

Macron and Marr muddy the waters as Brexiteers speak out against the ECJ

The headlines in Open Europe's daily e-mail sounded very promising:- **"UK could have a bespoke arrangement between full single market access and a free trade deal, says Emmanuel Macron."** Isn't that what everyone has wanted? Could it even be "having cake and eating it"?

Not if one reads the small print. Macron's comments were made during an interview for the Andrew Marr Show. Nicola Shawson of the *Guardian* listened to the full interview and pointed out that Macron insisted that there would be no cherry-picking:-

Pressed on whether there would be a bespoke special solution for the UK, Macron said: "Sure, but ... this special way should be consistent with the preservation of the single market and our collective interests... and you should understand that you cannot, by definition, have the full access to the single market if you don't tick the box."

So nothing new here. We will get a deal giving us some degree of access to the single market, but not full access. It will be worse than the access we enjoy as a full member. Fine. We already knew that.

Another person who listened to Macron's interview with Andrew Marr was Richard North, who pointed out that Macron contradicted himself:-

By definition, he said, the relationship will be "less deep than today". The deepest possible relationship is being a member of the European Union. But he then adds: "As you decided to leave you cannot be part of the single market".

Now this is confusing because he goes on to say that “you can have some deeper relations and some others”. For instance, he says, “we have a deeper relation with Norway than the – the one we have with Canada”. So it depends on the outcome of the Brexit negotiation but, unless you change your mind, you will not be part of the single market because you will not be part of the European Union.

Addressed to someone like Andrew Marr, who already has a slender grasp of the basics – to say nothing of the body politic in general – this sort of confusion, where he elides membership of the EU and the Single Market, can be fatal.

Certainly, the French President seems to contradict what he was saying last week in the aftermath of the Anglo-French summit at Sandhurst.

It's therefore not only our side which is getting into a muddle over Brexit.

Macron and Marr were discussing a longer-term EU-UK relationship, Turning to the transitional arrangements, it is encouraging to note that opposition is mounting among Conservative MPs to any role for the ECJ and to free movement of people after 29th March 2019 – Brexit day. Jacob Rees-Mogg didn't mince his words about free movement nor the cost of the Brexit settlement, while ex-ministers Iain Duncan-Smith, John Redwood, Owen Paterson and Lord Lawson also made clear their opposition to any involvement of the ECJ once we are formally out of the EU.

Of course, it is one thing to point out the bad features of a proposed deal and quite another to come up with a suitable alternative, particularly one which will satisfy the business community, which is desperate for some guidelines in time to plan for life outside the EU. Some compromises will have to be made as it is impossible to find even a short-term deal which will tick everyone's boxes. A total surrender to the EU,

however, turning us into a colony of Brussels for 21 months, is definitely not the answer and it is good that voices in Parliament are beginning to be raised which will hopefully force a re-think – and soon.

PS: Since this article was published, a further article which provides an indication of the scale of opposition to free movement of people and any role for the ECJ after Brexit has appeared in the *Independent*. Mrs May is going to have a very tough time trying to get an agreement for the transitional deal as it stands, although a leadership challenge, as suggested by the author of the article, does look very unlikely.

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