

My Interventions in the Draft Postal Packets (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2023 (3)

John Redwood:

I thought that, in law, and certainly politically, the Good Friday agreement took precedence over other agreements, given its importance. How is this measure in any way compatible with the Good Friday agreement when it does not have the consent of the Unionist community—an important underlying principle of the whole agreement? I would also like to assure the Minister that I do not use the phrase “hard compromise”, and I have not been recommending these kinds of proposals.

Victoria Atkins, Financial Secretary to the Treasury:

I am sorry; I did not catch my right hon. Friend’s last point. Would he repeat it?

I thought the Minister implied earlier that I thought that this was a hard compromise. I do not; I think it is bad policy.

Victoria Atkins, Financial Secretary to the Treasury:

I think my right hon. Friend misheard me. I was referring to the Northern Ireland Minister, the hon. Member for Wycombe (Mr Baker). I would not dream of putting words in the mouth of my right hon. Friend the Member for Wokingham.

A point was made about the Road Haulage Association. The answer to that intervention is that the powers were available to Border Force in respect of international movements. We understand the sensitivities and the concerns raised about making powers available for GB to NI movements, but we would say that that is not the same as making these international movements.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Wokingham asked a very important question about the Good Friday agreement. We do not accept that this is contrary to the Good Friday agreement. These regulations are in fact an enabler to the agreement that we have negotiated. As I said, we have ensured that consumer interests in Northern Ireland and the interests of British businesses selling to Northern Ireland are protected, but that means that an incentive now exists to move goods into Northern Ireland and take them across the Irish border to avoid EU tariffs. If we are to manage that risk—*[Interruption.]*