave on 29 March whilst Remain MPs are still trying to thwart Brexit.