

Let's stop negotiating with ourselves

There are endless discussions in some of the media and in Parliament about what concessions the UK should offer. Why don't they understand the negotiations may go on for 19 more months? The EU has not yet made a sensible offer or explained how it wishes to maintain full tariff free access to our market with no new barriers. Why do they keep on recycling the same old stale stories, and the same old failed lines from the Remain campaign?

Some people are in danger once again of mistaking media noise for change of policy. The government's policy of Brexit was clearly laid out in the Article 50 letter, the supporting Act of Parliament, Lancaster House speech and White Paper. It is not changing. It is now embodied in the EU Withdrawal Bill.

If the media had any interest in news rather than olds they would go off and interview the other member states about their negotiating aims and their attitudes towards the EU approach so far. They would go and ask German car companies, French dairy farmers, Dutch market gardeners, Danish pig farmers and the rest what they want the EU to achieve on the trade front.

There is no need to offer the EU any money over and above our legal obligations. If you have to pay to trade the cheapest way is to adopt WTO tariffs, and then negotiate away the tariffs with countries outside the EU to get us even better access to their markets and to cut import prices. If you had to pay a fixed up front sum to trade related to the volume of your trade they would be paying us more than we pay them, which is extremely unlikely. We are offering them free access to our market.

The UK voters were very clear when they voted to take back control. Taking control of our money was the central feature of the Vote Leave campaign. There are plenty of good uses for that £12bn net saving. It would be a good idea if the media had a few interviews with interested parties on how we should spend that money, or whether we should give some back to taxpayers.

There is no sign of the government weakening its line on the money, as the Foreign Secretary has recently made clear in his vivid if unorthodox language.