

A reply to the Minister on the World at One

The Minister defending the government's line said on the World at One that Conservative MPs who planned to vote against the Agreement did not understand it and had not thought it through.

Let me reassure him that I and my colleagues have read and thought about it in great detail, and have thought through the ramifications of signing this dreadful deal, and of not signing. It is not a good idea to pretend that we have idly decided to vote against a government we usually support. That will not make us want to vote for it. It is the absence of detailed government explanations and answers to our deep reservations that lead us to vote against. I do not make these remarks personal to the Minister, as I assume he was asked to take this line.

The Minister also wanted to know if they got some kind of tweak to the Irish backstop if then we would vote for the Agreement. It appears the Minister does not understand the reasons I and some others have given repeatedly and in public for rejecting this deal. Of course we would not suddenly support if there was a tweak to the backstop. Let me repeat for the Minister's benefit I oppose

1. Signing away more than £39bn of our money for nothing in return
2. Signing a Withdrawal Agreement without having a legally binding text of a Future Partnership Agreement, despite the Manifesto promise that the two would be progressed together
3. Putting our country into a very weak bargaining position for 21 months or much longer, to try to get a future trade deal, having given away most of what the EU wants in advance!
- 4 Making us accept all existing and new rules from the EU for an indeterminate period, as they could then legislate without us present and do us harm if they wish

Any tweak to the Political declaration is irrelevant. What is needed is a dropping or complete re write of the legally binding Withdrawal Agreement.

The Minister also said I and my friends had to set out the detail of how our trade would work if we vote no. I suggest he reads the WTO rules and especially the 2017 WTO Agreement on non tariff barriers, and my submission to the Department of International Trade on the a customs schedule we should set with lower tariffs than the current EU one. In particular they should make it clear the UK will not impose any tariffs on components coming into UK factories. He might also like to tell me when under the government's approach he thinks they might be able to tell us how we will trade with the EU after the end of the so called Transition period, as of course the Political declaration is both vague and contradictory on these matters.