

Questions for the government

The government has failed to negotiate an exit that people want, uniting Remain and Leave voters against their so called Withdrawal Agreement. There were many opportunities along the way to negotiate something better which they failed to take.

- 1 Why did the government surrender early on over the issue of negotiating the Withdrawal and the future partnership questions together? That was the clear promise in the Conservative Manifesto which the PM ditched for no good reason.
2. When the issue of money was first raised the UK had a good counter that it did not owe them most of what they demanded. Why did the UK surrender on the money when there is no Treaty base requiring them to do so? Why didn't they follow the logic of their own mantra, "Nothing is agreed until everything is agreed", and demand things in return for offering any ex gratia payments?
3. Why when the issue of the Northern Irish border was first raised, didn't the government explain how this VAT/Excise/currency/anti terrorism border works today, and explain there was no need to impose new barriers at the border to slow down trade in future? Why didn't the UK say it would not itself be imposing new barriers at the border, and advised the EU to make a similar declaration?
4. Why didn't the government ever get round to tabling a comprehensive free trade deal? We know from official EU statements they were receptive to that, but could not negotiate one if the UK refused to table one.
5. When Parliament voted for the Brady compromise, a substantial concession by the Eurosceptics who voted for it, did the government fail to table any of those proposals for dealing with border issue in its talks with the EU?
6. Why now the EU Trade Commissioner has repeated the EU's willingness to have a comprehensive free trade agreement if we just leave will the government still not get on and table one and leave as originally promised? This after all was the MALTHOUSE 2 proposal under the Brady compromise, with considerable support across Conservative MPs.
7. Why did the government abandon the pledge that No deal is better than a bad deal?
8. Why did the government tear up its promise that we would leave on 29 March 2019?

I – and others – offered good advice throughout these negotiations urging the government to be much firmer, to hold to its positions that nothing is agreed until everything is agreed and no deal is better than a bad deal to maximise the UK's negotiating leverage. Instead the government at every turn ignored this good advice and sought to weaken or undermine the UK position by making needless concessions too early. The EU soon realised that as long as they

refused to budge the UK would surrender on all the things the EU wanted to insist on.

It is because the negotiations have been so poor from the UK side that we now must just leave without signing the Withdrawal Treaty. The public understood only too clearly how the UK had to argue its corner and dig in over what we thought was fair. Only the government seemed unable to grasp the basics of how to negotiate.