

Getting people back to work

It is time for government to come out with proposals that can make it easier to start or re start a business and to keep or create new jobs. Unemployment is already far too high thanks to the anti virus policies adopted, and is set to go higher as we limp out of lock down.

It is quite clear that there will need to be accelerated change in our economy to cope with the social distancing rules and the other changes that the pandemic has brought on. There will be more on line shopping and less shopping in physical stores. There will be more remote technology working in health and education, in leisure and office work. These big changes will require large companies to be adaptive, and will require many more new and smaller businesses to offer new models and services and provide the flexibility fast change needs.

Let's start with cutting into those great lists of the unemployed. Why not let any self employed person take on an employee or assistant, with the first year based on them being self employed. It is often the hassle of National Insurance, pensions and other paperwork that puts the self employed off expanding a successful business by taking on additional staff. Give them up to a year to work with someone to see how good it can be and to guide them into the idea of accepting full employer responsibilities. Alternatively it might lead them to adopt a partnership or franchise model with the new person. We need more self employed to expand their often successful businesses.

End the threat of IR35 changes. We are losing business to foreign companies, as large groups here worry about carrying on or taking on a UK self employed contractor for fear that their tax status will be queried at a later date.

Raise the VAT threshold to allow small business more activity before they need to go through the complex process of registering for VAT.

There were around 5 million self employed when the pandemic struck. We need to see them as an important part of our future, and give them every help to get going again and to grow their activities. Sometimes the Treasury seems to see them as a nuisance, seeking ways to tax them into working for a large employer or not working at all. It is a prejudice we cannot afford.

Public spending

It is right for the government to cushion individuals and businesses temporarily losing their incomes owing to the lock downs. It is right for the government to provide a fiscal boost to offset some of the massive

deflationary forces unleashed by the global anti virus policies. It is not right to waste public money or add to the burden of the debt with marginal or unwise spending.

So I renew my list of spending reductions that are even more needed now, given the state of public finances.

1. Reduce overseas aid spending. It will exceed the 0.7% of GDP legal requirement this year given the fall in GDP unless it is reduced. Start by taking £1bn off plans.
2. Improve collection of the charges for use of the NHS by overseas visitors. It is a National, not a Global Health Service. Possible £400 million extra.
3. Cancel HS2 saving up to £100 bn over a period of years
4. Toughen enforcement against people trafficking to cut the costs of illegal migrants.
5. Insist on leaving the EU at the end of the year with no further payments to them. Savings of £1bn a month thereafter.
6. Stop Councils building property asset portfolios based on low cost public borrowing.

[My speech during the debate on the Trade Bill, 20 May 2020](#)

John Redwood (Wokingham) (Con): You do not need to pay to trade: I welcome the policy behind this legislation and the Bill itself, which makes it very clear that the United Kingdom wishes to be a positive trade partner with as many countries around the world as would like a free trade agreement with us. This Bill ensures that we can carry across the FTAs that the EU has with a range of countries that naturally fall to transit to us as well as to it.

Many of us were told that we were wrong when we argued that during the referendum and afterwards, but the Government have proved us right in that of course those countries wish to roll over those agreements. In one or two cases, they wish to go considerably further than the agreements we already have. I welcome the Government's positive response to that to see what more can be added so that we can have a better deal as we leave the European Union than we had when we were in it.□

We must see the policy background to this Bill as including the most important letter written this week by our trade negotiator to Mr Barnier about the parallel negotiations for a possible UK-EU free trade agreement.

It is an admirably lucid letter which makes it very clear that, just as in this Bill, we are not sacrificing our fish, offering special payments or agreeing to accept the laws of other countries in order to create a free

trade agreement with them, and neither should we do so in the case of the European Union. We voted very clearly to leave the single market and to leave the customs union.

Many of us who voted that way strongly believed then, and believe even more so today, that we want a free trade-based agreement with the European Union if that is also its wish, but we would rather trade with it under WTO rules and the excellent new tariff we have set out for external trade if it wishes instead to claim that we need to be some kind of surrogate member taking its laws, paying its bills and accepting many of its views on matters like our fish resources.

