

An MP's surgery

MPs are receiving copies of a lobby email asking us to sign a pledge not to report illegal migrants if they come to our surgeries. Let me explain the nature of an MP's surgery and the legal position to those who send in this email.

The main purposes of an MP's surgery are to take up cases for constituents where government has let them down, treated them badly or failed to apply its own rules fairly, and to listen to constituents who have advice on how laws and government policies should be changed to make life better. Constituents often stray beyond their relations with national government into their relations with Councils and sometimes even their contractual relations with private sector suppliers and employers. The MP has most chance of helping with national government, where more direct access to Ministers can sometimes trigger a review of an action or policy which resolves the problem, or where legal change can sometimes be generated to fix the problem for the future. I work with local Councillors on local matters, as the Councillors have privileged access to local officers that the MP does not have. Just as collectively MPs can change offending national laws, so Councillors collectively can change offending local policies. Occasionally an MP letter to a private sector company that is misbehaving can help, but as a general rule contractual disputes between constituents and private companies are best worked out in direct dialogue with the company and through the usual complaints processes available.

Attending an MP's surgery does not give the constituent sanctuary from the law. Whilst an MP will handle information carefully, in order to process a complaint or resolve a problem with government the MP will usually have to share the information with the government. I wish to repeat that if someone comes to my surgery they should understand I have no special privilege to give them to protect them from the law, and will normally share their information with the authorities to seek to resolve their issue. If someone is living in Wokingham as an illegal migrant and they wish to seek legal permission to stay then I will assist them if they have a sensible case by contacting the authorities, but I cannot give them some indemnity or help them cover up their illegal status. Similarly if someone comes to me and tells me they have not paid tax I am happy to take up their case with the authorities if they believe they do not have to pay the tax or if they think their assessment is wrong, but I am not in the business of condoning tax evasion and have no blessings to give to tax law breakers.

Quite often an MP has to explain to a constituent that the law is as it is for a good reason, and they like everyone else will just have to accept it even though they do not like it. Sometimes I find advising someone not to pursue a complaint but to accept the world as it is can prove to be good advice which they accept. You can cause yourself a lot of trouble and distress by pursuing complaints that are not going to result in a good outcome. Show me a just cause and a clear unfairness from government and I will fight tenaciously to have the injustice remedied.

Mrs May damages the Union she wants to defend

Here's an irony. Mrs May says defending the Union of the UK is one of her fundamental principles. Yet in three of her misjudgements over Brexit she puts its future more at risk.

In Northern Ireland the upholders of the Union are the majority community who vote DUP and similar parties. Mrs May instead accepts the analysis of Sinn Fein and the Republic of Ireland, used by the EU to damage Brexit. All of this group wish to end the union of the UK and create an island of Ireland economic area, as a stepping stone to an island of Ireland country. This is proving damaging to Brexit, threatens the end of Mrs May's coalition and is incomprehensible to Unionists in Northern Ireland. Mrs May needs to be on the side of the Unionists who want to support her.

Most of the people of the Union live in England. Mrs May ignores us. The word England rarely crosses her lips. No one speaks for England in the endless devolution/Brexit talks. The strong pro Brexit vote in England is never mentioned. It is as if Mrs May is forgetful of the voting base that gave her the largest Conservative vote since Margaret Thatcher. It is high time she balanced her view of the Union with recognition of England's needs, to create a more realistic and even union.

The third mistake is in her handling of Scotland. If you want to keep the union together you cannot keep giving concessions to an Independence party called the SNP who do not speak for the majority in Scotland upon the only issue that matters to them. Their understandable habit of turning every issue into one about independence wears thin after they lost a referendum on this very question. The PM has to appeal over the heads of the SNP to the pro Union majority in Scotland, Labour, Conservative and others. She has to say No to anti Union demands by the SNP where these are against the spirit of Brexit. Fortunately the SNP lost two referendums in the right order. They first lost the Scottish independence referendum, so they then had to accept the validity of the UK wide EU referendum. It's no good them saying Scotland voted Remain, as the electorate was the whole UK. Their refusal to accept the UK wide result shows how anti democratic they are. They have become the neverendum party wanting to have more referendums on the same topics until they get a result they like.

