

View from Westminster

There's nothing quite like a leadership election to get the pulse pumping. We geeks love this stuff and we particularly enjoy it when a contest rolls around that will have a profound impact not just on the direction a political party might take, but also the way the country will be governed. In the hierarchy of leadership contests, this one is right up there at the pinnacle.

But enough about Sir Edward Davey vs. Jo Swinson. The focus for those that dwell in SW1 has been on the bruising battle engulfing the party that scored a whopping 9% in the recent European elections and which has shed just north of 1,200 councillors. The UK's fourth political party are currently choosing the next Prime Minister and their entire grassroots membership is experiencing a Nigel Farage shaped existential crisis. Salvation apparently comes in the shape of an Etonian Trump, but before we get to everyone's favourite bicycle inventor, it is worth firstly enjoying the best the rest had to offer. Esther McVey and the artist the taxman formerly knew as Lorraine engaged in the most bizarre row, Michael Gove confessed to some cocaine shame during his misspent youth and Rory Stewart walked into the public consciousness and proved there's something quite punk about removing a tie during a debate. One suspects all three will ride again the other side of this contest.

We end up with Boris Johnson vs. Jeremy Hunt, or to be more accurate, Boris Johnson vs. Himself. This being Boris, he is demonstrating predictable proficiency at snatching defeat from the jaws of victory. His Brexit policy is a shambles and bears no relationship to what is permissible under WTO rules. His personal life has also reared its head again, although seemingly on this occasion only to duck a plate being hurled towards it. When not arguing with his girlfriend, it turns out he likes making model buses out of cardboard boxes. Did somebody say, "dead cat strategy"?

God we've fallen a long way from Winston Churchill and Clement Attlee.

Boris can count himself extremely lucky that his opponent is a former remain voter who possesses competence in performance, but not necessarily the X-Factor required to grab the attention of the grassroots. And to the 160,000 grassroots members who will decide this thing, Boris is a godlike genius. One suspects Boris could shoot somebody on Parliament Square and they'd be fine with it providing (a) it was a Remainer and (b) he got the UK out of the EU by Halloween. We'll know the victor in the contest by 23 July. As it stands, the debate is more about the margin of victory.

Away from the gaze of the leadership contest, some grown-up politics is occurring. James Brokenshire found £142m in his MCHLG budget to expand the infrastructure needed to get lots of homes built in Truro and Woking. Quite a financial commitment for two towns to receive which, given in quieter times, would probably have received more scrutiny. DfT has been doing some commendable work improving the safety of level crossings, whilst DEFRA has announced a major review of the UK food system – a long overdue piece of work that has the potential to change the nature of the farming industry. The Treasury meanwhile demonstrated that the monarchy are still making money for the nation. God Save The Queen and all that – particularly if she is asked to prorogue parliament to get Brexit done. Still, what's a constitutional crisis between friends...