

View From Westminster April 2019

Game of Thrones... Avengers Endgame...the 2019 European Elections... I fully accept that the ongoing political saga lacks the sparkle and razzmatazz of its visual counterparts. In fact, it lacks excitement, depth of plot and character development as well, but this is politics and we play the cards we are dealt. In fairness, such has been the ridiculousness of it all in recent times, that I'm not sure the scriptwriters can surpass reality.

Lord Adonis has successfully transitioned from Europhile twitter sensation to line-walking sell-out in the space of one candidate selection. Tommy Robinson, of EDL and courtroom fame, had to stop selling burgers at an event to avoid breaking electoral laws. ChangeUK (the artists formerly known as TIG) are fielding social media's more annoying commentators under a party logo that looks like half of it has been redacted. The Conservatives have disappeared somewhere up the cul-de-sac of irrelevance and are praying something magical happens that means the whole thing can be called off.

All something of a circus...where the ringmaster on all things European Union is, once again, Nigel Farage. The multiple electoral loser and Donald Trump groupie is back with his rhetorical flourishes and talk of political revolutions. It's working. So far, 70,000 people have stumped up £25 to join the crusade and his fledgling Brexit Party is topping opinion polls. Impressive stuff. Dig deeper however and you discover that Farage 2019 is doing about as well as Farage 2014. Labour look set to post a similar result. The remain parties continue to successfully fight amongst themselves, as UKIP continue to deploy the Trump playbook (badly) by fighting with the mainstream media. The Tories are falling faster than a paratrooper without a chute.

In other words, and to borrow from Mrs May, nothing much has changed...yet one would think, from the coverage so far, that politics is falling about at the seams. And that, dear reader, is because of the Conservative Party. The self-styled natural party of government is objectively making a bit of a pig's ear of matters. The electoral strategy appears to be to get Boris Johnson and Brandon Lewis to beg Conservatives to vote Conservative. As a play, its one up from Jeremy Corbyn announcing his local bus services policy standing on a tram, but it's come to something when the best they have is a preach to the choir.

Yet beneath it all, some politics is still happening. DfT has announced a fund to help service stations make themselves more accessible for disabled people. DEFRA is leading the way on international efforts to tackle illegal wildlife trading, whilst addressing important bilateral

agreements with the EU in terms of the movement of farming produce. BEIS is doing some excellent work preparing businesses for Brexit. HMT is championing the increase in personal allowances that have kicked in now the tax year has ticked over (and keeping very quiet about the increase in pension contributions...). DCLG is currently inundated with applications for the Future High Street Fund as the world, his wife and their children have submitted bids. All worthwhile, all important, none getting airtime. Brexit continues to suck the oxygen out of Westminster. One glorious day, all of this will be over.