

Can anyone engineer such a shambles by accident?

On this website, you can read two assessments of the Government's Brexit White Paper. Nigel Moore, one of our regular contributors, calls it "unworkable, risky thinking", saying that it is highly unlikely that the EU will agree to it as it violates so many principles of the Single Market. Meanwhile, taking a different angle, academics from the Brexit Studies Department at Birmingham City University have examined the plan and have declared it to be "Brexit in Name only", keeping us tied to the EU with the only real change being perhaps a limited ability to control freedom of movement.

It is now over two years since the Brexit vote. Mrs May reached the second anniversary of her taking office last Friday. Under her watch, a new Department, the Department for Exiting the European Union, was set up, with several hundred staff employed. What have they been doing all this time?

Unless drastic action is taken, we will end up in a shambolic situation whereby our fishing industry will be devastated, our freedom to trade will be limited and we will still be subject to virtually all the EU *Acquis* with no representation. It is the worst of all possible worlds.

It is not as if Mrs May isn't aware of the less damaging EFTA option, which as a transitional arrangement, would at least get us out of the EU, save our fishing industry and enable us to negotiate a longer-term agreement from a position of strength. We know that EFTA-supporting MPs have met with her. They seem to have made no impression. The EFTA route would have solved many of the Irish border issues. The present plan still leaves many questions unanswered. The unfortunate Dominic Raab, parachuted into David Davis' former position, challenged Mrs May's critics to come up with a credible

alternative. The answer is that they have and she ignored it.

What is more, It does not take much foresight to predict that her party would suffer in the event of a botched Brexit. We have been warning for some time that it could create the worst crisis for the Conservatives since the repeal of the Corn Laws in 1846. It should come as no surprise to readers that since the Chequers meeting and the publication of the Government White Paper, support for the Tories has fallen by 6%, with UKIP being the beneficiaries. Only 17% of voters are happy with the Chequers proposals. Unsurprisingly, some Tory MPs are getting nervous.

The big question which needs addressing is whether this is cock-up or conspiracy. An interesting piece in The Telegraph mentions how Airbus has been double-crossed by the Government. It spurred them to publish a dire forecast of the impact of Brexit before handing a prize £2bn RAF contract to US rival Boeing without a competition. What is more, the piece mentioned that Airbus officials met with Remainer Cabinet ministers. Just coincidence?

Then there is the question of what happens if, as widely expected, the EU rejects the proposals in the White Paper. Writing in CapX, Oliver Wiseman claims that although Mrs May might claim that this is the “furthest the UK can go”, rejection may result in yet more concessions.

It is unsurprising that some MPs are beginning to smell a rat. Jacob Rees-Mogg claimed that the PM was only ever “pretending” to deliver Brexit and that she was a “Remainer who has stuck with remain”. This is a damning indictment. If proof can be found that Mrs May was never serious about achieving a successful Brexit, the implications are enormous. Unfortunately, when her behaviour over the last two years is weighed in the balance, it is becoming increasingly hard to hold to the position that the mess we are currently in – and which Mrs May seems so determined to continue – is entirely

the result of incompetence.