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HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON
SW1A 0AA

The Rt. Hon. the Lord Adonis,
House of Lords,
London,
SW1A 0PW.

5th September 2018

Dear Lord Adonis,

As your letter of 12th August appeared in a newspaper before it reached me I would not normally reply but two of my constituents wanted to know if there were any responses to your points so I am sending it to you as well as to them.

In your letter you refer to 'no deal' as if it were my proposal. This is not correct. I would favour a Canada-style free trade deal. This is still possible and indeed was previously offered by Donald Tusk and recently by Michel Barnier.

However, if no withdrawal agreement has been made within two years of Article 50 having been agreed, i.e. on 29th March 2019, we will then then resort to trading under World Trade Organisation (WTO) terms. 'No deal' is a misleading phrase, it is more helpful to refer to it as the 'WTO option'.

This WTO option would be preferable to the Government's Chequers proposal. That is because under the Chequers proposal, we would not have control of our laws, borders, money or trade. We would be out of Europe but still run by Europe.

On the issue of whether we would be under a legal obligation to make any payments in the case of the WTO option, the most authoritative report was produced by the House of Lords European Committee in its publication 'Brexit and the EU Budget'. In its conclusion in paragraph 135 it states:

"On the basis of the legal opinions we have considered we conclude that, as a matter of EU law, Article 50 TEU allows the UK to leave the EU without being liable for outstanding financial obligations under the EU budget and related financial instruments, unless a withdrawal agreement is concluded which resolves this issue."

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It is worth bearing in mind that the membership of this committee is primarily made up of peers who supported Remain, including such notable figures as Lord Butler of Brockwell. The full legal advice is attached as an appendix to the report which sets out the argument with considerable clarity. Saving £40 billion is an important factor. Although I know you have a fondness for spending tax payers' money, if we added this to the saving from cancelling your other favourite project, HS2, we could have a Lord Adonis dividend heading towards £100 billion.

You mention the scare stories and threats that are a continuation of 'Project Fear', that our aircraft will not be able to take off, that we will be starved of food, denied vital medicines, suffer from trade tariffs along with bluster about border posts in Ireland in contravention of the Belfast Agreement.

None of these scare stories has any foundation in fact while a number has been shown to be absurd in the Government's recent papers. Our aircraft will still be able to take off under international conventions. It would be ridiculous for the EU to try to cause problems in this area as flights from Europe to North America mainly pass through British airspace and any problems with air travel would damage the tourism industries on which many EU economies depend.

Food and medicines will still arrive, because checks and taxation on our imports will be a matter for us and it would be perverse to deem goods safe on 29th March but unsafe on 31st March. If we do not wish to make checks then we are not required to do so. Moreover, if we choose to lower all tariffs, which would be my preferred option, food and clothing could be up to 20% cheaper than is the case today. We could decide to have our own 'transition period', independent of the EU, leaving things as they are until we are ready to make changes.

As for the Belfast Agreement, any breach would be caused by the Republic of Ireland imposing border controls at the demand of the EU. It would not be by act of the UK. I would hope that the Republic would not undertake such an unnecessary act given that checks could be made away from the border with the use of appropriate systems and co-operation. Currently, the UK, EU and Republic of Ireland have all said that they will not impose such a border.

In each of these cases the threat is empty and if the EU did try to cause problems it would simply rebound on it as an unnecessary act of economic self-harm. Indeed the more we are bullied by Europe, the clearer the case for taking back control. An organisation that makes threats is not one to which we want to belong.

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In areas such as extradition agreements and sharing of security information, my approach would be for us to be as generous as possible. We should say that we will continue to share any relevant security issues with countries in Europe. As we co-operate in this way with non-EU states this has little to do with Brexit.

I do not believe there should be any special terms for EU migrants. Once we have left the EU there will be no legal basis to treat them differently from migrants from non-EU countries.

As regards a second referendum, there is no mandate for one. In the 2017 General Election, both the Conservative and Labour manifestos accepted the referendum result and were against a second referendum. 82% of the vote went to these parties. The national parties who promised a second referendum, the Liberal Democrats and the Greens, both saw their vote share fall.

I am sorry that you do not understand the point I made in the Commons on October 24th 2011. I was discussing the idea of a mandate referendum for David Cameron to begin his negotiations on our membership of the EU followed by a decision on what he had achieved. However, the Government decided on a simple in/out referendum after the negotiations, so this mandate option was not used.

The British people voted to leave the EU over two years ago. Since that time many in the establishment – Lords, mandarins, big business – have been fighting to reverse the democratically expressed will of the British people. They think they know better than the majority that decided we must leave the EU.

Everyone knows that the EU is a failing economic model. If we make the most of our renewed national independence to reform our economy and forge stronger links the world over, we can grow as the rest of the world grows. With 90% of future global growth forecast to come from outside Europe, that will be a brighter future for Britain. This great opportunity will help the least well off the most.

With every good wish,

John Glegg
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