

# Brexit progress at the beginning of September

To ensure a successful and permanent separation from the EU, three tasks need to be accomplished. Firstly, Article 50 needs to be invoked, beginning the two-year process (which can be extended subject to mutual agreement) which will actually take us out of the EU. Secondly, the government needs to have studied the alternatives and come up with a well-researched Brexit strategy that will ensure that we arrive at the exit door with the best possible future ahead of us, our trade with both the EU and the rest of the world in good shape. Thirdly, remain voters, especially the young, need to be de-programmed and years of indoctrination undone so that the scales of europhilia will fall from their eyes. At the same time our democratic processes need to be renewed to ensure that no politician will ever be able to repeat Edward Heath's litany of deceit to drag us back in.

The Campaign for an Independent Britain will do what we can to put pressure on HMG to ensure the first of these tasks takes place as soon as practically possible. As far as the second is concerned, we have sought to provide a forum for an exchange of views on the subject. Tackling the third will be a major long-term challenge and one which, no doubt in common with other pro-independence campaign groups, we are only starting to get to grips with. The Harrogate Agenda has gone some way to devising a blueprint for democratic renewal, but more needs to be done, especially in our schools and universities, to provide a counter-weight to years of pro-EU propaganda which young people have been fed and – in many cases – uncritically imbibed.

Another part of the de-indoctrination process is to provide resources. There is a need to disseminate news of post-Brexit developments, including informed comment. The shock of Brexit

has left something of a vacuum and there has been no shortage of on-line doom mongers claiming that Brexit will never happen, while disgruntled remainers continue to call for a second referendum and to latch onto any piece of bad economic news.

We are therefore producing pieces like this article both to reassure worried leave voters and to provide them with information to use in their dealings with any remainers among their acquaintances. Once we separate the wood from the trees, the picture is actually pretty encouraging. Early economic indicators suggest that the “do-it-yourself recession” over which George Osborne fretted has not happened and is not going to. Meanwhile Theresa May has proved much firmer on the issue of Brexit than many leave voters had expected. She intends to trigger Article 50 at some point next year and has ruled out a second referendum or an early general election. Her comments at yesterday’s cabinet meeting at Chequers have been quite unequivocal:-

*“We must continue to be very clear that ‘Brexit means Brexit’, that we’re going to make a success of it. That means there’s no second referendum; no attempts to sort of stay in the EU by the back door; that we’re actually going to deliver on this.”*

She also added that “quite a lot of work” had already been done over the summer to prepare the way for the Article 50 exit negotiations, although no more details were provided. She has stated that there will be a “red line” on free movement from the EU and thus that we would pursue an unique relationship with the EU rather than adopting an off the shelf solution such as the Norwegian or Swiss models.

Mrs May has also confirmed that there will be no parliamentary vote before Article 50 is triggered. This will spike Owen Smith’s guns, but is perfectly fair. After all, the referendum bill saw Parliament hand over to the electorate the final decision about whether or not to stay in the EU. Even if both

Houses of Parliament have strong europhile majorities, it would still be nothing less than immoral to ride roughshod over June 23rd's vote.

So it does look like Article 50 will be triggered and that we will therefore begin the withdrawal process at some point next year. This is all very positive. It would be good to know a bit more about the likely exit route and how the key issues of restricting migration and access to the single market will be dealt with. It is no secret that there are disagreements over these issues within Mrs May's cabinet. However, in view of her tough rhetoric on immigration at last year's Conservative conference, it is no surprise that she has thrown her weight behind some restriction on freedom of movement – after all, immigration was one of the main factors behind the leave victory and recent statistics have underlined the scale of the task which her government faces if these aspirations are to be met.

Returning to the economy, things look pretty positive. Last week, we mentioned Anatole Kaletsky, who claimed that over time, public opinion would shift back towards EU membership. In the interest of fairness, it's only right that we report his "Remainer's Recantation" – in other words, his admission that the post-June 23rd armageddon he predicted hasn't come to pass:- *"Nobody can say at present whether this newfound indifference to Brexit will turn out to be well-founded realism, complacency or wishful thinking, but it is definitely not the attitude that I expected in the panicky hours immediately after the vote."*

The CBI's latest quarterly survey also shows that business and professional services firms – which include accountancy, legal and marketing firms – reported that business volumes were unchanged on the quarter, after rising in May. Meanwhile, consumer services companies – which include hotels, bars, restaurants, travel, leisure – saw further moderate growth in business volumes. The report highlighted a decline in

optimism, but given that the CBI was a staunch supporter of remain, this isn't really a great surprise. With business performing better than expected, it is likely that this lack of optimism will prove a short-term issue, which will dissipate once a clear timetable for Article 50 and details of the withdrawal strategy are spelt out.

This article from the oil and gas industry's magazine expresses some concern about the possible effects of Brexit on a very unstable EU, claiming that it could trigger a fall in demand, but the article goes on to say that "things rarely turn out as bad as we feared or as well as we hoped." Meanwhile, consumer spending has rebounded, with strong high street sales figures reported for July.

All in all, a pretty upbeat picture of our economy. In fact, in view of the data, it is highly questionable whether the Bank of England should have re-started its Quantitative Easing. The economist Tim Congdon called the move "crazy".

For all that, we did the right thing on June 23rd and if anyone is in any doubt, the recent behaviour of the European Commission should put their minds at rest. Less than two months after the decision by one of the biggest EU member states to leave this project, the Commission President, the arch-federalist Jean-Claude Juncker showed just what a different world he lives in compared with the average UK voter. "Borders are the worst invention ever made by politicians", he recently said in a recent meeting to discuss the future of the EU following the Brexit vote. Our Prime Minister replied that people of the United Kingdom consider the control over their country's borders to be important. Indeed, the desire to regain a greater degree of control of our borders was a big factor in the Leave vote.

But we are not alone in our concerns. The migration crisis is causing borders to be reinstated in many frontiers across Europe, even between countries who signed the Schengen accord.

Mr Juncker's desire to see national borders completely abolished is increasingly out of step with the wishes of many EU "citizens".

Meanwhile, his colleagues at the Commission have seriously upset the Irish. Margrethe Vestager, the EU's Competition Commissioner, ordered Apple to pay €13 billion in tax to the Irish government, claiming that its arrangement with the Irish government is illegal under state aid rules. Not only is Tim Cook, Apple's Chief Executive, annoyed by this decision, calling it "maddening" and "political", but reaction in Ireland has been very hostile. The Irish cabinet is contemplating an appeal against the decision, while Michael O'Leary of Ryanair, one of Ireland's most well-known businessman, used somewhat stronger language to register his disapproval.

While such resentment is unlikely to build up a sufficient head of steam to lead to calls for Irexit, there is no doubt that the European Commission could prove one of the withdrawal movement's key allies in our longer term campaign to ensure we never re-join the EU. Its behaviour makes our end-game a lot more achievable – namely when we reach the same point as Switzerland where, to quote Thomas Minder, a counsellor for Schaffhausen state, only 'a few lunatics' want to join the EU,