It is more likely that we will get a free trade agreement from a reluctant European Union just before the deadline at the end of the year if we have made great progress in negotiating free trade deals elsewhere. That is why the Government are absolutely right to respond very positively to the United States of America, to Japan, to Australia, to New Zealand and to the Trans-Pacific Partnership. In each of those cases, the counter-party is very willing.

In each of those cases, there are precedents for good agreements between other parts of the world and those countries, and we can build on those and our own models for a positive free trade arrangement.

The EU will see how relatively easy it is to make such progress with those countries we have agreements with. When we were in the EU, the EU had not got round to having agreements with some of those countries—big countries such as the United States of America. When we are outside the EU, that will make the EU even keener to want to have a free trade agreement with us. Rather reluctantly, it will have to admit that it has been making a mistake over these past years in trying to make our exit so protracted and so difficult, and claiming that you do need to pay for trade.

I will vote for the Bill as vindication that, of course, many countries wish to trade with us on as free a basis as possible. I will vote for it as part of a much bigger package of a free trade loving United Kingdom driving a free trade agenda around the world.

I will vote for it because it sends a clear message to the European Union that it is negotiating in the wrong way and running the danger of ending up without a free trade agreement that is rather more in its interests than ours, given the asymmetry of our trade.

Free trade is a good way to promote prosperity. It is even more vital now we need to recover our economies from the covid-19 crisis. I urge the EU to understand that and to co-operate sensibly, just as I give the Government full support to press ahead in negotiating deals with all those great countries and regions of the world that think Britain is a hugely important future partner, and where we see fast-growing trade that can enrich both sides.

Billionaire influence?

Some people want me to publish their personal campaigns against a few named billionaires. I tell them repeatedly I will not do so. It is not the purpose or nature of this site.

Some claim these billionaires lobby governments, setting up lobbying institutes to seek attention for policies they favour. Indeed, some of them do just that. So do Trade Unions, raising millions from their members, large charities, spending a fortune on adverts and lobbying, opposition political parties, every large company that has a government affairs department and many others. All of these people and institutions use money they have earned or raised to sharpen their message and to try to influence Ministers who make decisions and to influence the officials who help them. Sometimes they want governments to do things that are self serving for them and possibly damaging to the rest of us. Ministers need to stay alert and work out who to trust.

One of the purposes of this site is to examine the quality of the decisions governments and public institutions make and the consequences of them. As an MP I am also seeking to influence government on behalf of my constituents and in line with my and my party's view of how to proceed in the national interest. Where external lobbies are putting forward damaging or ill judged proposals then I am always willing to give a voice to the counter arguments to their theories and propositions.

I am not willing to publish personal attacks on people who believe they are working for the wider good just because one or you – or I myself – disagree with their advice. I do not have the capacity to research the truthfulness of claims made about them. Please find somewhere else in the media who do want to run with conspiracy theories if you believe you have a case. Governments do not have to follow these people – sometimes they choose to do so, presumably when they think they are right.

In support of Mr Frost's letter

Mr Frost's letter to Mr Barnier told him some home truths. Is the EU stupid or wicked in thinking that the UK wants to stay as part of the single market, and therefore needs to make concessions to do so? The UK has made it crystal clear we are leaving both the single market and the customs union. We have also made it clear we would be willing to grant the EU a Free Trade Agreement, which will help them more than us, as an act of friendship which could also be of modest benefit to us as well.

As Mr Frost asks, why is the EU apparently unwilling to offer the UK something similar to the FTAs it signed with Canada and Japan? They obviously thought those were in their interest.

I at last got a speaking slot yesterday in Parliament. I made clear there must be no UK concessions and no extension to the negotiations. Either they come round to an FTA or they do not. It's up to them. The UK will be fine either way. We do not need to pay to trade- not in money, not in fish nor by sacrificing our freedoms.