

5 Live and Brexit

On Brexit night I spent 10pm to 11.30pm on 5 Live

Their idea of balance was to have reporters in Parliament Square (pro Brexit) balanced by the Scottish SNP Remain demonstration in Glasgow (anti Brexit) and a protest on the Irish border (anti Brexit) where no-one was around at the protest for the programme! So it was designed to be two against one as if Remain had won. It is also questionable whether you need to balance Remain and Leave now as if there were still a referendum under way, when the public have endorsed Leave again in a General election and it is now government policy. The official Labour Opposition was not out and about complaining on exit night about Brexit so there was no official party source to voice opposition to this national event.

They took pro and anti Brexit calls in turn. They failed to understand the pro Brexit callers who largely took the view that they had voted to belong to an independent democratic country and who instead were treated to detailed points about trade issues on various questionable forecasts and told they would be worse off. Although I gave them positives for Brexit and suggested they put those to the Remain callers they did not do so. I asked them to join me in discussing the advantages of Brexit which they promised to do but did not do. They seemed unhappy when I started to reel off a few of the potential wins we have once we are free.

It is most difficult to hold a sensible public debate when leading broadcast organisations cannot understand either what Leave means or understand why people wish to live in a free democratic and independent country. As I explained we can be better off once out properly, but that will depend on how we use our freedoms. I expect this government to help us be better off, but if any future UK government fails then the joy of democracy is they can be removed and replaced by a government that does know how to make us better off. This is something we were never able to do to the makers of EU policies like the ERM which did so much damage to our prosperity.

When as a young man I was on the losing side of the EEC referendum I accepted the democratic verdict. I did not object to the issue of a celebratory coin nor to the entirely pro EEC bias of the media after the result. Then the establishment regarded the policy and its endorsement as a matter for national rejoicing, not to provide an opportunity for the losing side to go on and on about why we were right all along. No-one suggested we might like a second go because the winning side had not stressed the truth about how this was something much more than a common market, when they assured us our sovereignty was not at risk. No-one asked us to explain how we felt about it all.

I have received complaints about the BBC Brexit night coverage. I expect the government to propose decriminalising non payment of the licence fee soon.

Churchill's vision

On 02.02.2020 it is appropriate to look forward to our future.

When Churchill did so in 1958 at the end of his History of the English-speaking Peoples he looked forward to their ultimate union. He saw the military and defence alliance developing, as it has through NATO, and saw the English speaking peoples as the defenders of Peace and Freedom.

He did not write a history of the European peoples or ever recommend the UK should pool or give up its sovereignty to European institutions. He did point the way to a more united continental western Europe through a rapprochement between France and Germany.

Today we look forward to global UK, with many alliances, friends and allies. Our defence will continue to rest with NATO, our intelligence with 5 Eyes and our global trade through WTO with various other Agreements on top.

Reply to President Macron

Dear President Macron

Thank you for your letter addressed to the UK on the occasion of our departure from the EU. My country looks forward to welcoming you personally to the UK for your next visit, and wishes to have friendly relations with you as our neighbouring state as with the rest of the EU.

As an independent nation we support free trade, democracy and peace and will work to promote all three with our allies and friends. We regard the question of membership of the EU as something for the peoples and governments of each country to decide without external interference. We will work closely with fellow European countries whether non members like Norway and Switzerland or members like France and Germany on issues where we have a common interest or viewpoint.

I was disappointed to see that you have not understood why so many people in the UK voted to leave the EU in the first place and why so many voted in the two subsequent General elections for parties that wished to see Brexit through. You state that you need a "sovereign and democratic Europe whose strength will make our continent strong". You may well think the EU needs to have a stronger central government which is more efficient and effective at doing things. Your task is to explain that vision of greater EU integration and power both to the EU itself where the Germans are

sometimes more reluctant than you going forward, and to your own voters who do not all share that vision. I can assure you that the pro Brexit majority in the UK was fundamentally opposed to more EU political integration, and wanted powers back from the EU for the UK which the EU decided not to offer. As a bare minimum we wanted control over our taxes, benefits and borders, areas where UK governments had previously falsely assured us we would retain a veto.

It is not now for the UK to tell the EU what level of political or economic integration is appropriate because we are no longer members with vote and voice. We wish you all well in coming to a happy outcome. I note making a success of a single currency usually requires substantially more political, budgetary and economic integration than the EU has so far achieved. It usually needs what the Germans somewhat disparagingly call a "transfer union". When I with others ran a successful campaign to persuade the UK not to join the Euro it was obvious the UK needed a different relationship with the EU, whilst the EU proceeded on the false assumption that it was only a matter of time before the UK gave in and joined the currency.

You state that UK access to the single market will depend on the "degree to which EU rules are accepted". The UK is leaving so we can make our own laws. The government has made clear we seek a Free Trade Agreement if there is a mutually beneficial one that is better than trading with each other on best or favoured nation WTO terms. Japan and Canada have good FTAs with the EU that do not require accepting EU legislative supremacy. You should also remember that the EU seeks preferential access to the UK market, which it has enjoyed for many years. Our mutual trade account is dominated by EU exports, not by UK exports. We are happy to offer continued tariff free and relatively barrier free entry to the UK in return for similar access to the EU despite the big imbalance in trade in the EU's favour.

