

HOUSE OF COMMONS HANSARD

European Union (Withdrawal) Act

1st Allotted Day

17:46:00

The Prime Minister (Mrs Theresa May)
I beg to move,

That this House approves for the purposes of section 13(1)(b) of the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018, the negotiated withdrawal agreement laid before the House on Monday 26 November 2018 with the title ‘Agreement on the withdrawal of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland from the European Union and the European Atomic Energy Community’ and the framework for the future relationship laid before the House on Monday 26 November 2018 with the title ‘Political Declaration setting out the framework for the future relationship between the European Union and the United Kingdom’.

At the start of five days of debate that will set the course our country takes for decades to come, it is worth taking a moment to reflect on how we got here. When the treaty of Rome was signed in 1957, the United Kingdom stood apart. It was 15 years later, at the third attempt, that we joined what was then the European Economic Community. Ever since, our membership has been a contested matter.

In the first referendum in 1975, the British people voted to stay in, but almost a third of those who voted wanted to leave. Indeed, there are those in this Chamber who campaigned to leave at that time. As the EEC evolved into a European Union of increasing political depth, the British people’s doubts about our membership grew. Ultimately, membership of any union that involves the pooling of sovereignty can only be sustained with the consent of the people. In the referendum of 2016—the biggest democratic exercise in our history—the British public withdrew that consent.

Angus Brendan MacNeil (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)

The right hon. Lady has lost in the Supreme Court and in the European Court, and today she has lost in this House. I hope that she will not compound that by opposing a section 30 order for Scotland when the Scottish Government want it. Her history of opposition is not a good one and she should respect the democracy that she is talking about; it applies to Scotland too, Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister

As I have just said, membership of any union that involves the pooling of sovereignty can only be sustained with the consent of the people. In 2016, that consent was withdrawn by the British public in relation to our membership of the European Union. In 2014, when the people of Scotland were asked whether to remain in the United Kingdom, they voted to stay in the United Kingdom.

As I just repeated, in the referendum in 2016, the British people withdrew that consent, and they confirmed that choice a year later by voting overwhelmingly for parties that committed to delivering Brexit. The referendum was a vote to bring our EU membership to an end and to create a new role for our country in the world. To deliver on that vote, we need to deliver a Brexit that respects the decision of the British people: a Brexit that takes back control of our borders, laws and money and a Brexit that sets us on course for a better future outside the EU as a globally trading

nation in charge of our own destiny and seizing the opportunities of trade with some of the fastest growing and most dynamic economies across the world.

Anne Marie Morris (Newton Abbot) (Con)

Having read this agreement, it seems to me that we will not be able to enter into trade agreements because we are going to be stuck with the same rule base that we had in the EU. Does my right hon. Friend agree?

The Prime Minister

I do not think my hon. Friend will be surprised if I say that I do not agree with the analysis that she has just given in relation to the agreement. It is clear that we will have an independent trade policy and that we will be able to negotiate trade deals around the rest of the world. This is a specific issue that we looked at when we were putting forward our own proposals in the summer in relation to our future economic partnership with the European Union. I heard somebody on the Labour Benches asking from a sedentary position when we will be able to negotiate our trade deals. During the implementation period, we will be able to negotiate, sign and ratify trade deals around the world.

This will only be a moment of opportunity if we in this House can find a way to deliver a Brexit that begins to bring our country back together. That means protecting the easy trading relationship that supports just-in-time supply chains and the jobs that depend on them, the security co-operation that keeps us safe, the progress we have made in Northern Ireland, and the rights of citizens here in the UK and across the European Union.

Stephen Doughty (Cardiff South and Penarth) (Lab/Co-op)

The Prime Minister spoke of security co-operation, yet when I asked the Home Secretary the other day whether we would be left more safe or less safe as a result of this deal, he could not answer the question, because he could not guarantee that we would have access to the crucial SIS II database that ensures that we have information on terrorists, paedophiles and other criminals trying to cross our border. That is the reality of the deal that she has put before us.

The Prime Minister

As the hon. Gentleman knows full well, I think, the political declaration and the security section of that political declaration go well beyond any security arrangement that the European Union has with any other country—[Interruption.] And it makes it clear that in the next stage of negotiations, we will be negotiating how we can have access to the very elements that are covered by both SIS II and ECRIS. [Interruption.] No—perhaps the hon. Gentleman would like to look at the political declaration. The reference to those elements is indeed in the political declaration. [Interruption.] He says that they are not. I am sorry, but I have to say to him that he may not understand the elements that lie behind SIS II and ECRIS.

