

1st December 2018

Dear Mr Rees-Mogg,

What the hell is going on, Sir? One minute you're up there on the Westminster trench-board about to lead – or, more likely, send – your Dad's Army over the top; the next it appears that Godfrey's knees are playing up (again) and Corporal Jones has accidentally bayoneted Mrs Fox (again) so you go all quiet and throw yourself back into judging champion marshmallow competitions in Little Bordering-on-the-Slaughter. Even Steve Baker has stopped jumping up and down next to you – or was that just so he could get in camera? Meanwhile, far from being hauled from the Thames somewhere off Woolwich, Mrs May's smooth, unruffled progress towards comedic immortality continues in the corvine manner to which we're accustomed. You and Baker should have let me know you were having trouble getting your volunteers to sign on the dotted line. (One can hardly call them conscripts since hardly anyone even turned up, the snowflakes. "Snowflakes" is the term you have used to describe Remainers, isn't it, Mr Rees-Mogg?) As a teacher I could have put you in touch with some very crafty and resourceful little letter-forgers had I known, and Steve lives just up the hill from me, though we're not talking at the moment either. Well I am; *he* isn't. But I forget: you are a man of principle. Quite which principle one anticipates daily, but each is very clear at any one time for those willing to strike fast.

So what are you going to do now, then?

[Sorry: last night down The Happy Onion Darren wagered me a ton that I am incapable of writing a one-line paragraph where you are concerned. I drove home the advantage by wagering *him* a large one that he wouldn't be able to read it if I did – so I'm quids-in this morning and I don't care who knows it. Almost worth suing, you might say.]

But seriously now: what on Earth *are* you going to do? It's not looking good, is it? I mean just look at the launch of your European Research Group Brexit paper. Don't you have any women in the ERG? Couldn't you have slipped Kwasi Kwarteng a few shares in your Irish or Cayman Islands subsidiaries so he might decorate your bench as handsomely as he does those of the House of Commons? Perhaps David Davis could have browned up and donned a burka or something? Call me politically incorrect but Enoch Powell could have made a better job of the diversity bit. I mean, if you'd had just someone – *anyone* – under the age of 130 it might at least have looked like you were making an effort. Yes, I *know* you went to Eton and have a nanny, but believe it or not there really are times in life when one must try hard and not expect everything on a plate as of right! Worst of all, I'm trying to introduce my kids to politics but on the evening of your launch I had to send them to bed early just in case one of you croaked live on air. It's as if you didn't want young people to have any say at all in the future of our country, and I'm sure that's not your intention at all. Is it?

Now to calm things down as we so thrillingly anticipate whether March 2019 will be a moment of truth for our nation or, like June 2016, another moment of coffin-nailing lies, I did promise in my last communication to take up a couple of points you made in yours to my friend in your constituency, so here goes.

You also wrote this to her about the possibility of having a referendum on the terms of the Government's Brexit deal:

There is also the problem of timing. Even if the Government and the opposition were to support the calls for a referendum, it would still take at least eleven weeks for legislation for a referendum to be passed, as the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act (PPERA) states that this legislation time must include assessment by the Electoral Commission. Following that, the UK's referendum legislation specifies a minimum 10 week campaign period for any referendum. Given the two-week Christmas recess, this amount of time already takes us beyond the 29th March 2019, the date on which we leave the EU and all 28 European Parliaments would have to extend or rescind Article 50 before this date to stop Brexit from happening. ...

All I'll say here, Mr Rees-Mogg, is that at very same time that you wrote the above you were, as we've seen, conspiring to force a leadership election upon your own political party. With Christmas intervening, that process would be likely to take about three months. Your move – had it come off – was designed to result in an entire change in policy that would in no way have been complete let alone accepted by both sides in the EU negotiations before March 2019. I rest my case.

Then, you went on:

In any case, another referendum campaign would only exacerbate the divisions that already exist within the country. Fundamentally we have already had a 'People's vote' on our future with [sic] the EU. The people voted to Leave.

That old one again, is it? Your characteristically gentler version of the tired yet expletive-ridden slogan spat every day from always-departing van windows in lieu of a cogent and sensible position on what must now be the greatest crisis facing our country since Harald Hardrada! You are no better than those foul-mouthed idiots. In fact you are far worse, because neither you nor I would dream of denying that, unlike them, you know what you are talking about. Mr Rees-Mogg, quite apart from its fragile constitutional validity, the argument that we had an informed, honest referendum in 2016 – let alone that we should “respect” it or take it as an “instruction”, as the Prime Minister wrongly said in Parliament the other day – has now been so far discredited that it is an even greater discredit to you that you dare offer it to a constituent or anyone else. That you fail to elaborate your reasoning in your letter to my friend simply reinforces my conviction that your claim is weak and your method of dealing with your constituents both disrespectful and lazy.

Once again, I ask you to answer my two questions which, a calendar month from today, I will have asked you – as a politician might put it – three long years ago:

- 1. Do you consider that Edmund Burke was wrong in his address to the electors of Bristol in 1774?*
- 2. If so, with what principle would you replace that which he set out in it?*

Yours unsinkably,
Peter