

## **BREXIT AND HOW NOT TO DO GOVERNMENT**

### **A Rant**

**For the Tories Brexit was an exclusive game of thrones. As Michael Gove's missus said to him when the result of the referendum came through,**

**'You were only supposed to blow the bloody doors off.'**

Having been sacked as Secretary of State for Education for poisoning what he was meant to nourish Gove wanted to get up the ladder again. Like Boris the Boor personal advancement was all that mattered.

As the referendum was never meant to produce a binding result fun could be had making extravagant claims and assertions. Nigel Farage must have been secretly hoping to lose because winning was bound to finish his single-issue career. Others, such as Liam Fox, genuinely wanted us out of the EU in order to privatise the NHS and sell everything to America.

David Cameron is supposed to have a degree that contains the word 'politics' in its title. But politics is the inclusive discussion of and arrival at public values. That means wide participation by well-informed people. To apply the word 'democratic' to a political decision truth should be involved. And in the case of a binding referendum there should be a specified threshold for the decision to be acted upon. None was set because for an advisory referendum none is needed.

So why are we treating as binding the result of this referendum, in which 37% of the electorate voted for us to leave the EU? Because David Cameron miscalculated. He was only interested in keeping his throne. By saying that he would regard the result as binding he probably hoped that when he won it would shut up the troublesome people in his party, the people that John Major referred to as 'The bastards'. He may have assumed that he was speaking with the authority of a prime minister. In fact he was merely speaking as a protagonist. He did not have the power to change the terms of the referendum. That point ought to have been made very loudly.

### **AND NOW**

Theresa May is in charge: the former Home Secretary who since 2010 had the power to restrict immigration from within and without the EU but, despite repeatedly setting targets, failed to do anything. Her inaction allowed immigration to become an issue.

Rather than working through her civil servants she preferred to work with her advisory dynamic duo. Her Manifesto (yes it was hers as she repeatedly told us) was a shoddy piece of work that as school homework would have been covered in red ink. In the run up to the referendum it was clear that Cameron and co. did not trust her. Is it because she is a clever manipulator playing it both ways that she was not trusted? In my view all her sound bites and slogans about strength and stuff are there to hide the fact that she has no substance.

Irrespective of a hard or soft Brexit work has to be done. Where are the civil servants? For years we have been getting shut of them. Are we going to hire G4S to draft position papers? When/if we repatriate tons of legislation that means work, unless, as May has shown signs of wanting to do, we deploy all the monarchical powers of government. Many commentators have mentioned Henry VIII powers. Did they not know about all this stuff? It seems to have come as a surprise to some that we are not citizens: we are subjects. Subjects only have to submit. If you don't like submission work has to be done. Bills have to be drafted and, a weak part of our system, scrutinised properly.

The Select Committees of the House of Commons contain people with knowledge and experience of the range of government activity. They question and they publicly hold ministers and others to account. They know their stuff. They are, however, kept away from bills when they are scrutinised. For that we have Standing Committees in which a group of MPs are thrown together, with an in-built government majority, in order to push legislation through. The greater the legislative pressure the more sloppy becomes the scrutiny. That is where the unelected House of Lords comes in. It is full of experienced people only too eager to demonstrate that given the chance they can still put their boots on and get a game. What a way to run a democracy!

It seems not to have occurred to Theresa May that soft or hard this Brexit stuff requires the rolling up of sleeves. I would prefer us to stay in the EU and work to make it less in hock to corporatist capitalism and to counter the nasty nationalism exhibited by some countries. Inside we have the clout to do this. Unfortunately, we have preferred not to. And when you hear Leavers moan about the bureaucrats of Brussels they ignore the extent to which we influence what they do.

Meanwhile, we suffer a government that deludes itself that all that we need are a few fresh sound bites each week.

**Cliff Jones 20<sup>th</sup> August 2017**