Mrs May should try disagreeing with the enemies of our Union more, whilst being more in harmony with its defenders. The defenders of the Union accept Brexit, as that is the will of the majority in the Union referendum. It is central to the future of the Union that Brexit is delivered properly and promptly. England expects. Wales expects. All those Leave voters in Northern Ireland and Scotland expect. We only keep our Union if Union decisions matter

and are implemented by the politicians.

[A small win in the battle against waste in the NHS](#)

The Health Minister has announced a welcome drive to get NHS equipment returned after use so it can be used again after cleaning, or recycled. Some NHS Trusts do this, and the Minister is now seeking to extend this to the whole English NHS. Readers of this site will know I have been pressing for this for some time, as an obvious way of saving money and cutting down on waste.

[Tax and spend](#)

I read in one newspaper that we will be offered tax cuts in the budget. Just what we need to stimulate an economy being put through a combined monetary and fiscal squeeze. Then I read in another paper that the Chancellor will tear up the promises to raise Income Tax thresholds, and find some more money for Universal Credit. I read elsewhere that the Treasury still thinks it needs to raise a tax or two to pay for the increased NHS spending that has been outlined.

Who knows which of these leaks is informed. They could all be right with a government still trying to make up its mind. What is clear is many of us who will have to vote on the budget when they have decided and announced it want to honour the promise to raise tax thresholds, want to cut taxes to provide a stimulus to enterprise and want to boost spending on crucial public services. We do not however wish to run up excessive debts and do not think there is a magic money tree.

The good news is there is an easy way to do all these things. Make it clear to the EU that we do not owe them money after we leave, and announce we will be leaving on 29 March 2019 with or without agreement to a Free Trade deal. The EU can decide whether they want one or not. It is in their interest to want one and I suspect they would offer one if they were sure we will just leave otherwise.

The government also has the option to review the large spending planned on HS2. There does need to be more spending on better targeted rail investments in the North, but even after allowing for these the cancellation of this

vastly expensive project would also free substantial resource to do other things.

The extraordinary thing about current Treasury thinking, as they dither over any increased spending tax cut, is their persistent wish to give £39 bn to the EU. Why can't they transfer some of the toughness they show about desirable UK spending and tax cuts into determined resistance to paying so much money to the EU when there is no legal requirement to do so.

I have one simple piece of advice for the Chancellor. Dig in against more money for the EU and all your money problems for the next three years drop away. Grasp that we will trade just fine on 30 March 2019 if we just leave. That is what we voted for. We want to spend our own money on our own priorities. What part of £39 bn doesn't the Treasury understand?

Lecture on The Future of Brexit

My lecture on The Future of Brexit, delivered on Tuesday 20th February 2018 at Speakers House:

On 23rd June 2016 17.4 million voters told Parliament we should leave the EU. Leave voters voted to take back control.

We voted to take back control of our money, our laws and our borders.

We voted to be a sovereign people again.

The overarching aim is to restore our freedoms

To become self governing as we used to be

We wish our Parliaments to frame our laws

To levy and spend out taxes

To make our borders safe

To award the precious gift of citizenship to those we choose to invite

We did not vote in the belief that future Parliaments will always be wise

Nor that they will always get it right

We voted to restore powers to Parliament because it is our Parliament

We can lobby and influence it

We can dismiss it and replace the MPs when they no longer please.

I find it surprising that some find it difficult to understand this overriding wish

For it is based on our long standing pursuit of freedom

It springs from our history

The history of the UK is the story of the long march of every man and every woman to the vote

The story of asserting the rule of law against all, however mighty.

