

The dark shadow of David Cameron hovers over Westminster

Finally, after a long battle over various proposed amendments, a vote following the third reading of the European Union (notification of withdrawal) Bill saw it passed by 494 votes to 122, a majority of 372. This is slightly down on the 384 majority in last week's vote, mainly due to an increase in the number of Labour MPs voting against it. In spite of much whinging by a few unhappy Tory MPs, in the end, none of them joined Ken Clarke in the "no" lobby. The full list of MPs who voted against the will of the people can be found [here](#).

The proposed amendments were voted down and the recent announcement by the Government that MPs would have a vote over the final Brexit deal was actually quite astute. It satisfies their demand to have a say but at the same time gives them very little wiggle room. There is no question of MPs vetoing Brexit at the end of the negotiations if they don't like the deal. The choice will only be about how we leave – either backing the government's package (whatever it turns out to be) or going for a disorderly Brexit relying on WTO rules only – an outcome that no one in their right minds would support.

So now the bill goes to the House of Lords. One government spokesman said "The Lords will face an overwhelming public call to be abolished if they now try and frustrate this Bill. They must get on and deliver the will of the British people." In other words, the Europhile majority must accept the result, just like many of their pro-remain colleagues on the House Commons. A gun is essentially being pointed at their heads and a call by Lib Dem MP Lynne Featherstone for their Lordships to block Brexit as their "patriotic duty" is unlikely to win many new friends either for her or any peers who follow her advice. The Upper Chamber can propose amendments, which will then be

debated by the House of Commons, but no one can doubt Mrs May's determination to ensure that the bill will complete its passage through Parliament in time for her self-imposed deadline next month. For all the huffing and puffing we are likely to hear from the Upper Chamber, it is therefore most unlikely it will amount to anything more than angry noise – just like the sickening behaviour of SNP MPs when following yesterday's vote, they started first whistling then humming the EU's "National Anthem" – the *Ode to Joy* from Beethoven's 9th Symphony – in the Commons chamber. They received a justified rebuke from the Deputy Speaker, Lindsay Hoyle.

Of course, all this would not have been necessary were it not for the incompetence of David Cameron, whose dark shadow must have been hovering over Westminster in recent days. Not expecting to lose, he did not draw up the referendum legislation in a competent manner. Whereas there was no ambiguity about how Westminster was to have responded if Scotland had voted to leave the Union, the Government's promise in its booklet sent to every household that "***The government will implement what you decide,***" carried no legal weight, hence Gina Miller's challenge and the resultant hours spent debating the withdrawal bill.

Mrs May and her team have stood firm on their commitment to deliver Brexit and for this they deserve our respect and full support. However, the really hard bit is yet to come. Tough as beating down the opposition in Parliament has proved, it will not be nearly as tough as the challenges of negotiating a deal which will see us exit the EU seamlessly in two years' time.