

Queen's Speech – to the NEW Parliament! – Published in the House Magazine 04.05.17 titled '**Network Solution**' by Lord Howell.

By David Howell. 19.04.17

A massive reality check is the message which I would like to see both go into the Party Manifestoes and be fully reflected as well in the first Queen's speech to a new Parliament in mid-June . In outlining all the forthcoming Brexit legislation, including not just extensive repeal but several full-scale new Acts , the burning need is to set the process in the right context , clarify the principles which should inform it and prevent every issue descending into a polarised squabble between the past and the future.

The preceding Election will have been dominated by the Brexit issue – that's inevitable- and the Europhile Remainers will have had quite a strong re-run, despite the Brexit process being well underway and looking on the whole less harshly binary and more manageable –on both sides of the Channel. The overriding national need will be to make good the Prime Minister's fervent wish to see Westminster, as well as the country-at-large, more united and positive in its approach to a new and very different future.

So here's what a Queen's Speech on those lines and with those aims, , opening a new Parliament and with a new Conservative Government (likely to be bolstered by a substantially bigger majority), could include:

First, some frank advice about the new realities to both wings ,to still smouldering Europhiles and to triumphalist Brexiteer zealots alike.

To the Europhiles the message they have now to accept is that Brexit is in fact part of something much bigger – a revolutionary process which has invalidated the whole EU model and its underlying philosophy of centralisation, standardisation, economies of scale and long production runs, and an unrelenting drive towards integration. The digital age is taking things completely the other way. Brexit may be accelerating the trend but there is no going back and there could be powerful ways of going forward. This is not populism, it is straightforward technology enabling the unstoppable impulse for humankind to communicate and relate.

Far from 'departing' or 'going it alone' Britain could now be 'arriving' and entering into a transformed network world of trade and international relations . It is this overdue realisation and mindset that should be the main determinant in deciding how much of the EU legal legacy is redundant and belongs to a past age and how much we need for an entirely different future.

[The essential new feature of international trade to be grasped, which some find so difficult, is that nowadays we do not need EU laws, rules and standards governing our whole economy to trade into the EU market, any more than we need all-embracing American rules to trade with America, or all-embracing Asian rules to trade with the booming ASEAN markets. The glory of the micro-chip age is that it allows ceaseless tailoring and product individualisation to suit different markets, with near costless and immediate switching to meet varying demand almost instantly. This is the digitalised competitive production and marketing environment , and we need an updated regulatory framework, allowing flexibility on a scale never before possible, to adapt to it.]

Turning to the other audience, the Brexiteers, the post-Election Speech message should warn that talk of taking back sovereign control is largely delusory. Most of the forces which are going to

directly effect our daily lives, our security and prosperity , are OUT of our sovereign control in an interdependent network world and becoming more so by the day .

Unrelenting technological advance and total global connectivity on an unimaginable scale are now determining our physical safety, our living standards, the prices we pay in the shops, our interest rates on what we borrow, our health and that of our surroundings, what we invest in, what we save (not much), what we choose to consume, how we heat and light our homes and power our industry, the balance, and re-balancing, of our economy and our society, where jobs are going to come from ,how we keep our kingdom United and to a much larger extent than yet admitted, who comes into it.

The pace of technological advance and the momentum of innovation and new development now lies largely outside the old 'West'. A post-Western world, with its new and parallel institutions and networks has already emerged. And more than that , with hierarchies increasingly replaced by networks, and bureaucracy by new platforms and blockchain systems, the old multilateral institutions of the 20th century, to which past Queen's speeches always used to give ritual praise and support, now demand deep reform or face redundancy.

It is the new networks and groupings which are opening up Central Asia, like China's gargantuan 'One Belt, One Road' plan, into which we have to get tied in order to survive and prosper, and for which we must equip ourselves with the best regulatory framework. China is becoming a major exporter of capital and innovation. That's why the ready-made although much neglected network of like-minded Commonwealth nations, reaching across Asia and Africa, ought to be such a boon to us.

All this should put our own local preoccupations, and our trickle of new domestic laws, well in their place. But in as far as we need to change our own laws and regulations over and above the EU inheritance , to meet transformed world conditions, two obvious priorities stand out – genuinely spreading wealth and asset ownership, and the proceeds of growth ,to all sections of society and all parts of the Kingdom, and giving top priority to upgrading the skills and training necessary to adapt to the disruption ahead.

Little or none of this will probably find a place in the Queen's speech to the new Parliament. But you never know . How pleasing it would be to see the ancient institution of monarchy combine with the full force of the communications revolution to drag the rest of us into the real new outside world.
