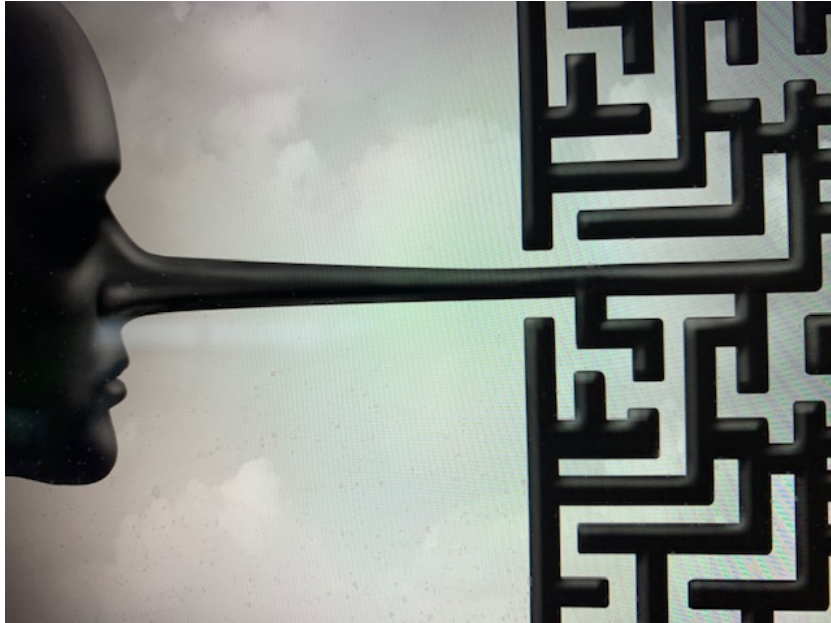


## Parliament prorogued



**THE PARLIAMENT** of barefaced liars has been silenced for a short while. Most of its members are committed to remaining in the European Union, while they pretend that their only concern is to secure a good deal from Brussels. Yet most of them have spent three years attempting to subvert the decision of the electorate clearly expressed in the nation-wide vote of 2016. The MPs who established the referendum, subsequently voted to leave by triggering Article 50, and then adopted the strategy of arguing that there was “no mandate for leaving without a deal”. They all know that this argument is specious, because they all know that they themselves had created a simple-majority referendum without restrictions, conditions, or qualifications of any kind.

It is true that the Liberal Democrats came clean in the Euro Elections by brazenly arguing to remain in defiance of the result of the referendum. Other

arguments have crowded in . . . “the situation has changed . . . we need a second vote . . . people might well have changed their minds . . . the consequences of crashing out will be disastrous . . . we must put the national interest before party.”

This last clarion cry, “Nation before Party”, has been taken up by John McDonnell, Jeremy Corbyn, and their company of erstwhile revolutionaries, committed to the many, not the few. In their desperate attempt to avoid an election before the 31<sup>st</sup> October they have thrown their lot in with the Liberal Democrats and Scottish Nationalists. We must prevent “No Deal” they shout, while Emily Thornberry and John McDonnell have let the cat out of the bag – they, along with most Corbynistas, have made clear their intention to do all they can to keep Britain in the EU in defiance of the vote to leave expressed by popular majority in 2016.

Now, it is equally clear that Prime Minister, Boris Johnson’s, relationship to the truth is as uncertain as his opponents. However, although equally disingenuous, the difference between Johnson and McDonnell, and Corbyn, is that Johnson is defending the votes of the *many* against those of the *fewer*, a cardinal principle when it comes to responding to the result of referenda.

As a consequence, we are faced with arguments concerning the rule of law and the astonishing spectacle of the far left attempting to arraign Boris Johnson and his allies for, not merely being undemocratic, but also for threatening to break the law by refusing to ask Brussels to keep us in the European Union long enough for Labour to reverse the result of the referendum. This is an astounding move on the part of a left that has hitherto been in favour of breaking the law in defence of its own outlook . . . now the revolutionaries, and the ‘useful idiots’ amongst the party’s left social democrats, have decided to put nation before party and stand by the rule of the oligarchy: in Parliament, in big business corporations, and in the civil service.

There is no doubt, the country is in the midst of a constitutional crisis created by the rival claim of the majority expressed in a referendum, and the outlook of most of the elected representatives in our sovereign parliament. But it was this parliament which voted for the referendum, accepted the terms on which it was held, and have sought, ever since, to move the goalposts. This is because the majority surprised us all by voting the 'wrong' way, because they were atavistic backwoodsmen, grievously ignorant, or racist, or simply illiberal and unthinking.

Labour has decided to throw its lot in with the 'enlightened' big bourgeoisie in defence of the European Union on the grounds that 'shared sovereignty' is a more plausible route for the country than the 'national sovereignty' canvased by Nigel Farage and Boris Johnson.

