



TRUST ME.... Boris Johnson has a poor record when it comes to keeping promises and now keeping to agreements he made himself

Baffling that unionism trusts someone known for breaking promises

THERE was never any doubt that a law giving Boris Johnson's government the power to override parts of the Brexit withdrawal agreement would pass its first hurdle in the Commons.

The prime minister has a huge majority, and could pass a law making it illegal not to wear blue on a Friday, and get it through parliament with little in the way of opposition.

This administration also benefits from the lack of knowledge that many of those sitting on the green benches have when it comes to this island, our complex politics and fragile peace.

While some have taken the time to research the subject, many more vote blindly without ever trying to understand why special measures for Northern Ireland are essential to preserve the open border we now enjoy.

Five former prime ministers have now criticised

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the Internal Market Bill that will give Britain the power to breach the terms of the Withdrawal Agreement Boris Johnson made with the EU. Specifically the Northern Ireland protocol, the compromise designed to allow the UK to leave the EU without jeopardising the Good Friday Agreement.

Brexit was never going to be good for the people of the north, economically, politically and in terms of community relations and building and preserving of our peace. Theresa May's backstop was the least worst option on the table. She was never going to be able to pass that through parliament, handcuffed as she was to the DUP in a confidence and supply deal. Boris Johnson's Northern Ireland protocol was an imperfect third place but at least there was a framework for business to work towards. The Internal Market Bill throws all that in the air and now once again, people are faced with chaos and uncertainty.

During a five-hour debate on Monday evening, Mr Johnson claimed the EU's current approach could lead to excessive checks and even tariffs on goods moving from GB to Northern Ireland.

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These are checks that he agreed to as part of his 'oven ready' deal. They are checks that will need to take place, that all experts repeated would need to take place, and yet when questioned Boris Johnson repeatedly said wouldn't happen. At which point you have to think, either he hadn't read his own deal or had never intended to honour something on which he shook hands.

While the blatant manner in which this administration intends to breach an international treaty 'in a limited and specific way' should probably not come as that big of a surprise, the ongoing faith in his actions by sections of unionism remain baffling. Boris Johnson is known for breaking promises. Brexit remains primarily an English phenomenon but the pursuit of it undermines the union the Conservative government claims to be protecting. It is never going to be any good for the economy in Northern Ireland. The DUP's ongoing support for it remains an act of self harm that is difficult to comprehend.

Despite talk of a rebellion only two Tory MPs voted against the bill on Monday night – Sir Roger Gale and Andrew Percy – while a further 30 abstained.

Trade talks continue between Britain and the EU but they now take place in an atmosphere of bad faith and it seems difficult to see how Britain can be trusted to make a deal they intend to honour.

Former attorney general Geoffrey Cox has been scathing of the bill, saying: "No British minister should solemnly undertake to observe treaty obligations with his fingers crossed behind his back."

The Conservative MP added that the Withdrawal Agreement and "its attendant Northern Ireland protocol" represented treaty obligations to which the government "gave its solemn and binding word".

The Tories fought the law and in this case the law lost.

ON THIS DAY

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Envoy to 'Ulster'

SIR Ernest Clarke, the new Assistant Under-Secretary for Ulster, arrived in Dublin yesterday and will proceed to Belfast to take up his duties.

Inquiries at Dublin Castle elicited a categorical denial that the appointment is a first step towards Irish partition; it is purely a matter of administrative expediency. There is no intention on the part of the Government to establish a separate administrative responsibility in Ulster, or a new office with executive autonomy. Sir Ernest will work through the Under-Secretary [Sir John Anderson] in Dublin. One of his first activities will be to secure law and order as a necessary prelude to good government in Ulster.

At Dublin Castle yesterday, Sir Ernest Clarke said that he had no political or religious prejudices and by strict impartiality he hoped to enlist the aid of all creeds and classes in restoring order. To say that his appointment is a preliminary step towards the partition of Ireland was, he added, quite untrue.

Loyalist Force a 'Precursor of Civil War'

THE executive of the National Liberal Federation passed a series of resolutions on Ireland. They attributed the deplorable state of anarchy in that country to the denial of self-government, declared that further measures of coercion would aggravate the situation and expressed dismay at the suggested raising of a voluntary armed force in Ulster as giving official status to Sir Edward Carson's illegal Volunteer Army [UVF] and as being the sure precursor of civil war in Ireland. They reaffirmed the Federation's belief in Dominion Home Rule as a solution to the Irish problem.

Despite his protestations of impartiality between the two communities in the North, Ernest Clarke's remit was to establish a separate administrative and policing authority for the six counties on lines acceptable to Craig and the Unionists. Clarke did little to restore the 8,000 expelled Catholics to their jobs. He is remembered as the 'midwife to the Ulster state'.

Short Strand Man Wins Appeal

AT THE Belfast Recorder's Court yesterday an appeal was heard by Bernard Quinn, Anderson Street, against a sentence one month's imprisonment for disorderly behaviour.

Constable Brennan stated that Quinn was in the centre of a crowd at Short Strand. Quinn was shouting, "Up the rebels" and called upon witnesses to fight. He also said if he had a rifle and bayonet he would do what was being done to the police in Tipperary. He was under the influence of drink. Quinn had been in the army and had some young children. If he went to jail they would suffer.

The Judge ordered that the sentence be reduced to a fine of ten shillings.

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