

The speakers at the Bruges Group meeting on the 28 March 2018, says James Henderson, “were John Redwood and the economist and mediaman Liam Halligan. “

“They were both good value judged purely as speakers but I 'm afraid Redwood did what I have seen him do so often, namely, play the role of the big bad Brexiteer then collapse when it comes to the difficult questions.”

{concordanceout.eu has been in correspondence with some of the Irish Problems, as printed on this site, and JR has been Nelsonian and does not reply except to say that “He sees no problems”.}

“During his speech Redwood went on about how the UK would gain control of this and control of that in the abstract, but there was little solid detail. In particular he appeared to have a blind faith in technology (and God knows, we have had enough public sector IT disasters to cure such blind faith) to handle the border problems, including that of the NI/RoI border in Ireland. This led him to advocate what was essentially an open borders immigration policy.”

“He started from a position that the UK should restrict low wage, low skilled labour while encouraging the high skilled. He then tried to fit this into a regulatory system enforced by work permits. Anyone, Redwood said, could physically come into the country but if they did not have a work permit they would not be able to work. This is living in cloud cuckoo land because:-

(1) Many of the low skilled already work off-the-books

and cash in hand [see says the ed. how well that works for many builders in cosmopolitan areas]

(2) Many more would be willing to do so under such a regime. It is also improbable that EU members state citizens coming after Brexit would be denied all benefits, either because they have dependents or more probably simply because a liberal internationalist dominated political class and media would prevent them deporting EU citizens in large numbers.”

But the really telling point was not in Redwood’s speech but during questions.

I wanted to put two questions: -

1. What if Theresa May agreed to a treaty which either thwarted Brexit by surreptitiously stitching the UK back into the EU, e.g., through membership of EFTA, or simply gave the EU too much and the UK too little, for example, agreeing to a long and potentially endless "transition" arrangement. Suppose May threatened to get or got the treaty through Parliament with the help of Remainers from all parties, what would you [Redwood] do then?

2. What would be the legal position if the [draft] treaty May had agreed was rejected by Parliament? Would that mean the UK left without a deal or would it mean that the UK remained in the EU?

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I was unable to ask either question.

Someone else asked Redwood question 1.

Redwood replied that he thought it best not to address that question at this time. This brought murmurings of dissent from the audience. This prompted Redwood to make the incredible claim that Brexit was in safe hands with Theresa May and that she could be trusted with the rest of the negotiations.

Outright derision resulted as the audience variously reminded Redwood that May had capitulated on every single policy to date - the money to be paid to the EU, the right of EU citizens to come to the UK and acquire a permanent right to stay during the transition period, fishing rights during the transmission period etc.

Redwood just repeated what he had said.

J Henderson says that:-

I think it reasonable to conclude that if “shove comes to push” over the betrayal of Brexit Redwood cannot be relied on to end up on the Brexit side of the ledger.

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Question 2 - "What would be the legal position if the treaty May agreed was rejected by Parliament? Would that mean the UK left without a deal or would it mean that the UK remained in the EU? "remained unasked.

J Henderson says:-

Many leavers are assuming that if the treaty May negotiates is not accepted by Parliament then the UK will leave without a deal and trade under WTO rules.

But this may not be so. He says and continues: - It could be argued, as Remainers doubtless will argue, that Parliament has been given a vote on the treaty and that their rejection

of the draft treaty automatically means the UK remains in the EU. The EU might well support the contention because it would suit their purposes.

[ed. I cannot agree with that. The words of Art 50 are clear. We are going out, deal or no deal. Once out, other things may be agreed but that all takes time between 27 still separate countries (just!) plus EU Commission and the UK.]

Liam Halligan: -

He was forthright in rebutting all the nonsense found in the mouths of Remainers and painted a positive economic future for the UK outside of the EU.

However, he seemed much too sanguine when it came to his belief that the UK would leave without a deal.

Much more probable than that, is that May will agree to a bad deal either out of panic as the deadline for leaving approaches or because it secretly suits her Remainer beliefs.

Best wishes

Robert Henderson [with thanks from concordanceout.eu]