We prize the gift of freedom under the law for all on an equal basis

We share an aversion to slavery

A dislike of military rule

A resistance to arbitrary government
A rejection of the patronising errors of elites
A distaste for overmighty bureaucracies cramping our freedoms
A belief that we should be free to do whatever we please unless the laws prevents it

The signposts to democracy run through Magna Carta to the first Parliaments
From the 1660 settlement to the Glorious Revolution
From the Great Reform Act to the triumph of the suffragettes
We carelessly lost some of these freedoms,
casting away much of the power of our vote and voice
by passing powers to the European Union
We allowed the EU to impose laws we did not want
To levy taxes we disagreed with
And to spend our money as they saw fit
Brexit is designed to recall those lost powers

The once free people will be free again
The once and future sovereign will be the people themselves
Let me question the thoughtless assumption of some who think this should be an argument about trade and not about these wider truths
Let me challenge their view that our membership of the single market and customs union has boosted our economy
They wish us all to discuss in worried tones what we might lose from leaving
If you look out the economic growth figures for the UK you will discover that the UK economy grew faster from 1945 to 1972 when we joined the EEC than in the long years since we joined
You will discover that the growth rate did not accelerate again in 1992 when the EU claimed it had completed its single market

The immediate sequel to joining the EEC and to completing the single market was the UK plunged into recession on both occasions
In 1974 it was the oil and banking crisis that affected much of the west. Not the EEC's fault, but the EEC offered us no respite from it.
In 1993 it was a recession created by European policy
Our period shadowing the DM and then as a member of the Exchange Rate Mechanism gave us a nasty boom and bust
Our early experience of the completed single market was a 5% loss of national output and income.

We were told then that creating currency stability was a crucial part of a single market.
The only problem was the policy to achieve it did the opposite.
The EU itself has sought to study the impact of the single market
They concluded that the UK got the least benefit of all the states out of the process
They said we experienced a single gain of just 1% over the whole time we have been in the single market.
It is difficult to find even as much as that that in the figures.
Instead the UK's entry into the EEC's so called common market of the 1970s speeded painful losses of industrial business in the UK

The lop sided freeing of trade, removing barriers where France and Germany were strong but not doing the same where we were strong hastened large closures and output losses in steel, cars and other basic industry.

In 1972 the UK made 1.92 million cars. Ten years later in the EEC that had fallen to a low of just 888,000.

We lost Austin and Morris, Wolseley and Riley, Vanden Plas and Hillman, Sunbeam and Triumph, Jensen and Rover

It is true there were home made problems with the way the industry was managed, but no-one can say we got a boost from EEC membership.

In 1972 the UK steel industry had 323,000 employees and the UK was the world's fifth largest producer

Today we have 35,000 and are in twenty first place

The large coal industry that produced 147 m tonnes in 1970 has seen all the deep mines closed

With just a small residual of surface mining left

The German steel and coal industries flourished and the German car industry exported large volumes to the UK replacing our output

EU regulations have played a part in the demise of parts of our energy industries

EU energy policy is turning the UK into a net importer despite being a country rich with energy resources

In chemicals and textiles too the UK lost out to continental competition

Under Labour and Conservative governments there was a remorseless decline of important parts of our industry throughout the period of our membership.

It is difficult to see why people think there will be any additional a loss of output when we leave the single market when there was no gain from joining it

The argument seems to be based on the dubious idea that our exports to the continent will suffer because we will find the EU impedes our access to their market

This assumption too needs examination

Given the way the rest of the EU exports to us much more than we export to them imposing barriers could be a more costly choice for them

I assume the UK will retaliate should the rest of the EU impose tariff and non tariff barriers, and would match any such restrictions

Tariffs will be strictly limited under WTO rules which bind both us and the EU

We should not exaggerate the impact moving to World Trade terms would have. Many countries have increased their exports to the EU at a faster rate from outside the customs union than we have from inside

Non tariff barriers too have to conform with the Facilitation of Trade Agreement which the WTO brought into effect last year

It is possible the rest of the EU will want to punish us and punish themselves more by imposing what barriers they can

The UK economy would have several ways of adjusting

It could import cheaper goods from the rest of the world, removing tariffs on imports in return for free trade agreements with other countries

The UK could reimburse consumers and companies that had to pay the additional tariff by giving them offsetting tax cuts out of the substantial tariff revenue the UK state would collect

The UK Treasury would collect about £16bn in tariff revenue on EU exports to us, giving plenty of scope to compensate. Meanwhile the rest of the EU would collect just £6bn on our exports to them. All of that money of course would go to the EU, not to member states governments.

