

# NO! NO! NO!

Listen to the clip attached to this article. Pinch yourself. Is it real? Here we have Nigel Farage, the man who friend and foe alike acknowledge played a significant role in securing the historic vote to leave the EU over eighteen months ago, calling for a second referendum.

Yes, I could hardly believe it. The author of the article suspects an ulterior motive – in other words, that Nigel is happier when he has something to snipe about from the sidelines. Nigel himself offers a much more straightforward reason for his “conversion” – winning a second referendum would finally shut up the likes of Blair and Clegg for good. Perhaps – but this argument is flawed for several reasons.

Firstly and most importantly, there is the practical issue of the ongoing Brexit talks. Our team needs the distraction of a second referendum like it needs a hole in the head. We are less than 15 months away from Brexit day and there is a huge amount which has to be sorted out before then. As for groups like CIB, rather than gearing up for a second referendum, our energies should be devoted instead to campaigning for a change of course from the current plan for a transitional deal which, as we have pointed out, is most unsatisfactory as it stands.

Secondly, a second referendum would undermine the legitimacy of the first one. The question was simple – Should the UK remain a member of the EU or leave the EU? 51.9% of those who voted, in other words, 17,410,742 voters, voted to leave. The vast majority of them knew what they were doing and while a few have changed their minds, most people have accepted the result. The Government triggered Article 50 and is pushing through the European Union (Withdrawal) Bill on the strength of the result. It was the biggest democratic exercise in our nation’s political history. More people voted to leave the EU than have ever voted for anything else. The result must stand.

Thirdly, who wants to go through that gruelling campaign again? When I look back to 2016, I will never forget the euphoria of that momentous day when the result was declared, but neither will I forget the preceding months, including taking part in six debates in seven days. Those late nights, the travelling, the thousands of e-mails, the phone calls. It was absolutely incessant. From the day when Cameron announced the date of the referendum until the result was announced, it completely took over my life and the life of thousands of many activists up and down the country. I doubt if there are many people on either side of the Brexit debate who are keen on a repeat performance.

Fourthly, it would reopen a lot of old wounds. Nigel's opinions, sadly, come across as the view of someone enclosed in the Westminster bubble. The average man or woman in the street was never that interested in the European Union and I suspect that there are many people who now switch off whenever Brexit is mentioned in the news, especially as it is all getting very technical. Let's face it – some of us who were active in the campaign are fed up with it all and can't wait for Brexit to be done and dusted. To repeat a point which was made above, most people, whichever way they voted, have accepted the result and even some remain voters, rather than moping, are considering the opportunities Brexit will bring. Apart from some of our universities and parts of London and Scotland, animosity over Brexit has been pretty short-lived. We have moved on. Who cares about Nick Clegg, let alone Tony Blair? The reason their bleating is getting more desperate in tone is that every day which passes is a day closer to the day when we finally leave the EU and everything for which they have stood politically will come crashing to the ground.

One reason why we can be confident that Nigel's call for a second referendum will fall flat is that the Conservative Party, like the country as a whole, has no desire to reopen old wounds. Last June's election result was a shock to the

system and it has concentrated minds powerfully. Apart from the real headbangers like Ken Clarke and Anna Soubry, most Tory MPs know that their survival depends on standing together and delivering a successful Brexit. A second referendum will do nothing for their party's cause. Furthermore, considering the bad blood between Leave.eu, in which Nigel was prominent, on the one hand and Vote.leave, which was the preferred leave campaign of most leave-supporting Conservative MPs, on the other, there will be little enthusiasm among any Tories for Nigel to be calling the shots on Brexit.

So while many of us share his desire to see Clegg, Blair & Co silenced once and for all, a second referendum is not the answer. Thank you for all you did, Nigel, but as Mrs Thatcher would have said, NO, NO, NO!

Photo by Michael Vadon 