

The ERG and Mrs May

There is considerable misunderstanding in the media about the ERG. The ERG is the European Research Group. There are paying MP members who contribute jointly to research staff to help them, and non paying members like myself who contribute our own research to the Group and also attend its meetings. As the name implies all the research is geared to understanding the impact of the EU on public policy and in the last two years to detailed consideration of leaving the EU and establishing a new relationship.

There are many MP members. We all agree that the draft Withdrawal Agreement is unacceptable and as far as I know all will vote against it if it reaches the Commons as draft legislation. The ERG as a Group does not have a view on the future of the PM. Jacob Rees-Mogg (Chairman) has announced in public that he has submitted a letter, and Steve Baker is very active in promoting a vote. There are some other ERG members who have stated they have sent letters. There are some members who have sent letters but do not wish to make a public statement. There are members consulting their Constituency Associations about it. There are some members who do not wish to send letters for a variety of reasons. The Group has only had one formal discussion of this matter when Jacob advised us of his intentions, because the future of Mrs May is not within the normal remit of this Research group. Our aim as a Group is to concentrate on the issues around withdrawal and to set out a clear path on the ones where the Group has something important to say, as on the Irish backstop. Members of the ERG between us have over the last two and a half years set out a comprehensive approach to Brexit and urged the government to take it up. We have written and spoken on the legislation needed, on the legal and constitutional issues, on food and fishing, borders and immigration, trade and tariffs, the economy and taxation, transport security.

The campaign to have a confidence vote is now effectively led by Jacob Rees Mogg and Steve Baker. As Steve has stated on tv he thinks 48 letters should now have gone in. Clearly more letters have gone in than the number of public declarations. I do not believe Sir Graham Brady will fail in his duty. When he has received and opened 48 such letters he has to tell the PM immediately, and organise a vote promptly.

A letter to younger citizens

Last night I was asked on Any Questions why I supported Brexit which the young questioner thought would have an adverse effect on her generation in particular. Here is a longer version of my answer.

Dear fellow voter,

I support Brexit above all for the younger generation, because it will give to you something I was denied. It will give you the most precious political inheritance of all. It will give you a powerful UK democracy where the British people can make their own choices. Our Parliament will be able to do whatever the people wish, whatever we choose in the ballot box.

The freer the country the more prosperous it usually is. The USA is a mighty economy based on the architecture of freedom, and on the great principles of its Constitution. Switzerland is richer than EU countries, with a fine tradition of Parliament and referenda. Norway's democracy has been preserved by staying outside the EU, and she too is a very rich country.

It is because I have confidence in the generations to come that I want to pass to them a democracy that works, where they will be in charge as they reach the age of holding powerful jobs. It is the EU's austerity policies and thought throttling centralisation that has spawned such high youth unemployment in many EU countries. I do not want you to have to battle to restore our democratic freedoms, and to resist their further erosion to the EU, as I have had to do.

Yours sincerely

John Redwood

73% of Conservative members oppose the draft Withdrawal Agreement

I was surprised as many as 23% of Conservative members support the draft Withdrawal Agreement. Maybe they heard the Prime Minister say on tv that we are taking back control of our laws, our money and our borders and ending freedom of movement. We all agree with that. That is exactly what the EU Withdrawal Act achieves. Unfortunately it is not what this Agreement says. The PM must understand that the draft Withdrawal Agreement does the opposite. It means we pay the EU a fortune, stay in everything for at least 21 months and will have to stay in the Customs Union thereafter unless the EU is suddenly very nice to us. As more members read the document or read about it and understand it is not Brexit, I suspect they too will be disappointed.

(Conservative Home survey)

The economic benefits of leaving with no Withdrawal Agreement

The EU's refusal to discuss the future partnership and trade arrangements before we leave means we now have a simple choice. Sign an expensive and damaging deal and try another 21 months or more of talks, or leave and trade under WTO rules on terms we set out. It's obvious we must just leave. Doing so produces many economic advantages

- 1 An immediate substantial improvement in our balance of payments as we cease sending money to the EU
- 2 An end to all the uncertainties about our trade relationship with the EU, which will become much like our trade relationship with the USA and China.
- 3 The ability to increase spending on public service, providing a welcome boost to schools, social care, defence and others, out of the savings.
- 4 Tax cuts to raise take home pay and boost the economy
- 5 If we spent an extra £39 bn on ourselves instead of paying to stay in the EU for longer over the couple of years, that would be a 2% boost to GDP
- 6 Remove VAT from green products and domestic heating fuels, which we are not allowed to do in the EU
- 7 Announce zero tariffs on all components coming in to the UK for industrial assembly, making components from non EU sources cheaper and boosting manufacturers
- 8 Announce cuts in tariffs on food from non EU places, which are currently very high. The new lower tariffs will also of course apply to EU product. Set them to boost domestic agricultural output of things we can grow well.
- 9 Take control of our fish and rebuild our fishing industry.
- 10 Limit unskilled and low paid work permits and go for a higher wage more productive economy. Have a migration policy that is fair to all parts of the world and based on our economic needs.

The detail is worse in the Agreement

So as we feared the ECJ has a big role, we cannot unilaterally leave the customs union and may have to stay in for a long time if there is no mutually agreed exit deal. All the government has achieved is the elimination of the Article 50 right to leave we currently enjoy.

Our negotiating power would be dramatically reduced by giving away the money in advance of a deal, and binding ourselves into the customs partnership and law codes of the EU. Remain voters will say being in the EU is better than this, and Leave voters say this is not Brexit. As yesterday in the Commons made clear there is nowhere near a majority for this one sided and damaging

Withdrawal Agreement

The Irish backstop treats one part of the UK differently from the rest and is already being used by the SNP against the Union. The huge payments buy us nothing we want and mainly relate to staying in for longer than we wish. Why would the EU bother to agree a good future partnership when they will control us and take our cash without such a deal?

The resignation of 7 more following the 8 who resigned after Chequers must be a record number for a single policy. It makes the defeat of these proposals even more likely as they will all presumably vote against.