

The future of Mr Carswell

Knowing how keen some of my contributors are to discuss UKIP and its role, I feel I must mention the recent loss of UKIP's one elected MP. Mr Carswell no longer feels UKIP has a task given the decision to leave the EU. He believes that was its main proposition, and therefore thinks it is redundant now that has been adopted by the public. Others in UKIP think there is a continuing role in the future for the party, as they seek to define its stance on a range of issues other than our relationship with the EU.

I am not going to express an opinion on this difference within UKIP. I would be interested to hear from those on either side of the argument. Some will think Mr Carswell has behaved sensibly and has explained how voters and elected officials need to move on now the issue of EU membership has been resolved by popular vote. Others will think Mr Carswell was wrong, and will see a future for UKIP.

What kind of a party should UKIP be going forward if you think, unlike Mr Carswell, it has a future role? What should be its distinctive policies and platform?

The response of the EU to the letter

It is curious that some in the EU seem to think there needs to be a long negotiation over the UK's exit. The UK has announced its intention to leave, and can do so after two years or before by mutual agreement. It is difficult to see why these democratic friendly nations would want to keep us in the EU for a whole two years if we just want to leave and if they do not want to talk about the future relationship. Of course the UK will pay its regular bills up to the point of departure. There is no legal requirement to pay anything else.

The UK is making a very friendly and generous offer – full tariff free access to our market, full rights for all EU citizens currently here, continuing defence and security collaboration and much else. All we ask is the same courtesies in return. I always defend the other member states and EU from allegations that they want to damage themselves and us during this process. I now look forward to them living up to the fine ideals of democracy, co-operation and free trade which they say are part of the EU scheme. I would expect them to see that free access to our market is an important advantage for their farmers and others who would face higher tariffs under WTO rules.

The pound and the letter

Some said the pound would tumble more when we sent the letter.

Instead this week in the run up to its delivery the pound has remained fairly steady at around \$1.24 and Euro 1.15, above the lows of October last year when the pound reached \$1.20 and 1.10 Euros. The cut in UK interest rates last summer and the rises in US interest rates have of course led to a stronger dollar. The world's leading currency has also risen strongly against the yen and the Euro.

The pound hit an all time low against the Euro of 1.04 in December 2008 when we were firmly in the EU and is now 10% above that. It is also well above its all time low against the dollar.

Independence!

Independence Day will forever be 23rd June. UK voters decided they wished to be self governing again on that day last year. March 29th will also be high in our affections. Today is the day we send in our formal withdrawal from the EU.

As Lord Pannick argued in Court and in the Lords, the Article 50 letter is irreversible. We will leave the EU within the next two years, with or without an Agreement.

There are those who now wish to change the legal advice from the Remain side. Some now claim the court case argument was just that, a useful argument at the time but not one Remain really believed. I will defend Lord Pannick in his absence. I am sure he is an honourable peer of the realm. This was no mere lawyer using the best argument for his client, but a member of the legislature stating what he as an expert believed the law to be. It was successful. The government would have won the case if the court thought the Article 50 letter was just an invitation to talks about withdrawal. I made all this clear in the Parliamentary debates we held to pass legislation to approve our exit. The court has now done us a favour. We are leaving the EU with a very strong majority of MPs supporting departure, as well as a majority of UK voters. The Act to leave the EU passed with a majority of 372 votes.

Article 50 put in the two year exit provision to prevent a reluctant EU delaying a country's departure by refusing to negotiate an exit agreement sensibly. The UK's despatch of the letter now places the obligations on the

rest of the EU to see what they can salvage from their departing member. They should have a long list of things they do not want to lose which is realistic, and another list of things they don't want to lose which are unrealistic.

The first list will encompass protecting their access our lucrative export market, ensuring the position of EU nationals in the UK, keeping access to the City for the money their companies and individuals need to raise, keeping their flying rights into the UK, keeping UK involvement in European defence, and preserving and developing many collaborations on research and joint investment. All of those the UK is willing to grant in return for a punishment free settlement.

The second list may encompass an exit fee, continuing contributions to their budget, and continuing freedom of movement between the UK and the EU. Asking for those will show they still have not understood why we are leaving, nor the weakness of their legal and political position.

[The walk away option is real](#)

The EU has constantly underestimated UK unhappiness with the EU and our resolve to leave as a result.

They are in danger of doing so again. They are determined to believe just leaving is impossible, because it does not suit them. No worry that it forces them into their own Project Fear. No worry that it means trying to think of ways to harm themselves.

Leaving without a deal is always going to be better for us than a punishment deal. What is bizarre is the number of politicians in the UK who are on the EUs side, actively promoting the idea that the UK has to pay a fortune to the EU to leave when there is no such legal or moral obligation on us. The BBC also claims to have found government officials who want to undermine the walk away option. So they too want to weaken the very strong UK position.

The EU should not overplay its hand by believing the UK would not dare to just leave if there is no deal that makes sense.