Wes Streeting (Ilford North) (Lab)

rose—

The Prime Minister

I am going to make some progress for a minute.

Achieving all the things that I have just set out in terms of protecting our trading relationship, the security co-operation, the progress in Northern Ireland and the rights of citizens requires some compromise. I know there are some in this House, and in the country, who would prefer a closer relationship with the European Union than the one I am proposing—indeed, who would prefer the relationship that we currently have and want another referendum which they hope would overturn

the decision we took in 2016. Although I profoundly disagree, they are arguing for what they believe is right for our country, and I respect that. But the hard truth is that we will not settle this issue and bring our country together that way. I ask them to think what it would say to the 52% who came out to vote leave, in many cases for the first time in decades, if their decision were ignored. What would it do to our politics?

The Prime Minister

I will take a significant number of interventions, but I will make some progress at this stage.

These are important points. There are those who want a closer relationship with the EU, but they need to recognise the message that was given by the 52% who voted to leave the European Union.

There are others in this House who would prefer a more distant relationship than the one I am proposing. Although I do not agree, I know that they are also arguing for what they think is best for our future, and I respect that too. But the hard truth is also that we will not settle this issue and bring our country together if, in delivering Brexit, we do not protect the trade and security co-operation on which so many jobs and lives depend, completely ignoring the views of the 48%. We can shut our eyes to these hard truths and carry on debating between these extremes for months to come, or we can accept that the only solution that will endure is one that addresses the concerns of those who voted leave, while reassuring those who voted remain. This argument has gone on long enough. It is corrosive to our politics, and life depends on compromise.

Wes Streeting

My constituency was split pretty much down the middle during the referendum. May I explain the crux of the problem that the Prime Minister has next week? She set as the benchmark for security co-operation things being better than the relationship the EU has with other countries. My constituents who voted leave voted for a better future for our country, and my constituents who voted remain wanted to protect all the good that we have with the European Union. With the deal she has negotiated, she has brought those two groups together, but against her deal.

The Prime Minister

The deal that I have negotiated provides that good security co-operation while protecting the jobs that depend on the trade relationship with the European Union. That is why, as I say, it is not a deal that appeals to those who want—there are many who want a relationship that is closer and there are those who want a relationship that is further apart. I believe it is important that we respect the views of those who voted leave and deliver Brexit, but we also recognise that we need to protect the trading relationship with the European Union and the jobs that rely on it for the future.

Kevin Hollinrake (Thirsk and Malton) (Con)

If Parliament does not support the Prime Minister's deal, what is the most likely outcome—no deal or no Brexit?

The Prime Minister

I will reference the problems if Parliament does not support this deal a little later in my speech, if my hon. Friend will wait for that.

Catherine McKinnell (Newcastle upon Tyne North) (Lab)

I absolutely agree with the Prime Minister that we need to start coming together as a country once this process is over, but does she agree that if she is so convinced that her deal and political agreement are what the British people voted for, she should have the confidence to go back and ask them to verify whether it is something they support?

The Prime Minister

As I have said in this Chamber before, it is very important that all of us in this House recognise what this Parliament did. This Parliament overwhelmingly voted to give the choice of membership of the European Union to the British people. The people voted. They voted to leave. I believe it is incumbent on us to deliver that Brexit, and I believe it is a matter of trust in politicians and in this House that we do indeed deliver on that Brexit.

Sir Patrick McLoughlin (Derbyshire Dales) (Con)

Will the deal that my right hon. Friend has agreed ensure that inward investment in this country, which has led to many hundreds of thousands of jobs—particularly in the automotive industry—will have the same access to markets that it presently has?

The Prime Minister

That is absolutely what underpinned the proposal that we put forward in the summer, and it is what underpins the ambitious trade relationship identified in the political declaration, ensuring that people can invest in this country with confidence. Reference was made earlier to people voting for a brighter future for this country. We can deliver that brighter future for this country with a deal that delivers a good relationship with Europe but also enables us to have those other trade deals around the rest of the world.

Sir Geoffrey Clifton-Brown (The Cotswolds) (Con)

My right hon. Friend has courageously and consistently said that there will be no second referendum. Does she agree that a second referendum would reopen all the wounds within families and, above all, that it would put the Union itself in jeopardy?

The Prime Minister

I do, indeed, agree with my hon. Friend. I think a second referendum would exacerbate division in our country and would not bring our country back together again.