UK business could divert some production from export to the EU to the domestic market

Our farms could greatly expand production behind the substantial tariff wall that is allowed under WTO rules for food so that we all enjoy more home produced food as we used before entry into the EEC.

The one non farm tariff that does cause some to worry is the 10% tariff on cars

Here you would expect the combined impact of the stronger Euro and a 10% tariff to cause more UK car buyers to switch to domestic suppliers Helping offset any impact on export volumes to the continent.

The UK does run too high a balance of payments deficit.

It has been persistent for many years of our membership of the EU

It is heavily influenced both by the substantial budget contributions we have to make

and by the large deficit in goods we run with the EU

On exit we will be able to cut the deficit by no longer making payments

We will be able to rebuild our agricultural industry

Prosperity, not austerity.

That must be our aim.

Prosperity will be easier won once we are out of the European Union.

Restoring the freedoms of a once sovereign people.

That is the overriding task we face.

On June 24th 2016 17.4 million voters gave a great mandate to Parliament To take back control.

During the referendum campaign I was asked one of the questions designed by Remain to damage the cause of freedom.

Would you, the media avidly asked, accept being poorer in order to regain lost freedoms?

I replied that fortune meant there was no so such choice before us.

The very right to govern ourselves that we wished to reclaim

will allow us to follow policies that made us richer, not poorer.

As an optimist I anticipate we will do better out than in.

No-one can be sure what loss there might be in store if we remain in the EU Or how many gains we will seize out of the EU.

What we do know is our fortune will rest more on our own decisions once we are free.

So let me begin my account of life after Brexit by explaining how we can be better off.

I appreciate this will be at variance with several modelled forecasts put out by an establishment afraid of freedom and scared of change.

It is an establishment that has a proven track record of error. They told us the ERM would bring us a golden scenario or more growth and low inflation. Instead it brought a deep recession.

They told us if the UK stayed out of the Euro it would be deeply damaging to our business. Instead our business flourished with the pound and the Euro area had several years of crises and low or no growth. They said the big build up in debts prior to 2007 were fine because banks had found new ways of managing risks. That forecast didn't work out too well either.

My forecast will be criticised, for it is not backed up with a model nor expressed in precise figures. It does however come from someone who did forecast the ERM crisis, the problems in the Eurozone and the banking crisis. I must warn that no-one can deliver a precise and accurate 15 year economic forecast. I have no intention of trying to deliver one.

Too many things will change.

I can, however, point to the opportunities and the favourable changes that we can expect in the few years that follow Brexit that will boost whatever our growth rate then is. I do not expect a sudden fall in growth or income thanks to Brexit. The Treasury's short term forecasts of such an outcome for the year after the vote have already proved wide of the mark.

In future as in the past the main forces shaping our growth rate will be the pace of innovation, the monetary and fiscal policies being pursued, and the state of the world economy.

The most obvious gain that the anti-Brexit forecasters rarely put in to their models is the chance to spend our tax money on our priorities.

The £12bn we send every year to the EU and do not get back is lost money to the UK.

Worse still it is a large drag on our balance of payments every year.

To pay that bill we either have to borrow more money from abroad to pay it or we have to sell more of our assets to overseas buyers, cutting the investment income we earn on those assets.

Stopping that drag will boost our economy.

Spending the £12bn at home each year will mean more jobs and more items bought from UK suppliers.

That will boost our economy with extra growth of 0.6% of our total income.

