

Publish the legal advice

It is normally right for the government to withhold its legal advice from freedom of information requests or Parliamentary questions. Where the government is pursuing a court action to collect more tax or prosecute some criminal or to justify its actions, it should keep its own legal advice to itself to give it the best chance of a successful court outcome. The case of the legal advice on what the consequences of an International Treaty will be before we have signed it is altogether different. Parliament is to decide whether to sign this Treaty or not. Parliament therefore needs to know the legal implications of what we are being asked to sign.

Not that many of us need the Attorney's advice to grasp just how dangerous legally this Treaty is. It is a Treaty with many long term commitments that we cannot get out of. It is a Treaty which undermines the whole idea of Brexit, by bringing back considerable powers for the EU and for its European Court of Justice. It is a Treaty which prolongs the uncertainty over our possible exit from the EU, damaging business. It is a Treaty which removes most of the bargaining powers the UK currently enjoys when we embark under its provisions to try to negotiate a Future Partnership Agreement. This is not a deal, but a straightjacket. This is not Brexit, but a new servitude.

I am against the whole idea of a Withdrawal Treaty. I voted to come out of the extensive Treaty commitments we currently have under the EU Treaties. I did not vote to enter a new binding Treaty with the EU I cannot get out of. Nor did I vote to end up in an Association Agreement with the EU, which is what they have in mind for the so called Future Partnership. Two Treaties to replace one, and probably at a similar expensive financial price, is not what we Leave voters voted for. We did at least like Article 50, the leave clause, in the current EU Treaties. The two new proposed Treaties have no get out clause!

The Attorney General had a successful career at the criminal law bar and doubtless wrote a detailed and careful opinion. He is also a politician and Minister who will be asked to explain parts of his advice to the Commons under the control of the government's overall message on this Agreement. Parliament wants to see the full advice as some MPs think the most critical sentences about the Agreement are likely to be played down or ignored in any edited highlights for the Commons. It will certainly be a testing session for the Attorney to deliver enough of the shocking truth about this Agreement whilst defending the government that wishes to sign it.

Whatever happens on the publication of some or all of the advice, of one thing readers should be clear. There are quite enough of us MPs in the Commons who have read the draft Agreement and have serious doubts about the wide ranging powers it gives to the EU over us to ensure Parliament with or without the full advice will hold a debate knowing the main legal pitfalls of this unwise Agreement. You do not have to be a lawyer to understand the prose of this Agreement. In so many clauses of this document it places more burdens and restrictions on the UK long after we are meant to have left the EU.

The mood amongst Wokingham Conservatives

Mrs May is consulting the party and the wider electorate about her Withdrawal Agreement. I have been taking soundings for some time, ever since the Chequers climb downs exploded into the media. On Friday I had the opportunity to sound out 100 Conservatives at a party lunch, on top of the many conversations, emails and comments I have received in recent weeks.

The opposition to the Withdrawal Agreement is very strong, and there is overwhelming support for the stance I am taking in proposing to vote against the Agreement. Very few party members believe this is the best we could do, and a majority of enthusiastic leavers think leaving without an Agreement will be considerably better. The minority in the local party that regret the decision of the referendum are also against this Withdrawal Agreement, but want a return to negotiations or a delay in the Article 50 process following the vote against the Agreement.

Opinion on Mrs May herself has been more mixed, but recently the majority has moved against her continuing in office. There is a general feeling that she should not continue if the Agreement is voted down, a mood I have voiced in interviews. I would assume she would want to resign if her Agreement is defeated by a substantial margin. Were she not to I expect more MPs would send in letters requiring a vote on her continued leadership. I have urged her not to proceed with the Agreement in the interest of the nation, the party and her own future. I did not vote for Mrs May to be the Leader of the Conservative party and do not support the course she is taking.

How do I represent my constituents on the issue of our exit from the EU?

A whole series of emails are arriving in my email box and doubtless in the email boxes of other MPs drafted to ask How will I represent the constituent, given their view. There are different versions, with some of the drafts used by people who want to leave, some who wish to remain, and some who want a second referendum. Some are individually worded by constituents. There are several different views, but an MP of course only has one vote.

