

Leaked Letter from Dame Lucy at the unit for co-ordinating Brexit

Readers will remember past leaks from a senior official, Dame Lucy. Another has come to my attention.....

Dear Frank (I'm not sure who he is)

The Prime Minister is rightly pressing on with the Withdrawal Agreement. As you know, the Cabinet Office has been strongly behind this initiative, as it offers us the best chance to protect all that is best about our current membership whilst fulfilling the letter of the remit to leave the EU on 29 March 2019. We have carried out a substantial scoping exercise, and presented Ministers with the enormity of the task, reflecting all the inherent agreements and arrangements that have arisen from 45 years of membership of the EEC/EU. We have also responded to those Ministers who have said they are looking for a compromise between Remain and Leave, and wish to reflect the Opposition position that there must be no damage to jobs and trade. Some Ministers as at the Treasury and Business recognise that it will take a lot of time to try to get these features of our current membership into any future partnership agreement, though they would like to do so.

The truth is there has been no Agreement on offer which duplicates our membership of the Customs Union and single market which also meets the requirements to exit freedom of movement and to leave the EU. Because of this we worked with the EU on the sequencing proposal. Now it is established that the UK has to sign up to the money and a number of important obligations up front to reassure the EU, we can proceed to highlight the possible addition of better trading terms and some agreement on customs once the Withdrawal Agreement is signed. As you can see from the WA we have allowed plenty of time, with 21 months to be followed by up to a further 2 years. This means of course there could be one or more General elections before the negotiations are finished. The Opposition policy of wanting to stay in the Customs Union and single market would not be pre-empted before at least one General election had occurred, which might be best in the circumstances, assuming we need all the time laid down to try to sort out a future partnership. Meanwhile, though we have technically left, all obligations and legal arrangements remain the same.

There is concern in the Unit that the WA might not get through the Commons. We have briefed Ministers to stress there might be no Brexit without the WA, and to highlight the uncertainties rejecting the WA will create. We need to help them respond to those who argue that just leaving and trading under WTO terms is a true Brexit. The government has successfully stressed that such a Brexit would be "hard" and like falling off a cliff. We may need to send out more of the material from the scoping survey showing just how many things might change, and how they might change for the worse without the continuity provided by the WA. I understand there are a few large multinationals prepared to forecast problems for supply chains and transport which we must give

prominence to. The government is very preoccupied by the Union, so it is good that the EU stresses the significance of the Irish border issues.

This current fluid situation leaves open the danger of just leaving by default. That is why we must draw attention to the risks, and help Ministers stress the advantages of staying in and spending more time trying to get the future partnership right. In practice once we have signed the WA our bargaining position is much reduced, so we also need in private with Ministers to lower expectations of what can be achieved in subsequent negotiations. Treasury and Business seem aware of this, but some other departments are less well informed. We need to ensure the Trade department does not raise hopes of any early breakthrough for a Free Trade Agreement with the USA or some other non EU state, as that would be seen as provocative on the continent. We also need to ready departments for the rush of new EU legislation likely to come from the new Parliament and Commission, which we must implement thoroughly in our usual way.

Yours

Lucy

[Union Jack and the beanstalk on video](#)

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– Bow Group (@bowgroup) [December 25, 2018](#)

[Happy Christmas](#)

(Here's one I prepared earlier)

WILL SANTA COME TONIGHT?

“Will Santa come? Will Santa come tonight?”

“He might. He might.”

If you are good, he might.”

“Can I stay up and see?”

“No. He will not come for you or me

If we do not sleep .

He’s too busy to meet us all.”

“And will he come for us?

If you go to sleep – he does not like fuss.”

Tonight, by the lights of the tree

There is, at last, some grown up time for me.

The cake is iced

The wine is spiced

The carrots diced.

The pudding’s steamed

The brandy butter creamed.

The turkey prepared awaits

And yes, I did clean the plates.

The tree is up, the table laid,

the cards are out , though the bills unpaid!

So shall I soon with gifts a plenty

Mount the stairs to deliver twenty?

Do I dare to tread the stair?

And will it creak?

And will it creak?

When can I take a peek?

I need to know if they slumber
Before I arrive with my lumber.

If they are still awake
what dreams will go?
What heart might break?
Or do they know?
And is their belief just all for show?

