

October 2018

Dear Constituent

Thank you for contacting me about a second referendum.

I understand your strength of feeling on this matter but I believe it would be wrong to have another referendum. When a decision of constitutional significance is made, it is important that democratic processes are followed. It would be wrong for politicians to give the impression that they were going to continue to ask the public to vote until they made the right decision. This would weaken our democracy in a way that could be disastrous.

To many of my fellow remain voters I ask the question, if the result two years ago had been to remain, would they now be opposing those leave voters who would undoubtedly be asking for a re-run? During the referendum Paddy Ashdown said, "Anyone who says we need a second referendum does not believe in democracy. We cannot run a democratic system unless we respect the democratic will of the people." The leader of the Liberal Democrats, Vince Cable, said at his Party's conference in 2016 that it is "disrespectful" to voters and "politically counter-productive" to call for a second vote. I agreed with them then and I still hold to that view even if what they are now voicing in public has changed.

For another referendum to happen we would need the necessary legislation. I very much doubt there is a majority in the House of Commons for a second referendum Bill to pass. In any event it would be subject to endless amendments as different MPs from all sides of the House seek to impose what they want to ask the electorate, the spending limits for each side, when it should take place, what should happen with the result and many more areas of conflict both in the House and in the country.

I have conflicting advice from people wanting a second referendum on what the question should be. Some say it should be a vote on the deal reached with the EU, but others say it would only be held if there is no deal. Others want a rerun of the first vote and others propose a multiple choice between no deal, remain or whatever plan the Government agrees with the Commission.

The question that needs to be answered by all who want a second vote is would this resolve the issue? On this, I can do no better than to quote William Hague in a recent article:

"...the honest answer has to be "no". If the referendum was about approving a deal or not, and it was rejected, people would still have voted to leave the EU but not with that particular agreement. How then, would the country decide what would happen next? If it was a re-heated remain or leave vote, and the electorate voted once again to leave, the situation would be the same as now but a year of indecision would have passed pointlessly. So great would be the outcry if a second vote led to the abandonment of Brexit that the campaign for a third one would start immediately.

"This risk of making a divided country even more embittered, and political campaigning even more hateful..."

Finally, you have to ask what would happen to the UK in the event of a second referendum. I believe that at every level we would become more estranged from each other. However it was spun many, probably most

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people would view it as simply re-fighting the last referendum. This would produce the hardest fought, most negative and most emotional political battle in the lifetimes of today's voters. Families and communities would become more divided. And since it is more than just possible that Scotland, Northern Ireland and London would again vote differently from Wales and the rest of England, the rupture of our fragile union would become more likely.

Many of these points were ignored by those marching at the weekend but I hope they help you understand why I cannot support another referendum.

I have recently published an update on the progress on our exit from the EU on my website:
<http://richardbenyon.com/its-always-darkest-just-before-the-dawn/>

Thank you for taking the time to contact me.

Yours sincerely



Richard Benyon