Brexit voters voted to leave the single market and customs union and do not share your rosy view of these devices. Many think the EU sees the UK as a Treasure island, to take our money and to sell us many goods on terms denied the rest of the world. We do not think the single market was created by UK Ministers. As the UK's single market Minister in the crucial period prior to the 1992 so called completion of the single market I remember fighting many battles at the time trying to make the single market less of an excuse for a power grab with a big build up in bureaucracy over business. Some of the large companies who now support EU rules in those days wanted me to argue against many of them or to water them down on the grounds that they made things dearer but not better and were hostile to innovation.

I watched sadly our first ten years of membership of the EEC. As I predicted at the time, the shock of removing all tariffs on goods where Germany and to a lesser extent France and Italy had a comparative advantage over us, without removing barriers to a wide range of services where the UK had an advantage resulted in a big increase in our trade deficit with the EU which continued throughout our membership. More importantly it led to a halving of our car output, to a large reduction in our steel output, to the

closure of many foundries and textile mills. No wonder I and many like me developed or confirmed a negative view of the EEC/EU. This was made far worse by the disaster of the European Exchange Rate Mechanism inflicted on us by the EU and the governing elite in the UK.

So please understand we want to be friends with the EU and with its individual member states. We are happy to trade freely with you even though it helps EU exporters more than our own. We see no need to sacrifice further or pay more for our future relationship. Your letter implies the EU has learned nothing and still does not understand why we left. We left to be an independent country. You cannot drag us back under EU control because it suits the EU.

You mention Winston Churchill. He did indeed want a more integrated Europe but never thought the UK would be part of it. He wrote his History of the English speaking peoples to set out his view that the UK needed closer ties with the USA and other Countries in his history.

With every good wish

John Redwood

[Brexit speech last night](#)

One of the first votes I cast as a young man was to vote to leave the EEC in 1975. I read the Treaty of Rome and realised this was no simple common market. I thought we were being lied to by the establishment who told us we could veto anything we did not like and would not lose our sovereignty, as the Treaty made clear wide ranging ambitions by the Europeans on their chosen path to "ever closer union".

I accepted the democratic decision of the UK voters and did my best for many years to believe in the common market and to limit the EU's activities to those of a common market. I only called for a second referendum a generation later when several new Treaties had transferred large powers to the EU and it was quite obvious this was well removed from the common market people thought they had voted for. It was helping lead the campaign to keep the pound that marked the turning point. The UK's eventual rejection of the main feature of European integration meant we had to seek a new and different relationship from those countries signed up to the federal state agenda. I launched the idea that joining a single currency was like sharing a bank account with the neighbours. It turned out to be an accurate metaphor, and one which most UK voters rejected as a policy for our country. The Euro predictably caused intense economic distress in various Euro countries.

Tonight is an historic occasion. We are well on the way to being an independent self governing nation again. The government now needs to be firm

as well as friendly to the EU in the talks ahead. We should not make any more concessions. Our fish are not be bargained away again, our laws must be under our sole control, and our money repatriated. The EU needs a Free Trade Agreement more than we do as it is such a big exporter to us, so we must stand firm in negotiation. The UK has been Treasure Island for the EU, both as a source of tax revenue for their plans, and as a great market for their exports. They should now be decent and honour their promise of a Free Trade Agreement with no penal clauses.

When we leave the Implementation period at the end of the year I will celebrate more. We will once again be that free independent country we were for centuries before we joined the EU. We will be a world leader for free trade, peace and democracy. We will regain our vote and our voice on international bodies. We will be true to our traditions of being engaged with Europe but not governed by Europe's main continental powers. The UK has long championed the rights of smaller nations, democracy and the importance of national self determination in Europe.

We will be free to set out own taxes, so we can remove VAT from green products, from repairs to charitable buildings and from female hygiene products.

We are already shaking off the Maastricht debt requirements as the central driver of our economic policy and replacing it with the aims of promoting growth and prosperity.

We will be able to pass the laws that people want, and spend all our tax revenues on our priorities.

I always thought myself lucky to be born into a country that so valued and defended freedom and democracy. I was always humbled by the knowledge of the sacrifices my grandparents and parents made with their generations to keep us free.

Tonight I am again proud to be British, and optimistic that we can do so much better once we have truly taken back control.

[My intervention during the debate on the Direct Payments to Farmers \(Legislative Continuity\) Bill, 28th January 2020](#)

John Redwood (Wokingham) (Con): Will the Minister confirm that as we move on to the new policy, there will be an emphasis on growing more food at home for

import substitution, so that these general moneys can lead on to moneys that help us to build a bigger domestic food industry?

The Minister of State, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Mr George Eustice): My right hon. Friend will be aware that we have presented a separate Agriculture Bill, which has had its First Reading. It sets out all the powers we would need to reform agriculture policy. The direct payment regulations before us bring the CAP into UK law and on to the UK statute book, and in the Agriculture Bill, there are powers to modify these regulations, so that we can remove the rough edges and simplify them. There are also powers in the Agriculture Bill to strike a very different course for our agriculture—a course based on payment for public goods, but also on providing farmers with grants to invest in new technology, so that they can improve their profitability or add value to their produce. That Bill also recognises that our food security is vital, and commits the Government to reviewing it every five years. That, however, is obviously a matter that we will debate in the coming weeks and months; I want to return to this direct payments Bill.