

View From Westminster June 2020

There are, in politics, big philosophical questions one hopes a government is guided by in the policy making process. There is comfort in presupposing that principles underpin decision making, and one hopes to see ministers articulating their beliefs when confronted by the microphones and cameras of the fourth estate. So, I for one felt enormously reassured to see the big issues being effectively covered by the Prime Minister as he demonstrated...his ability to perform a push up.

The United Kingdom finds itself gripped by low-level political violence, the prospect of soaring unemployment figures and an impending recession of immeasurable magnitude. For those of us who are millennials, this is what the 1970s must have felt like! The Government's latest pandemic plan is to quarantine Leicester...in a move that will surely win popularity amongst anyone who has visited the jewel of the Midlands... The MHCLG Secretary has found himself engulfed in a good old-fashioned donor scandal involving the direct texting of a porn peddler. Gavin Williamson has been politely informed to go away and shut up. The Home Secretary finds herself overseeing the restoration of street rioting, whilst the Foreign Secretary finds his emails and text messages the subject of a court battle. Only Rishi Sunak continues to shine, although those close to the Chancellor are astutely aware that the furlough scheme is a rather sandy foundation for his popularity to be built on. But Boris can knock out a push up on command, so all is well folks. All. Is. Well.

Despite the above, which barely mentions government policy surrounding Covid-19, the Conservatives still enjoy an opinion poll lead, albeit significantly reduced. In part, this is because there was trouble at mill for the Labour Party as well, where an unambiguous demonstration of the new normal took place thanks to Rebecca Long Bailey. The normal part was seeing her foolishly retweet some commentariat column filler harping on about whatever misdemeanour Israel is supposed to have committed this week. Somewhat more novel was that Sir Keir Starmer decided to sack her for doing so. The exiled Corbynites became incredibly exercised as the last comrade standing was thrown under the woke bus, presumably not seeing the irony that the culture war they themselves have pushed harder than most is partly to blame for the need to bin anybody who dares think differently about any given subject. The Tories meanwhile were equally disgruntled, partly because the only real achievement of RLB as Shadow Education Secretary was ensuring kids never went to school...but mainly as the decisiveness of her dismissal contrasts strikingly to the behaviour of Boris regarding both Dominic Cummings and Robert Jenrick.

The Liberal Democrats (remember them) are having a leadership contest to decide who gets to drone on about the importance of the UK rejoining the European Union. Either veteran of the coalition Ed Davey or bright young thing Layla Moran will take the crown in a contest that I'm sure will enthral the nation and no doubt contain some dubious bar charts along the way. Freddy Vachha, who I confess I originally thought was a failed airline entrepreneur, has ascended to the throne over at UKIP. His CV lists Nazi Germany and speaking American amongst his interests, perhaps demonstrating that it's a long march back to the Farage days for the once election winning party. As to what happens to the Brexit Party...time will tell...but one cannot help but feel a culture war is a pathway back for Mr Farage should the lure of politics prove irresistible now his LBC career has come to a close. The best reason of all perhaps for the woke and virtue signallers on all sides to log off Twitter I've yet heard...