Unfortunately, the truth is not so simple as this knockabout would leave us to believe. Neither perspective offers the prospect of a better long-term future for most working people because neither perspective seriously addresses the central problem of globalisation. As long ago as 1848 Karl Marx and Fredrick Engels were very clear in the *Communist Manifesto* that capitalism was bringing the world together in ways which could not be contained by nation states:

The need of a constantly expanding market for its products chases the bourgeoisie over the whole surface of the globe. It must nestle everywhere, settle everywhere, establish connections everywhere.

The bourgeoisie has through its exploitation of the world market given a cosmopolitan character to production and consumption in every country. To the great chagrin of reactionists, it has drawn from under the feet of industry the national ground on which it stood. All old-established national industries have been destroyed or are daily being destroyed. They are dislodged by

new industries, whose introduction becomes a life and death question for all civilized nations, by industries that no longer work up indigenous raw material, but raw material drawn from the remotest zones; industries whose products are consumed, not only at home, but in every quarter of the globe. In place of the old wants, satisfied by the productions of the country, we find new wants, requiring for their satisfaction the products of distant lands and climes. In place of the old local and national seclusion and self-sufficiency, we have intercourse in every direction, universal interdependence of nations. And as in material, so also in intellectual production.

The outlook of Marx and Engels was often wide of the mark, but in relation to what we now call globalisation they could not have been more prescient.

The largest merchant ships today are capable of carrying more than 18,000 twenty-foot containers, while the more modest and more common vessels carry a mere 9,500 twenty-foot containers. These ships and their manifests, together with the contents of the thousands of large steel boxes they ship, are monitored and regulated online. Payments, like investment capital, whip around the world within seconds, making it more economic to produce components and assemble products in widely dispersed locations. Transit costs have become vanishingly small, as have the costs of moving capital, and the related communications between businesses, and between businesses and the final customer.

Incidentally, we are hearing a great deal about the danger of Brexit to Ireland. But this is simply another piece of dissimulation. The border in Ireland cannot be settled by remaining in the EU or by leaving it – the partition of Ireland by the British a century ago remains to be settled, but it is yet another example of the porkies and lies offered up

by remainder members of our Parliament to suggest that leaving will provoke a resurgence of violence. Those committed to the reunification of Ireland by force or otherwise will continue to fight against British rule in the North regardless of any deals struck with London, Dublin, or Brussels. It is a lie to suggest otherwise. Consequently, the idea that the Northern border with the Irish Republic would have to be monitored by chaps in peaked caps clutching clip boards is as absurd as imagining that this is how most goods crossing international frontiers are monitored. International trade would surely grind to a halt if physical checks at ports of entry, inland, or on the coast, were insisted upon.

In 1848 it was clear to Karl and Fedrick that capitalism was slipping the leash of nationality and nation states – although it has taken far longer than either of them would have anticipated. In any event, we really are now on the verge of an epoch in which capitalism is colliding, quite fundamentally, with national political arrangements. As a consequence, we are also facing a mounting crisis of democracy because bourgeois democracy has, since its inception, in the middle of the nineteenth century, and its full realisation in the twentieth, always been national in form.

The attempt to save the situation, either by conceiving of the EU as a nascent nation, or by standing full-square for the national independence advocated by the leavers, will inevitably come to grief on the rocks of globalised manufacturing, globalised trade, globalised investment, which are all increasingly well beyond the purview, control, or supervision of national governments or even a large consortia of nations like the EU.

The real tragedy of the current crisis is that socialists from the far left to the most moderate have opted mostly for partisanship with Europe, buying into the notion that shared-sovereignty is likely to deliver better results than national-sovereignty without regard to the fate of Greece or

Italy, or the thousands who drown in the Mediterranean, or the tens of thousands stranded in camps on the margins of the Continent. The left has bought into the debate, and the parameters set for it, by struggle between the big bourgeoisie, the intelligentsia, and the metro middle class of our great cities on the remain side, and the mass of small or medium enterprises and the large numbers of workers and middle class people who feel disregarded and marginalised, on the leave side.

Nothing signals the bankruptcy of the left more than the inability of socialists to chart an independent course, by developing a relevant analysis of the trajectory of capitalist development, and attempting to work out a plausible response to it. Both those in the Labour Party and those outside it, bereft of any other options have simply thrown in their lot with the big bourgeoisie.

The immediate difficulty we now face is whether or not to reject the result of referendum.

My view is that the consequences overturning the referendum result, for the integrity of our institutions and the authority of Parliamentary democracy, far outweigh the inevitable economic and political dislocation of leaving the EU, with or without a deal. The widespread resentment of those who voted by a clear majority to leave, only to see their decision set aside, by the well-heeled and well-connected “who always know best” about everything, will intensify truly terrible social tensions in the country. If the remainers succeed in defeating the leavers we will be moving into uncharted territory in which bitter divisions and sharp social differences can no longer be resolved at the ballot box. If the remainers succeed in defeating Johnson and Farage I fear that we will all live to rue the day that the political class, the Labour Party, and the left more broadly, opted to disregard the popular will peacefully expressed in the referendum.