

## Let's pick some truth from this continuing EU debate

A few noisy Remain supporters, including now much of the Parliamentary Labour party, persist in spreading falsehoods from Project Fear and the referendum campaign.

We now know that their predictions about the first year after the vote, and after the Article 50 letter, were wide of the mark. Unemployment did not surge. House prices did not plunge. Commercial Property did not tumble. There was no first winter recession post the vote. The economy continued to generate a lot of extra jobs and housebuilding expanded at a lively pace.

Today they still assert that the UK will lose the benefits of the 50 or so free trade Agreements the EU has with other countries when we leave. This includes particularly important ones with Switzerland, Canada and South Korea. There are no such agreements with USA, China, India or the other large economies. I have every confidence that all these FTAs will pass to the UK as a member state co signatory, as they are entitled to do under international law. The only thing that could stop them passing is if the non EU state that entered into the Agreement wished to block. None have said they will block the UK keeping these agreements.

It is still fashionable for them to argue that the EU will have to punish us for leaving, to discourage others from doing the same. This is a bizarre view of friendly neighbouring countries that they wish us to stay close to. If the EU is as good as they say why would others wish to leave? Many of them are net recipients of cash, unlike us, so they certainly have no incentive to leave. The reason they are wrong is that the EU does not have the power to punish us once we have left. They cannot give us worse trade terms than they afford the rest of the world, as they are co signatories of the WTO protocols and agreements. We have rights under the WTO to trade redress if they tried heavy handed tactics. We would also have common cause with many other countries who will not want the EU using UK departure from the EU as an excuse to turn more protectionist against the UK and all the other WTO members in consequence.

There is a strange wish on the part of many establishment figures in the UK to send lots more money to the EU because that is what the EU would like us to do. They need to grasp two simple points. The first is we owe them nothing other than our usual contributions up to departure. Secondly UK voters will be livid with them if they try to give large sums to the EU with no legal basis. We do not need to pay to trade – indeed that is illegal under WTO rules. If they want to charge us to trade it has to be done by imposing tariffs, where they are limited on what they can do by the WTO schedules.

There is also a stupid pessimism about the UK's abilities to run a borders and customs system once we are out. We have to run a policed system at the moment. Lorries and planes arriving at UK ports have to be checked for

illegal migrants, terrorist materials, animal welfare, plant health and other matters. Non EU trade has to be assessed for tariffs. It is well within the UK's ability to have a functioning border to trade with the EU as we trade with the rest of the world if we have no deal by 30 March 2019.

Some say there will be huge problems with too many parked lorries in Dover and Folkestone. We do sometimes have a big problem with parked lorries when there are French strikes, and for that reason are putting in a huge lorry park near Ashford at the moment to cope with this eventuality. It will not normally be needed once we are out, but is a useful contingency for disruption if there are more French strikes.

Others say planes will not be able to fly! Try telling that to French and German airlines who will make sure they have rights to come to the UK and in turn will understand we need landing rights in their countries.