

The missing agenda

The government used conference to announce a few modest policies and spending plans. There was the much promoted ban on employers deducting money from tips, the freeze on fuel duty, £2 m for the Midlands Engine Partnership, a welcome £240 m extra for social care, future guidance on the maximum time young people should spend on social media, a higher rate of stamp duty for foreigners and a statutory duty for employers to consider flexible working for new jobs.

The financial items made no overall difference to a £2trillion economy being slowed by a combined fiscal and monetary squeeze, which went undiscussed. The other big gap in proceedings was the absence of detailed positive plans department by department on how they are going to take advantage of Brexit from next April. We did have a confirmation again that the new migration policy will reduce numbers of people coming to seek low paid work or benefits, and will be fair to the whole world. But where was the detail? Where is the draft legislation so we can have it in law by March?

It was the caution, the refusal of the whole government to engage with the big picture and to show energy in using the new freedoms and the freed money which Brexit will bring which drove delegates from the main conference hall to the fringe. There on the fringe were the bold ideas, the bigger picture, the wish to grasp the opportunities Brexit brings. The irony was not lost on many that the single word slogan was Opportunity for the conference as a whole, but all too many cabinet Ministers chose not to take any of the opportunities on offer for our country as we leave the EU.

So let's have the agenda filled. Let's have a farming policy that promotes home grown food, a fishing policy that puts UK interests first, a borders policy that provides the law to back up the aspirations, spending policies that reflect popular priorities. Above all let's have some tax cuts which can be the best driver of enterprise.

“A once in a generation decision”

The UK government sent every household a leaflet about the EU referendum.

It has as its headline “A once in a generation decision”. There was no mention of two votes or a second chance to decide. Nor do we need a second ballot.

It said about the decision to stay or leave “This is your decision. The government will implement what you decide”. It also made clear the government strongly recommended staying in, and warned that we could not stay part of the single market whilst leaving the EU.

Many of us voted Leave in good faith that if we won we would leave the EU and its single market, as we wished to do. We also voted secure in the knowledge that the government would implement our wishes and not expect us to vote twice.

We now want to get on with the benefits of leaving. We want the government to energetically pursue new trade deals with non EU countries. We want a new migration system that works for us. We want new fishing and farming policies that boost our home industries.

A Remain oriented Parliament has made heavy weather of honouring these government pledges, but has now reluctantly passed the EU Withdrawal Act. Taken together with the Article 50 letter which Parliament sent by an overwhelming majority, the UK has now done all it needs to do legally to leave on 29 March 2019.

A possible Chequers deal does not implement the wishes of the majority to leave, but looks unlikely to find favour either with the EU or with a significant number of Conservative MPs. Yesterday again at conference members of the party made crystal clear their dislike of Chequers and their wish to get on and leave quickly. There were large crowds for pro Brexit speakers at fringe meetings, and a muted response to Ministers pushing the government line. I urge the government to make clear to the EU that we are currently planning just to leave in accordance with the Acts passed and with the decision of the UK electorate. The sooner the EU believes this is what will happen, the sooner they will want to sort out those things about their continued access to the UK market that some worry about. In practice the UK government is not planning new barriers, but does need to get on with setting out its post 29 March tariff schedule which might provoke a wish to trade tariff free by the EU.

[A new vision for Conservatism – the party of higher pay and lower taxes](#)

This will be part of what I say today at the Politeia meeting at Conference:

As we leave the EU it falls to the Conservative party to set out a new vision for our country.

We voted leave to belong to a confident outward looking UK, trading with the whole world, with friends in all continents.

We voted leave to spend our own money on our priorities. The £39bn we save if we just leave in March 2019 can provide a great boost to our public services, and to take home pay from suitable tax cuts

We voted leave to limit the numbers coming to our country, to create more

better paid jobs for those already settled here

We voted leave to take back control of our fishing grounds and our farms, so we can produce more of our own food, cutting food miles and the import bills

We voted leave to make our own laws, so we can have high standards in areas like employment where that matters, and business friendly approaches where we need to boost enterprise and encourage more small businesses

The Conservative government needs to set out an agenda to modernise government. Applying new technology can raise standards of service and cut costs. Buying the best from the UK when we no longer have to apply EU procurement rules can lead to partnerships between government and business at home that are mutually beneficial. Pursuing the agenda of educational reform to raise standards and widen opportunity is crucial.

The Conservative party should be the party of higher pay and lower taxes.

Higher pay comes from working smarter. That requires more training, more support and more career progression for the many.

Our educational revolution has to equip and energise people to set up their own businesses or to promote the best interests of the customers of the company they work for.