That's a one third increase in the current growth

rate in the year we start it, with the same extra output in every year that follows.

In the referendum campaign I set out a draft budget to illustrate how we might spend the money

I recommend it to the government.

I also recommend that we advise the EU that if they do not offer a wide ranging and sensible free trade agreement anytime soon we should discontinue payments to them on March 30 2019 and start the benefits for us.

There is no need for a Transition or Implementation period if there is no good deal to transit to.

We know we can trade well under WTO rules and with WTO tariffs, as that is what we do today with most countries outside the EU.

Out of the EU we will be free to fix and levy our own taxes.
We were told by past governments that tax was a red line issue
That we would always be able to decide our own taxes
That proved to be untrue
Out of the EU we can take VAT off feminine hygiene products
We can remove VAT from green items ranging from boiler controls to draught excluders.
Promoting fuel efficiency without the drag of extra VAT will help us keep warm and be better off. We could do more to combat fuel poverty by cancelling the VAT on it
We can also levy the amount of tax we wish from larger companies.

EU tax judgements on UK corporation tax have made us repay tax we thought had been fairly and legally levied.
Once we leave the EU we can take back control of our fishery.
There have been many EU policies damaging to jobs and incomes for the UK
But none more consistently unhelpful than the Common Fishing Policy
We have been changed from a country with a rich fishery and a strong net exporter of fish
Into a country with a badly damaged fishery lamely importing our own fish from foreign interests that have taken it
A UK designed policy can do better at conserving our stocks

whilst at the same time delivering more fish through UK boats to meet our needs as consumers
The long period of forcing discards of many dead fish at sea has pillaged our fishery in a bad cause.
If a UK fishing policy requires fishermen to land everything they catch we will catch less and eat more, a win win for the industry, the country and the fish
Out of the EU we can restore our farms
We have moved from 95% self sufficiency in temperate products to under 70%
Our local supermarkets now are full of Danish bacon, Dutch salad stuffs, flowers and vegetables, Spanish fruit and French dairy products

UK consumers have to pay higher prices than world prices for things we cannot grow for ourselves.
Common EU policies on beef and milk and much else have proved damaging to UK farmers.
A UK based policy can help farmers cut the food miles and gain a larger share of our domestic market
Our membership of the EU confronted us in its early days with the abolition of tariff walls which had protected some of our industry
Whilst leaving up barriers against services where we had a competitive edge
Predictably we slumped into large and permanent deficit in our trade with the rest of the EU.

In the first two decades of our membership the UK lost large amounts of our industrial capacity
German industry proved to be more competitive and we turned to huge imports as we saw unemployment in our manufacturing heartlands mount
The EEC was reluctant to open up the markets we were good at to let us

compete fairly.

Out of the EU we can manage our trade more effectively.

Most people in the UK want us to promote more free trade, not introduce new barriers.

If this can be done fairly, with reductions in barriers on both sides, it will help boost our prosperity.

Our trade with the rest of the world is in surplus, showing that we have an EU trade problem, not a global trade problem.

There can be some early and easy wins for trade policy as soon as the UK takes back control over this important matter.

The UK can offer tariff free access to our market to emerging market producers of tropical produce in return for better access to their markets. Old friends and trading partners like Australia, New Zealand, Singapore and the USA will welcome Free Trade Agreements with us.

The Free Trade Agreements the EU has with third countries can novate to us as well as to the rest of the EU.

I know of no country that has a trade agreement with the EU that wants to

impose new barriers against the UK once we have left.

Some say such arrangements may be possible but will not offset the loss of our current trading arrangements with the rest of the EU

I disagree.

It would be strange indeed if the EU want to impose tariffs and other barriers on trade in goods

given their huge surplus in that trade today

If they did, the impact will be much larger on them, as they export so much more that can attract tariffs than we do to them.

We will carry on exporting to them one way or another.

Today the bulk of our trade is carried out under WTO rules with tariffs imposed by the EU.