There is, however, common ground in the vast majority of the emails I receive. Whether coming from Remain or Leave supporters, the big majority

dislike the Withdrawal Agreement. Both sides sees this as an attempted compromise which suits few. Both see the Agreement turns us into a rule taker and bill payer. It removes our bargaining levers by legally binding us to give the EU what it wants before we have secured what we might like. Most people see this rightly as a very bad deal, with no agreement on what we might get out of an eventual Future Partnership Agreement. Some Remain voters think it would better to stay in the EU to have vote and voice as well as taking their rules and paying the bills. Leave voters say the Withdrawal Agreement is not leaving, as we stay in the single market and customs union and carry on paying large sums to buy more time for talks.

This makes my task that much easier. My judgement has been throughout that this Agreement has to be voted down. In the light of the extensive correspondence I have received I do not have to worry about whether I am speaking for my constituents in so doing, as a majority tell me they too want it voted down. The question of what we should then do produces a variety of answers amongst constituents. I will return to these issues over the period of the vote and the sequel to the vote. I feel I need to honour my promises to electors in the 2017 General Election when I said I would support carrying out the will of the nation in the referendum.

The resignation of yet another Minister, the eleventh to go on this matter so far, is a reminder of how Mrs May cannot win this vote unless Labour change their minds. Ministers give up interesting jobs reluctantly, in order to vote against the government. That is eleven more votes against the Agreement so far. It is difficult to see how the Prime Minister could carry on if she goes down to defeat on this central policy she has designed. The sooner we tell the EU we cannot sign the Withdrawal Agreement the better. The sooner we table a proper Free Trade Agreement and see if they want one the better.

[Advice to Michael Gove](#)

The Withdrawal Agreement you are recommending denies us the Brexit you campaigned for. The alternative cannot be staying in the EU , which would be against everything you promised and against the Manifesto you and I stood on in the 2017 General Election.

[Leave voters are fed up with](#)

continuous Project Fear in Parliament and on much of the media

When a General election changes the governing party the media changes its mainstream agenda from the preoccupations of the outgoing government to the priorities of the incoming government. Media reflects the will of the people and the shift of power. Of course it allows the Opposition a say, and the Parliamentary Opposition battles to get some of its priorities onto the media as a challenge to the government. The Opposition gets more attention as the unpopularity of a government increases and or as another election approaches.

Most of the media have failed to reflect this sensible democratic approach to news over the Referendum. Most of them have carried on accepting as news and stories a series of tendentious or mendacious forecasts, predictions and non stories from the Project Fear stable as if the Referendum campaign were still underway or as if Remain had actually won. In this they reflect the Labour opposition. Elected on a Manifesto that said they accepted the result and would work towards the UK leaving the EU, Labour has instead spent the last seventeen months putting the case in the Commons for staying in the EU directly, and being remorselessly negative about leaving the EU at every available opportunity. Within the government the Chancellor and the Business Secretary have also delighted in highlighting gloomy and inaccurate forecasts of what might happen instead of seizing the many opportunities Brexit brings to lower taxes, cut tariffs, improve laws and promote more domestic business.

It is no wonder there is an ever growing gulf between most Leave voters and the Parliament and media which talks at them daily in discordant tones. We are constantly being told we were too stupid to understand what we voted on, that we never voted to leave the customs union and single market which were always an integral part of EU membership which we rejected, and that we should be asked again because we must by now have changed our minds. If an entirely false forecast of a mild recession after the vote would not make us vote Remain in the Referendum, maybe a even more false forecast (called a scenario) of a massive recession after we leave will force us to cry out for a second ballot.

It's high time those of us who believe in Brexit and have many positive things to say about our regaining our freedom and lifting our growth rate once out were allowed some airtime. There is no indication that this will happen, leading to more people to turn off the BBC news and cancel their subscriptions to the Daily Mail. It as if all the opportunities from Brexit did not exist for most of the media and all too many MPs. The Leave voting public have more vision than the establishment.