

Illegal Migration Act: Northern Ireland

Sir John Redwood (Wokingham) (Con):

We voted in a referendum to end the rule of EU law throughout the United Kingdom, including Northern Ireland. Given the muddle that the courts are creating, is not the only way out of this an urgent, short piece of legislation that asserts beyond doubt that we control our own borders?

Tom Pursglove (Minister for Immigration):

The Government believe that we have a legal basis for this. I recognise my right hon. Friend's determination for us to get on and deliver on the Rwanda policy. That is precisely what we are doing, on the basis of the Nationality and Borders Act at this stage, but when it comes to the IMA, we believe that we have a strong legal basis, and that is why we are appealing the judgment.

Keeping our right to self government

The Opposition parties in Parliament would still like to surrender more powers of self government to the EU. Meanwhile there are three issues currently before Ministers which pose the same question, should we govern ourselves? Labour and Lib Dem MPs take no interest, or would like to see us give more power away in each case. I was able to highlight the view that the UK should be self governing on two of these issues on Tuesday when colleagues secured Urgent Questions to remind Ministers to avoid any ceding of power.

The first is the World Health Organisation draft Treaty. Ministers assured us they will not sacrifice our sovereignty, our power to respond to a health crisis and to run our own NHS. I urged them to publish the amendments they are seeking, because they rightly said the current Treaty takes power away from member states.

The second is the continuing influence of the courts over the government's wish to control UK borders. I and others pressed the government to put through urgent clarifying legislation given the decision of the Northern Ireland Court.

The third is Gibraltar. I have put to the Foreign and Defence Secretaries the need not to cede any power over the Gibraltar border or the RAF and naval bases. These sovereign bases are an important part of Gibraltar and of NATO defences. Foreign and Defence policy are not devolved to the Gibraltar government. I think it would be a good idea for Gibraltar to be represented by an MP in the UK Parliament to confirm the democratic structure.

[My question on the WHO Pandemic Treaty negotiations](#)

Sir John Redwood (Wokingham) (Con):

Will the Minister then publish the amendments that the Government are seeking? He says, rightly, that he needs a very different treaty from the one that we see on offer. He needs to persuade other nations, so he should be making a public case; we would then not be so suspicious. There must be no new legal requirement imposed on the United Kingdom.

Andrew Stephenson (Minister for Health and Secondary Care):

We do not envisage any new legal requirements being imposed on the United Kingdom, and any changes to our domestic ability to react to any future pandemic would be unacceptable and cross one of our red lines. In this urgent question and in the Westminster Hall debate, which I know my right hon. Friend also participated in, I was as clear as I could be on the UK's red lines in these negotiations. We have been up front with both Parliament and our international partners in saying that the current text is not agreeable to us, and we are seeking significant changes if we are to reach an accord that will be signed by the United Kingdom.

[Will Wokingham Borough take some pride in our neighbourhood?](#)

When I was out about last week end doing one of my usual visits around the constituency I was saddened to see the neglect and damage being done to our environment by the Council.

I started at Shute End. There were cobwebs over the main entrance to the Borough offices. On the lefthand side glass there were two side remnants of some red poster sticking to the window where most of the poster had been ripped off. The garden borders were overgrown with weeds in front of the buildings.

As I made my way there were countless yellow diversion signs on roads. Some were badly positioned. None told you where they were diverting you from or to. The one by the Woollahill roundabout was partly missing and hanging off a rusty metal frame at a lopsided angle.

I visited California Crossroads over my boundary. The contractors are

installing expensive yellow bricks, which will doubtless shift position and discolour badly where cars are driven over them. Clearly the Lib Dems are out to paint the Borough yellow in as many ways as possible.

I found several pavements where the hedgerows overhang and had not been clipped back. Road drains are often blocked causing excessive water across roads when it rains. Grass goes unmowed. The potholes grow and grow.

Why will the Council not take a pride in our place? Why will they not carry out proper maintenance?

My Interventions on the Public Procurement Motion (3)

Is there not also a strong national security argument for procuring all defence items in Britain and creating a more competitive market at home to have honesty on prices?

That is exactly right. One of the arguments for buying steel from, mainly, Sweden—and possibly from France—was “We do not produce steel of that quality here”, but if we do not provide the orders for that quality of steel, our plants will gradually stop producing it, and we will also lose the skills. That has been a constant row. The same has applied to trains. When I was a Transport Minister, Alstom came along, having taken over the Washwood Heath factory, and said, “Our problem is that when we go to corporate headquarters, we will be told that if we want to sell trains in France we must produce them in France, and if we want to sell trains in Germany we must produce them in Germany. Britain will buy from anyone; where do you think the investment goes?” That has been a regular theme.

During the period of Labour government—and I fear that it is probably still the same with this Government—we heard Ministers say, “We have to abide by these rules because otherwise we cannot expect other people to do so.” I say, “Join the real world, the world in which people do fight their corner, the world where people battle for their corner!” The real, deep irony is that the failure to protect our industry is also a failure to protect our industrial communities, and to protect not just the livelihoods but the life of those communities. We talk about left-behind towns, which are very much at the heart of this issue, but it has also happened to quite an extent in America. It drives a populist feeling that people decry, but which they have been instrumental in bringing about.

If the argument that we have to follow some theoretical rules, rather than be part of the practical world, was wrong previously, which it certainly was, it is even less sustainable now. What the Ukraine conflict has shown is the need

for industrial capacity. When I say “industrial capacity”, I do not just mean a plant; I also mean trained personnel. I do not just mean scientists, high technicians and skilled trades—semi-skilled production workers with the ability to make the machines work and to turn materiel out are also a core part of this.

We have seen that drain and drift away, so when we are faced with an existential crisis and Ukraine is on the frontline for freedom against an aggressive and assertive Russia, it becomes incredibly difficult—regardless of whether we will the money out of the Treasury, which I accept is important—to get production ramped up because of the lack of skills throughout the economy. I accept that some of the equipment in the second world war was less technically advanced, but the allies were quickly able—America was astonishingly quick—to move civil capacity into war production. Although we often focus on the “whizz bang” stuff—the hi-tech stuff—a lot of it is about good machining, which requires those abilities and that capacity.

When I argue for maintaining capacity in the UK, it does not mean that we should not co-operate with other countries, but we should do so on the basis of ensuring that our interests get dealt with as well, which will be mutually beneficial in the long run. If we are able to play our part, we will have that greater industrial capacity, but we cannot be the universal donor. We also have to have a degree of reciprocation and investment coming into the UK.

As I said, I accept that the changes introduced by the regulations are an improvement, but they have still not broken the psychological grip inside the civil service, which is not interested in industry and does not rate it, even in the face of the Ukraine crisis and the world dividing up into trade blocs. I am asking not for Britain to be an outlier, but for Britain to become part of the international community, behave like a normal country and have prosperity spread out much more across the country. I think it is called levelling up—we even have a Department that is supposed to be dealing with that.