

Brexit – media muddle and rubbish galore

At first glance, headlines in a number of papers proclaiming “No Brexit until late 2019” sound thoroughly depressing. Has some new hold-up to triggering Article 50 suddenly appeared on the horizon? Not at all. In spite of a spat between Boris Johnson and Liam Fox over whether the Department for International Trade or the Foreign & Commonwealth Office will head up UK foreign policy, Theresa May has insisted that it is full steam ahead in the preparation for invoking Article 50 early next year and has told the two men to “stop playing games.”

If her plans go according to schedule, the two-year negotiation period would take us to early 2019. Factor in even a short delay in preparing the ground or a mutually-agreed extension to the negotiations and we will find ourselves in the second half of 2019 without having gone through the Brexit door. With France and Germany both holding major elections in 2017, it is quite likely that there will need to be an extension even before the complexities of negotiating a successful divorce are taken into account. A change of incumbent or government could result in previously-agreed changes having to be revisited if the leadership in either of those countries change – a distinct possibility in France, where President Hollande’s popularity ratings are very low.

Is business going to suffer as a result of June 23rd’s vote? Well before the referendum, we predicted a short-term blip in the event of a Brexit vote, particularly a drop in the value of sterling. We pointed out that the economic gains were for the longer term. House prices have fallen in the wake of Brexit, dropping by 2.6% in London and 2% in the South East. Is this a calamity? Ask any first-time buyer about the absurd prices they are having to pay to get onto the housing ladder

and you will not hear any sadness on their part. Another report claimed that businesses had become “pessimistic” as a result of the Brexit vote. Read the article in full, however, and it states that 36% of companies are planning to increase staffing levels now compared with 40% before the referendum. A slight fall in optimism, but hardly evidence of widespread business gloom.

It is frustrating that some remainers still seem unable to accept that we voted to leave – and with good reason. Avinash Persaud, writing in the Economic and Political Weekly highlights the supposed correlation between voting to leave and lower educational qualification. Those of us with degrees who voted to leave are becoming utterly sick of being characterised as ignoramuses. If anything, the number of graduates who voted for remain is an indication of the woeful inadequacy of our educational system as opposed to any correlation between intelligence and support for the EU.

Mr Persaud, like many other commentators, also links support for Brexit to disenchantment with free trade and the reforms that began under Margaret Thatcher. This again is simplistic twaddle. During the course of the Brexit campaign, one of the most frequently repeated advantages of Brexit was the prospect of beginning to take control of our own trade and escaping the protectionism of the EU. I for one was accused in one debate by my pro-EU opponent of advocating “Singapore on steroids”.

While the Brexit vote was strong in white working classes areas, the wonderful result on June 23rd was achieved by their alliance with frustrated small businessmen, some trade unionists, a few Labour MPs, a few more Tory MPs and a selection of educated professional types unhappy with the loss of our sovereignty, control of our trade and the top-down nature of the EU.

Of these unlikely bedfellows, the most uniquely British component is the strongly Eurosceptic centre right – one of

the legacies of Thatcherism. Peter Mandelson's claim that Jeremy Corbyn somehow sabotaged the remain vote just does not stand up to scrutiny. Undecided centre-right voters were never going to be won over by a Labour politician, whether Blairite or Corbynite. Somehow, Mandelson and his ilk still seem unable to come to terms with the fact that plenty of highly educated intelligent people studied the arguments on both sides of the debate and decided that we would be better off out.

Nor, sadly, are they giving up in their attempts to overrule the will of the people. The European Movement, which was a recipient of substantial CIA funding in the past, is organising a "March for Europe" on 3rd September. "We need to send a message that 16 million people voted to remain" says their propaganda. Well, we have a message for the European Movement:- over 17 million people voted to leave and we won. That's called democracy.

Lord Stoddart, a patron and former Chairman of CIB, recently issued a stark warning to Lord Mandelson and other Europhile members of the Upper Chamber:-

"My colleagues in the Lords would do well to remember that the Brexit vote was the largest vote for anything in the history of our nation. According to a study by the University of East Anglia, had Vote Leave been a political party, it would have won a huge landslide of 421 Parliamentary seats. That would equate to 65% of all seats and 73% of seats in England and Wales. Mess with this massive mandate at your peril!"

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