

View from Westminster

The John Lewis advert has been watched, the advent calendar has been raided for chocolates, the credit card has been hammered on Black Friday and Whamageddon is about to commence. 'Tis the season to be jolly and the Government has got in on the act!

Its Christmas message to the nation is that somehow, Covid will give us a break for the season to be jolly. The logic of their position seems to be that Christmas is different from other religious festivals, and that no number of requests for the 'next slide please' is going to stop us embracing the true spirit of the occasion that is unwrapping a Toblerone from the aunty you never see. To facilitate such delights, we must abandon all regulations for a five-day, fun-filled frenzy of turkey, booze and merriment before enjoying the inevitable January lockdown hangover.

The authoritarian 'ying' to the libertarian 'yang' is enhanced measures in the runup to Christmas for anywhere that isn't an island or Cornwall. Naturally, it's a position supported by absolutely nobody. The Covid sceptics see it as 'lockdown is dead, long live the lockdown'. The Covid hawks see it as a dangerous compromise to justify a dangerous festive binge that will ultimately lead to an increase in cases and failing businesses, as strict lockdowns are reintroduced in January.

Somewhere in the middle, far away from social media posts on the subject, nuance has died. We are therefore dancing to the same record we have since September, and Covid is becoming to Boris what Brexit was to Mrs May. In seeking compromise and walking down the middle of the road, the Prime Minister is finding you get splattered by cars coming from all directions... All eyes on the hitherto supportive Starmer. If the rebels do now number 100 strong, then Labour are unwriting Boris' Covid cheques...

Still, with vaccinations on the horizon and Brexit looming large, the promised sunlit uplands have nearly been reached. As the expectant nation watches, it does so armed with the latest comprehensive spending review documents that paint a bleak picture of the country's economy. In fairness to Rishi, he knows the global economy is not about to pull the rug from under his feet and therefore can indulge in some Wonga politics.

As for the poor Shadow Chancellor, she faced the unenviable task of responding to a fiscal statement containing borrowing figures at the wildest end of socialism's dreams. Local government meanwhile has finally seen some details on the Shared Prosperity Fund! As Rishi takes the plaudits and sprinkles evermore cash around, the voices of doom have started to sound... Wait for the budget they cry, for this isn't all going on the backs of the young. There's tax rises afoot...

In what has been an action-packed month, it is easy to forget that three of the most important political protagonists effectively left the stage. President Trump was told he was fired by the American people and is leaving office with all the grace and decorum that one might expect. Jeremy Corbyn has gone from hopeful prime minister to relic in the wilderness within a year. Dominic Cummings has left to spend more time with his eyesight check-ups. Love them or hate them, and plenty do both, one looks at their replacements (Joe Biden, Keir Starmer, Dan Rosenfield) and wonders whether what is bad for the satirist is good for the nation; time will tell...