Higher pay comes from harnessing modern technology, excellence in customer service, and high performance from well trained people supported by excellent machinery and artificial intelligence back up.

All this is so much easier if we take back control next March and free our budget to get on with stimulating our economy.

[The problems with socialism](#)

Some socialists start with the best of intentions.

They say, let's pass a law to cut the prices of basics so people can be better off.

If they do it too much businesses stop providing the goods and supermarket shelves empty.

They say, let's tax the rich more to give money to the poor.

If they do that too much the rich take their money and their businesses, their jobs and their ideas, to a country which taxes less.

They say let's take over profitable businesses, so we can use the profits to

pay for public services

Once they've taken them over they usually starve them of investment and talent, driving great industries into loss and sacking employees to balance the books

They say let's just print some money to give more to the poor

That way leads to more inflation, often leaving the very people they wanted to help worse off, unable to afford the basics.

This is something we can learn from our history books

Labour's great nationalised industries sacked hundreds of thousands of people, lumbered taxpayers with huge losses and failed to serve the customer well.

Labour's big spending sprees led to too much borrowing, to sterling crises and to high inflation

The final ignominy came when their policy meant the UK had to beg for a loan from the IMF, an organisation designed to help poor countries, as the country struggled from recession to recession

Labour's tax assault on success led to the brain drain, as energetic and able people moved abroad.

This is also something we can learn again today by looking at poor Venezuela.

Mr Corbyn heralded the government of Venezuela as a new way, an alternative to the capitalism he hates in free western societies.

Thanks to laws cutting prices, to nationalisation, printing money, high taxes and state control, the economy is in collapse.

The rich and the not so rich are rushing across the border to get away from the regime that torments them

The nationalised oil industry produces precious little oil despite the huge size of the reserves, starved of capital and good management

Supermarket shelves are largely empty, with companies unwilling to make and trade in such a damaged economy

The poor have been given large increases in benefits, only to end up worse off as inflation soars to make their money almost valueless

The state keeps spending money it does not have, so inflation surges making trading almost impossible.

The UK must say No to such a dreadful diet of policies.

We can offer a much better alternative.

It's not just in time for the customer

For the last forty years I have bought UK manufactured cars, ordering a new one to replace an older vehicle at regular intervals. I have always found plenty of choice and usually liked the products I have bought.

I do, however, find the UK based industry's continued arguments about Just in time bizarre. As I have pointed out, the government has no plans to create additional delays at ports for imported components. There is an even more curious thing about the industry's belief in Just in time. It does not extend to the customer.

In April I contacted my local car showroom to ask when I needed to place an order for a new replacement car for September delivery. The last time it had taken six months. They told me I was too early so I asked them to contact me when they needed the order. On June 1st I was invited in to sign up and pay the deposit. The deposit was taken in good time to help their cash flow, well before they committed any cash to the build. I was then told that the car would not be available until November, as they had misjudged their future production schedules. In July I was advised that the car would be available in the second half of October, and in early September I was advised it would be available mid October.

One of the advantages of Just in Time systems is the factory should be able to plan its output well in advance and plan exactly when it will build any individual car, yet I have experienced variation over more than a month of time in their forecast of build date.

All this reminds us that the absolute precision some now expect in Just in Time supply chains is not a reality within the single market. Just in Time is miles off extending to customers, and factories flex their production with delays of a month or more for the customer. The customer has to pay a deposit well in advance, and is left wondering exactly when they will get delivery of the new vehicle. I am not suggesting this is some hardship for the customer, merely pointing out that people are exaggerating massively the timeliness of current production of vehicles within the EU single market. The fact that a component may spend a few more hours in a traffic jam on the A34 is clearly not mission critical when the customer has been told to wait another month. And that is something they have to deal with whilst we are still in the EU. Some components today come in from outside the EU and come on a long sea journey, but planning still allows them to fit into a JIT system. All JIT systems have to hold buffer stocks for contingencies or "events". A current EU/UK supply chain damaged by French strike action at the ports for example, may have to turn to the expensive Plan B of flying components in.

So here are a few questions for the Just in Time worriers

1. Why cant Just in Time systems deliver cars at a specified date for a

customer that is quite soon after order placement?

2. How do you currently cope with traffic jams, lorry delays, port hold ups today, and why do you think it will be any worse after we have left?

3. What new barriers to entry are you expecting at Dover or Southampton, given the government has not proposed any?

4. Don't you have to allow plenty of time for the difficulties of road or sea transport today on complex supply chains?

5. How do all those Chinese goods get into the UK in good time to meet UK customer orders, given that China is not a member of the EU?

6. Why is the UK car industry having difficulty meeting customer orders in a timely way whilst we are still in the EU and when UK car demand has been hit by UK government tax policy?