So tonight by the magic tree
There is need of more time just for me
I will wait – and struggle to keep open my eyes
And wrestle with the morality of eating Santa's mince pies.

My adult mind is full of Christmas chores
The cooking times, and the cards through neighbours' doors
The parties where you cannot drink and go home by car
As that would be pushing Christmas luck too far
Drinks that might have been – but not that cheap red
Which would give me a headache as soon as I got to bed

I was once a child too excited to sleep
with a torrent of thoughts about what I might be given
Hoping that it was a toy beneath the wrapping – should I peep? –
Not more socks or hankies, preferably something to be driven

So could Santa still come for me?
Drowsily I dream as if I were eight

Hoping that Santa would not be late
Like every little boy
There is of course a much wanted toy

So will Santa come tonight?

He might, He might.

If you sleep well
and if you believe

Only if you believe.

And only if in your family
Love fills the hours you will be spending.
It could be the true Santa on the stair
Or it could be someone from an empty chair.

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So will Santa come?
He will. He will.

Ending rough sleeping

The government has announced its wish to make big inroads into rough sleeping with a view in due course to eliminating it. I am sure all agree that would be a welcome development, as no-one likes to see people out in the cold and wet trying to shelter in a doorway or under an arch as the rest of the world scurries by. We ought to be able to help more of them to a better life.

The latest proposal from the government is an initiative called "Somewhere safe to stay". Anyone seen out at night will be offered a place in a refuge, where there would also be assessment made of their needs and how they might

be helped into a more normal life with a job and a tenancy for a roof over their heads. Where people need medical attention or help with getting off drink or drugs, that too could be sorted out.

This is a development of the rapid assessment hubs currently used for the “No second night out” approach. It is important that there is a place where the homeless can be directed where they can receive immediate assistance and the longer term help they may require. The government runs a system of supported lettings and works with local agencies to try to find accommodation for an individual and the means to pay for it. In the high stress parts of the country overnight accommodation is available and people go out and tell the homeless of what is available.

There is in place a network of hostels and assistance from benefits offices and Housing departments. People out on the streets should be offered these facilities, as good Councils seek to do. People sleeping out cannot be compelled to take up offers made.

[Union Jack and the Beanstalk – a modern fairy story](#)

Union Jack was asking himself once again why he was called Union Jack.

He had just been reading a history book about a time when his country, the United Kingdom, was independent and free and used to display lots of so called Union jacks or flags.

Could his Mum have been wandering down memory lane? He asked her again.

She was quite severe with her reproof. “I have told you many times” she said “that I called you Union Jack after our glorious European Union, and don’t you forget it.

It’s seditious talk, you know, to suggest otherwise. If you bang on about the old union jack flag they might start questioning you for racism, and I haven’t got time for all that”.

In truth, all was not well in the UK part of the great European Union.

Jack and his mother could see the distant European castle that governed them. More importantly they had regular dealings with the EU Inspectors and tax collectors. They were told about all the latest laws by the local police.

Jack thought secretly that they were having to pay more and more tax.

Their income did not seem to go up. Indeed, it was going down. The fish from their local seas mainly went to the Union’s ships, so they were banned from

fishing for them.

They had to accept big taxes on any food coming in from outside the Union. They lived under increasingly complicated and expensive rules which made it slower and more costly to grow and make things for yourself.

If Jack ever shared any of this with his mother she warned him off it. She told him the European Union was very good to them really, and it would be much worse if they were not in it.

For a couple of months, they had to just concentrate on changing all their emails and website to comply with some new directive, instead of earning their living.

Privately, Jack's mother did understand that things were going from bad to worse.

She could not afford to keep going as they were, but was scared of saying so to her son in case he got into trouble for repeating it.

The European Union had been very clever, and made sure anyone in government, in the universities and in big business all thought the Union was great and defended it at every opportunity.

The system was too powerful to pick a fight with. They all thought the same. They all talked down to people like her.

They were good at making predictions of how much worse her life would be if the people did revolt against the European Union. They did have powers to make her life even more difficult.

One day though, the money had run out. She told her son things were a bit tight, and told him to take their cow to market to sell. It was a dangerous measure. It meant they could pay the bills for a bit, but would no longer have any milk.

On the way to the cattle market Jack met a man who asked him where he was going. Jack told his sorry story.

