

Summer break?

Our Parliament has stated its summer recess. After the dramatic events following the publication of the Government's Brexit White Paper, no doubt most MPs will be glad to get away from Westminster for a few weeks.

It is unlikely to be much of a summer break, particularly for Tory MPs who are likely to have an uncomfortable time in their constituencies. Conservative Home noted that support for Mrs May's Brexit plan, a mere 33% initially, has actually fallen subsequently – to a mere 29%.

Brexit- supporting MPs are angry and at least one of them has turned his fire on one of the worst offenders – Olly Robbins, Mrs May's current Brexit advisor. "You shafted David Davis' White Paper, didn't you?" said an angry John Whittingdale. However brilliant Davis' alternative paper may or may not have been, it does seem very odd that his team spent months working on it only for May and Robbins to produce something different behind their backs. Not content with humiliating Davis, Mrs May has now sidelined his successor, Dominic Raab who, in spite of being called the Brexit Secretary, will in effect be Mrs May's deputy. She intends to lead the negotiations herself, no doubt with the odious Robbins by her side.

Of course, there are huge obstacles facing Mrs May's proposals as well. Our colleague Brian Mooney has called it "A work that's already scrap". The parliamentary arithmetic is loaded against it. Even Mrs May wouldn't dare rely on Labour votes to see it pass.

It would take a brave person to predict what sort of Brexit we will end up with. Mrs May has made our final payment to the EU unconditional. We will have to cough up £39 billion come what may. That much is certain. Virtually nothing else is.

Readers who have taken Edward Spalton's advice and read the

COM(2018) 556 final document produced by the European Commission will note that agreement on the transitional terms is conditional on a full withdrawal agreement being agreed. "There might be a transition period" says the Commission, but on the other hand, there might not – and we have to hope that there won't be. All the hullabaloo about the Chequers text has diverted attention to the damaging "vassal state" period into which we would be locked for 21 months, with our fishing industry struck a critical blow from which it will be difficult to recover.

It is not too late for the transitional agreement along with the proposed ongoing defence cooperation with the EU to be scuppered. It is not too late for us to part company with the European Arrest Warrant. It looks like we will be kicked out of the Galileo space programme come what may, according to the Commission document. Given that its long term goal is to track every road vehicle in the EU, this is a small crumb of comfort in these uncertain times.

Of course, Mrs May could face a leadership challenge, but would it be successful? At the moment, it is hard to say, but there is no reason to believe that the White Paper is the final word. there is still everything to play for. Unfortunately, while many of us remain hopeful that a better escape package will be produced and the Chequers plan will indeed, as Brian Mooney suggests, be "scrap", none of this is of any help to businesses trying to prepare for life after Brexit. If the government is still a long way off producing a viable exit plan, it is even further off being able to tell business how this plan will affect them.

To end this summary on a more positive note, readers may enjoy this clip of Labour MP Caroline Flint rubbishing the calls for a second referendum. "I will never support that" she says. "If we're going to have a second referendum, why not a third? or a fourth?" She also claims that were a second referendum to be held, it would likely result in the country voting more

emphatically to leave. She confirms what we have been picking up from visiting Parliament- namely, whichever way people voted in 2016, the message MPs are getting is simply “A decision was made. Get on with it”.

Let us hope that someone does – and preferably someone other than the deadly duo of May and Robbins