This is why I do not think we have to choose between being free and being rich

We do not need to stay in some Faustian pact, trading freedom for more exports

The gloomy arguments that we will suffer from leaving are not merely misleading about the economy

They are also too narrowly concentrated on business profit and loss when we should be talking more of freedom and self government.

Leaving the EU will give us the freedom to decide who we should welcome into our country

Many people who voted for Leave, and both government and Opposition

Are keen that the UK should be open to talent,

Welcoming to entrepreneurs and investors,

Keen on extending academic networks through shared scholarship and exchange

And generous to those fleeing danger and intolerance

Many also feel we do need to impose some limits on unrestricted migration into low paid jobs or onto benefits

We want those who join us to enjoy good housing and decent living standards

That requires us to expand our numbers at a sustainable pace

We also want a migration system which is fair between the EU and the rest of the world

Out of the EU the UK will have more influence in the world

The UK has often been a force for good

We have faced down genocides and warmongering dictators

We have often with our US ally stood for freedom, self determination and democracy

We stood up for the values of freedom and self determination when we helped liberate Kuwait

Freed the Falkland islanders

And defeated the Axis powers in 1945

Some say if we leave the EU we will become isolated and less powerful

That is selling us short and misunderstanding the realities

Out of the EU the UK will regain her voice and vote in international bodies where the EU has displaced us

Let us take the WTO as an example

We were an influential founding member

In recent years we have had neither voice nor vote, as the EU has spoken for us

Out of the EU we will once again be a strong voice for free trade worldwide

Far from being isolated we will have new allies

Under WTO rules the EU cannot impose on us any barriers they do not impose on all the other WTO members

So if some in the EU have in mind retreating behind some stockade of tariffs and regulations

They will be picking a fight with the USA, China and the rest at the same time

Out of the EU we will be able to regain our voice and vote in various worldwide standards making bodies, whose work often requires the EU to implement the results 32

For the main benefits of Brexit come from once again being a self governing country

I find it extraordinary that so many who make their living out of government and politics

Are so defeatist about this greatest of countries

Why do they doubt our abilities to shape good laws

Frame a good economic policy

And trade with the five continents of the world based on what we are good at?

Why do they both say they love the EU

Yet have such a low view of it that they think its main aim will be to do us down

Why do they tell us every clause and line of the Treaties has to be enforced against the UK

Yet all those great clauses in the Treaties that require the EU to be a good neighbour and trading partner of nearby states

will in their view go unenforced and unheeded

If the EU is as logical and legal as they say our future friendly relationship is assured

And if it is not and the Treaty is made for breaking, it need not concern us
what it says, especially once we are out
Anyone who walks the corridors and great rooms at Westminster

Must see there the heroic story of our islands
There on the walls and in the sculptures are the establishment and the rebels
The winners and the losers, the great moments of our history
There is the signing of Magna Carta, the taming the King in the seventeenth
century,
The union of the crowns,
The saving of Europe from Napoleon,
The passage of the Great Reform Bill and the triumph of the suffragettes
So many made common cause to put the people in charge through their vote
And to put Parliament in charge of carrying out their wishes

All the time we remained in the EU there were an increasing number of laws we
could not change
More taxes we could not control. More money that someone else spent away from
our shores
This system took away the very freedoms our ancestors fought for and
established
Once back these powers will be used well and sometimes badly, but always as a
result of strong argument and heated votes here at home,
We will doubtless have economic reversals out of the EU as we did in it
But the difference matters
Next time when mistakes are made they will be our mistakes

They will be mistakes the British people can punish and put right
More importantly
Taking back control gives us immediate opportunities
To legislate wisely
And to grow our prosperity
That is why I voted for Brexit
That is why many of the 17.4 million voted for Brexit
That is why many who voted Remain
Will be winners too from this course
Once we are at last out of the EU.
This great people

This once and future sovereign
Will have many contributions to make to the world
As we have in the past
Let us be a voice for freedom
A strong arm for peace
And a force for good around the globe