Theresa May’s Last Chance?

Aesops Fables continue to echo their wisdom to us today – especially when we look at the way the UK has tried to disentangle itself from the EU. Like the lion with a thorn in its paw it has wholly disregarded the help it could get from its most unlikely and humble of helpers. Indeed it has preferred to walk on its wound rather than even acknowledge an annoying little mouse that can remove its thorn.

The English political class in general and the English ruling class in particular take it as read that nothing politically useful could come from a source outside London. They are probably glad that Stormont has been unable to contribute, suspended throughout the Brexit talks.

The government  invited submissions. But they dismissed them all – giving no explanations.  Indeed for the last 20 months the Cabinet Office has deliberately ignored any solution other than what we have come to know as ‘Chequers’.

Theresa May would have us believe that ‘Chequers’ enshrines her red lines – one of which is to keep NI in the UK. Yet it is not in the power of the PM to make it so. The Good Friday Agreement puts that power in the votes of the people of NI in a border poll. So, if there can be no guarantee that NI will remain part of the UK anyway, how can it be a red line? The DUP needs to explain its ‘blood red’ line – it is their behaviour that is most likely to result in the calling of a border poll.

This is only one of many instances where GB politicians have tripped up over their knowledge of the Good Friday Agreement and other Northern Irish matters. Yet this is not new. It characterises the general disinterest in NI, Wales and Scotland shown all the time by Westminster. It is symptomatic of the conceit that London knows best, and is probably the reason for appointing Karen Bradley – the most shockingly ill-informed Secretary of State that NI has ever had – to engineer the recall of Stormont.

However, as it has been Theresa May’s plan all along to make the EU a last minute offer it must refuse, there is now little or no time left to come up with a fix. The best Westminster minds have been exhausted and led us to believe there is no solution to ‘the border’ and so ‘Chequers’ is being promoted as the only way forward.

Except there is a solution. And so it is time for the lion to pay heed to the mouse.

In essence, here is the headline many will want to see across the media for the next 10 days:

BREXIT BREAKTHROUGH – MAY TO OFFER DUP DEAL THEY CANNOT REFUSE

*NI set for economic transformation - to become ‘the Hong Kong of Europe’*

*NI to join EU and Commonwealth separately and provide home for crown jewels of GB business*

*UK to incentivise transfer to NI of key GB companies needing to stay in EU, making the NI economy self-sufficient*

*UK now free to strike worldwide deals and make a success of Brexit*

*New NI to be ‘intradependent’ but financially and constitutionally guaranteed by London, Dublin and Brussels in line with Consumer Choice Democracy*

*May recognises NI border red line decision lies in hands of NI voters, not with UK PM*

*Final word to be given to the people of NI in a referendum, free from blocking by the DUP or Sinn Fein*

For background please go to [www.intradependenceni.com](http://www.intradependenceni.com) and pay particular attention to the letter sent jointly to the PM and Taioseach in April. This sketches out the deal that will not only secure the return of Stormont and the resolution of the Irish border issue but also the settlement of the Irish Question itself.

Up to now Theresa May’s government has been dependent on the DUP to stay in power. Cheqeurs never had to be a viable solution in itself – only a marker on the road beyond which she can dispense with DUP votes. This announcement will let her/oblige her to appeal directly to the people of NI and get the UK off the hook before next March, thus enabling sanity to prevail in all quarters. The DUP will have to back it or risk oblivion at the next election for turning down an unrepeatable offer to transform the lives of everyone in Ireland, north and south, while helping the UK out in its hour of need.

Whichever way you want to play it, publishing this will force Theresa May’s hand and pull everyone’s skins out of the fire.