

The blind are leading the blind on the Northern Irish border: Mr. Christopher Booker in: [behindthepaywall2](#)

Since last November, our more reckless Brexiteers have waxed lyrical about a report for the European Parliament that seemed to [offer a miraculous solution to that intractable problem of the Irish border](#). With apparently impeccable credentials as a former head of the World Customs Organization, its author Dr Lars Karlsson claimed that the answer to the riddle lay in a version of the system that allows goods to flow pretty freely between Norway and his native Sweden.

This was why last Wednesday Dr. Karlsson was attentively received by the Commons Brexit committee, to lay out his plan for a “smart border” between the two parts of Ireland, which could resolve the impasse that for months has threatened to derail Brexit talks. The only snag was that, as a customs man, Dr. Karlsson focused entirely on “customs controls”, completely failing to address those other “border controls” which are by far the more serious part of the problem.

The terrifying thing last week was that not a single MP seemed to realize that what Dr.

Karlsson was offering would solve nothing at all.*

Nothing he said would do anything to avoid the need for Border Inspection Posts, where, under EU rules, all live animals and “products of animal origin”, from milk to fish, will require inspections by officials wholly unconnected with

customs. The same applies to the Designated Points of Entry required to inspect all plant and vegetable products (right down to the wooden pallets used in transporting them).

All these items form a very significant part of the currently “frictionless” cross-border trade between the two parts of Ireland, worth billions of pounds a year. But leaving the EU will make a “hard border” inevitable.

Not a single MP seemed to realize that what Dr. Karlsson was offering would solve nothing at all; any more than they grasped that **the reason why goods can flow so freely between Norway and Sweden is that they are both in the European Economic Area**, which Theresa May is determined we shall leave. It was yet another example of Brexit wishful thinking. **The blind again are leading the blind.**

AS Dr. R North says: - The only snag said Mr Booker about the presentation of Dr. Karlsson, an ex-customs man, to MP’s, was that, as a customs man, Dr Karlsson focused entirely on "customs controls", completely failing to address those other "border controls" which are by far the more serious part of the problem*.

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Concordanceout expresses its thanks for all of this to Mr C Booker and to Dr. R North.