

Could a referendum be forced upon us?

Q: Just say it is late 2018. Britain and the EU have just agreed a Withdrawal Agreement (WA) with us largely under EU control until 2021, losing existing voting power. The future relationship declaration is non-committal. Would there be a second referendum?



Sacked minister Justine Greening wants a complicated referendum with 3 options – accept the deal, leave with no deal or remain in the EU. Voters would also get a second choice! Sammy Wilson MP responded that voters had already had referendums to reject the EU and Alternative Voting!

BIRDS OF A FEATHER? Greening (Times) and Mandelson (Guardian) both urged a second referendum, but their articles made the same error on being unable to influence EU rules. As former Trade Commissioner Mandelson would know better – this points to their articles being orchestrated.

The government wouldn't want a referendum. Apart from splitting the Conservative Party and reviving deep public tensions from 2016, it would take up precious Parliamentary time. Organising a poll and appointing official campaigns would be on impossibly tight timescales unless the Brexit date was put back.

The uncertainty might not actually appeal to the EU either! Bureaucrats in Brussels are overloaded with trying to get EU legislation through while the current European Parliament and Commission are still in place and would not relish the

possible disruption to their preparations and extra work. However, it was noted that EU leaders quietly agreed to keep MEP seats for Britain in the event that we did not leave before July 2019!!! So, the possibility can't be ruled out.

The EU (Withdrawal) Act doesn't repeal the European Union Act 2011 until we leave the EU, but as current plans won't give the EU new powers, no referendum should be triggered.

It's a hard call how MPs would vote on the WA. Most Leaver MPs would probably vote for it to ensure Brexit, salving their consciences that it is only a temporary deal and their vote keeps Jeremy Corbyn out of power. Although Tory Remoaners will bawl "worse than EU membership", they typically fall into line in practice.

With their 2017 manifesto preaching the benefits of the Single Market, Labour MPs might think twice about voting down legislation that kept Britain in it. On balance, a soft Brexit would probably get passed.

Greening's line that "the final decision" should be for the people and "out of deadlocked politicians' hands" is a joke. The deal being voted on is only interim (Transition) and the final deal should be ready towards the run up to the 2022 General Election.

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