The man was very sympathetic, and said he too thought the European Union was damaging their prosperity.

He got some beans out of his pocket, and said these were special freedom beans. If Jack took those for his cow, he could grow the precious plant of freedom which should transform his position. Jack was much cleverer than people realised for someone who had not had a great education.

He did know a bit about freedom, and had been thinking for sometime how the Union was crushing him and his mother. So, he asked, "how could freedom help me?".

"Well" said the man "if you were free you would not have to pay all those

taxes to the EU, and not have to obey all those costly regulations.”

Jack was smitten, and willingly accepted the beans for his cow. It also cut down the journey and the difficulty of getting a half starved reluctant cow to market.

When he got home, Jack told his mother the great news that he had a way to improve their situation.

When she heard his mother was livid, and afraid. How could her little Jack stand against the might of the EU.

She scolded him and threw the seeds out of the window. Didn't he know the great and good would rig it all against his precious freedom?

Next morning Jack and his mother arose and were shocked beyond belief. A massive beanstalk led away from their garden right up to the gates of the European Castle.

His mother was distraught, realising they could be found. Jack took courage and decided he was going to see how the other half lived.

When Jack crept through the castle gate unseen he was astounded by the wealth they had.

All those tributes from the Union meant they lived well in the governing castle, led by the five Presidents. They always seemed to have a fish course from all those fish they took from UK seas.

Jack soon found the Treasury and there to his delight was the money that the UK had agreed to send.

It was a signed promissory document, so Jack tore it up. He took the pieces away with him and showed his mother when he got home. “We are rich”, he said.

“Now our country can have all the teachers and nurses and doctors it needs, and we can pay less tax so we have more to spend. “

“You are naïve” said his mother. “Don't you understand our local government will just send it back again to the EU because they want to keep us poor”.

“So,” said Jack, “we will have to see about that”. Off he went again to the castle before his mother could stop him.

The next time Jack came back with more torn up paper. He had found the binding document that required the UK to impose high tariffs on the rest of the world and blocked any special trade deals and lower tariffs with their friends in the USA or Australia or New Zealand.

“There” said Jack to his mother, “this is just like the golden goose in the old fairy story.

Now we can buy cheaper goods and trade better for ever, so we will be better

off". Once again, his mother, petrified by now of what the EU and all their powerful friends nearer to home might do, told him to stop.

Once again Jack dashed up the beanstalk. This time he seized the most precious item of all, the voices of the UK people who were singing by a large majority that they were going to be free and they would not obey the 5 Presidents any more.

Just as he was leaving the castle, the 5 Presidents were catching up with him and chasing him.

They didn't shout at him that they could smell the blood of Englishman, because they didn't want to be a caricature of badness. They did want to teach him a painful lesson.

He raced back down the beanstalk, whilst they were still trying to negotiate it.

They were slower than him as they had so many good meals at his expense over the years. Jack, as in the old fable, hacked the beanstalk down, and the 5 Presidents disappeared from view and from the UK for ever.

The chopped down beanstalk deposited them in France, still alive but knocked about a bit.

So, what happened to Union Jack?

All the sages in the UK government, the Central Bank, the universities and big international business predicted poverty, isolation and unhappiness.

They expected Union Jack to have a few bad years and then to beg to go back to the EU on worse terms than before. Instead, Union Jack and his mother flourished.

Spending all their money at home bought lots of improvements to public services, with tax cuts to give everyone's income a boost.

Catching their own fish meant they could have fish every day if they wanted to, or sell it to others if they didn't.

They had lots of friends in other countries who wanted to trade more with them.

Even the EU, after a hissy fit, agreed a free trade contract and accepted in the end the UK did not owe them any more money.

The people's voices had been right, and all those experts wrong. Just as in the original tale, Jack and his mother lived happily ever after.

They had rediscovered freedom, thanks to the voices of all those UK voters.

And what happened to all those so called experts?

Well they did alright as well. They pretended they had not made such a big

fuss and got it all so wrong.

They carried on paying themselves lots of money and giving themselves lots of grand titles and honours as if nothing had ever happened.

The people grew less angry with them, because everyone was better off.

The people did have one last hurrah against the establishment.

They voted out all the ones who had done most to stop them being free. They felt better for doing that.

Freedom is wonderful thing.