

South West Trains apologises for Monday's lack of service

I have received a letter from the train company saying that engineering works overran on the local network, preventing them from running a proper train service. This is unacceptable for people relying on the railway to get them to work on a Monday morning, and argues for more discipline needed on works specification and contract supervision. I will take this up with the railway.

Train horns

I have been notified by Network Rail of their intention to impose a requirement that trains sound their horns at Smith's level crossing to the south of Wokingham so they raise the speed of trains on that section of track.

I have replied that I think this is a very bad idea, as this track runs close to residential areas. They should keep the current speeds until such time as they have provided a quiet technological answer to running at faster speeds in safety.

The Pizza 5

So five Cabinet Ministers who voted for Brexit are staying in the government. They tell us they do not like the draft Withdrawal Agreement, and will try to get the PM to seek amendments to it.

There are three problems with this approach. The first is there is no sign the PM wants to renegotiate. Secondly, based on the PM's determination to advance this draft, the EU has made clear it doesn't want to renegotiate. The third is the Agreement is so bad just changing some words on the Irish backstop does not fix it. The document is seriously rigged against us and has to be scrapped. It leaves us powerless in many ways. Far from leaving the EU it keeps us chained to their rules, payments and Customs Union, with no unilateral way out. The only way the EU would be persuaded to renegotiate is if the UK government said we were leaving without signing the Withdrawal Agreement.

Ministers have to support this unacceptable Agreement all the time they stay

in. They will be watched particularly closely by the media and the PM now we know they are trying to alter the policy. They would be better off resigning together. Then we would see the simple truth. You cannot want to leave the EU on 29 March 2019 and join or stay in this government. No Leave voter could possibly accept this deal as giving us what we voted for. It appears a lot of Remain voters also think it is a bad deal.

The ERG and Mrs May

There is considerable misunderstanding in the media about the ERG. The ERG is the European Research Group. There are paying MP members who contribute jointly to research staff to help them, and non paying members like myself who contribute our own research to the Group and also attend its meetings. As the name implies all the research is geared to understanding the impact of the EU on public policy and in the last two years to detailed consideration of leaving the EU and establishing a new relationship.

There are many MP members. We all agree that the draft Withdrawal Agreement is unacceptable and as far as I know all will vote against it if it reaches the Commons as draft legislation. The ERG as a Group does not have a view on the future of the PM. Jacob Rees-Mogg (Chairman) has announced in public that he has submitted a letter, and Steve Baker is very active in promoting a vote. There are some other ERG members who have stated they have sent letters. There are some members who have sent letters but do not wish to make a public statement. There are members consulting their Constituency Associations about it. There are some members who do not wish to send letters for a variety of reasons. The Group has only had one formal discussion of this matter when Jacob advised us of his intentions, because the future of Mrs May is not within the normal remit of this Research group. Our aim as a Group is to concentrate on the issues around withdrawal and to set out a clear path on the ones where the Group has something important to say, as on the Irish backstop. Members of the ERG between us have over the last two and a half years set out a comprehensive approach to Brexit and urged the government to take it up. We have written and spoken on the legislation needed, on the legal and constitutional issues, on food and fishing, borders and immigration, trade and tariffs, the economy and taxation, transport security.

The campaign to have a confidence vote is now effectively led by Jacob Rees Mogg and Steve Baker. As Steve has stated on tv he thinks 48 letters should now have gone in. Clearly more letters have gone in than the number of public declarations. I do not believe Sir Graham Brady will fail in his duty. When he has received and opened 48 such letters he has to tell the PM immediately, and organise a vote promptly.

A letter to younger citizens

Last night I was asked on Any Questions why I supported Brexit which the young questioner thought would have an adverse effect on her generation in particular. Here is a longer version of my answer.

Dear fellow voter,

I support Brexit above all for the younger generation, because it will give to you something I was denied. It will give you the most precious political inheritance of all. It will give you a powerful UK democracy where the British people can make their own choices. Our Parliament will be able to do whatever the people wish, whatever we choose in the ballot box.

The freer the country the more prosperous it usually is. The USA is a mighty economy based on the architecture of freedom, and on the great principles of its Constitution. Switzerland is richer than EU countries, with a fine tradition of Parliament and referenda. Norway's democracy has been preserved by staying outside the EU, and she too is a very rich country.

It is because I have confidence in the generations to come that I want to pass to them a democracy that works, where they will be in charge as they reach the age of holding powerful jobs. It is the EU's austerity policies and thought throttling centralisation that has spawned such high youth unemployment in many EU countries. I do not want you to have to battle to restore our democratic freedoms, and to resist their further erosion to the EU, as I have had to do.

Yours sincerely

John Redwood