

The EU Withdrawal Bill

We were told yesterday that the government invites Parliament to consider the Lords Amendments to the Withdrawal Bill, starting on Tuesday June 12th. These need to be carefully considered by the Commons with a view to making final decisions as soon as possible. Where the Commons decides to disagree with a Lords Amendment it will be because the amendment waters down the commitment to implement the wishes of the voters in the referendum. I trust that any Commons vote to reverse a Lords amendment will be end of the process.

The role of the Lords is to ask the Commons to think again. Traditionally the Lords does not oppose matters which form part of a governing party's Manifesto commitments. You would have thought the Lords would be even more careful about a commitment that stems from a free vote of the electorate. We were all told in a government leaflet that we the people were making the decision, so Parliament should now facilitate it.

There are all too many times when the Commons does not scrutinise a Bill extensively enough, owing to a lack of interest by the current Opposition. Then the Lords have more justification in detailed examination. No-one can deny that the EU Withdrawal Bill has been one of the most scrutinised Bills in history in both Houses. We have not lacked debate, insights, counter proposals or arguments. What we now desperately need are some decisions. That is what the Commons must now do.

It is important the Bill has passed all stages by the time the Prime Minister goes to the June 28 Council. It will show our EU partners that we are getting on with all necessary preparations and are serious in our intent. There are some on the continent who seem to think if they help Remain influences in the UK delay the process they might force us to think again. Almost two years have passed since the decision. It is high time Parliament confirmed the decision one more time. In voting for the EU Withdrawal Bill in its unamended form the Commons will be reaffirming its careful consideration of this Bill the first time round, and reinforcing its overwhelming vote to send the Article 50 letter. That letter, after all, was the effective Parliamentary decision to leave the EU. The purpose of the Withdrawal Bill is to ensure there is legal continuity when we leave. Sensible Remain supporters accept that a decision was taken on June 24 2016, and want to see the legal continuity the EU Withdrawal Bill can bring us.