The Prime Minister

I will give way to the hon. Member for North Ayrshire and Arran (Patricia Gibson), and then I will make some progress.

Patricia Gibson (North Ayrshire and Arran) (SNP)

The Prime Minister has repeatedly referenced the 52% who voted to leave, but I am still confused about why she is not willing to take any cognizance of the fact that electoral law has been broken, and therefore the result of the referendum cannot be trusted. Otherwise, we may as well abolish electoral law altogether. Will the Prime Minister not at least respond to the findings of the Electoral Commission?

The Prime Minister

The Electoral Commission stills says it believes that it was a fair poll, and I believe that we should abide by the result of that poll and deliver for the people of this country.

We can choose to settle this issue now—

Emma Reynolds (Wolverhampton North East) (Lab)
rose—

Ms Angela Eagle (Wallasey) (Lab)

rose—

The Prime Minister

I have said I will make some progress, and then I will be generous in my acceptance of interventions.

We can choose to settle this issue now by backing the deal in this motion—a deal that delivers Brexit and a new partnership with the European Union, a deal that delivers for the whole United Kingdom, a deal that begins to bring our country back together again.

Simon Hoare (North Dorset) (Con)

The deal that my right hon. Friend has brought back has my full and unequivocal support, but may I ask her to confirm that, as we leave, our country will still be a rules-based, international, outward-looking, caring and compassionate country that stands as a beacon for good in the world?

The Prime Minister

I am very happy to give my hon. Friend that absolute reassurance, but more than that, we will be a country that promotes those values and that promotes that rules-based international order around the world. That is what we have always done as the UK, and it is what we will continue to do.

The Prime Minister

I will take two further interventions.

Stephen Timms (East Ham) (Lab)

On 30 March, under the agreement, the UK will lose its place on the European Data Protection Board, even though Ministers have said they wanted to hang on to that place. It is a place where the UK has wielded considerable influence on the development of European policy. Is not the reality of the agreement that we will continue to have to obey these rules, but we will have lost the ability to influence what those rules are?

The Prime Minister

The position in terms of voting rights and various elements once we have left the European Union is of course going to change, but what has been clear from the agreements that we have negotiated is the capacity for the United Kingdom to continue to give technical support where that is appropriate in a whole range of matters. On a number of the issues that are dealt with by the European Union, in terms of the rules that it operates, of course these are not just European Union rules, but international standards on which the United Kingdom will continue, during the implementation period and beyond, to have its role. I said I would take a second intervention.

Mr Bob Seely (Isle of Wight) (Con)

It is unfortunate for the Government to be in contempt of Parliament. Does the Prime Minister agree that it is worse for Parliament to be in contempt of the British people, which is what will happen if we do not deliver on Brexit?

The Prime Minister

I absolutely agree that it is the duty, I believe, of this Parliament and it is the duty of us as politicians to deliver on the result of the vote that the British people gave in 2016 in the referendum. We gave them the choice, they voted to leave the EU and it is up to us to deliver that leaving of the European Union in the interests of our country.

The Prime Minister

I will make some progress.

The decision we have before us has two elements to it: the withdrawal agreement that sets out the terms of our departure from the European Union and the political declaration that sets the terms of our future relationship with the EU.

Alberto Costa (South Leicestershire) (Con)
Will the Prime Minister give way?

The Prime Minister

If I may, I will just make a little progress.

The withdrawal agreement ensures that we leave the European Union on 29 March next year in a smooth and orderly way. It protects the rights of EU citizens living in the UK, and of UK citizens living in the EU, so that they can carry on living their lives as before. It delivers a time-limited implementation period to give business time to prepare for the new arrangements. During that period, trade will continue on current terms so that businesses have to face only one set of changes. It ensures a fair settlement of our financial obligations, less than half of what some originally expected and demanded.

Alberto Costa

I thank the Prime Minister for giving way and apologise for intervening. Two years ago, I said to my right hon. Friend that I could never imagine her requesting me to vote to take away the rights of my Italian parents, who are resident in Scotland. Will she confirm that her deal guarantees the rights of EU nationals in the UK—3.6 million of them—as well as those of 1 million UK citizens in the EU27, in a way that no deal would not?

The Prime Minister

The withdrawal agreement does indeed guarantee those citizens' rights—the rights of UK citizens in the EU and of EU citizens here, in the UK. The withdrawal agreement delivers that guarantee.

Conor Burns (Bournemouth West) (Con)

No one can doubt the Prime Minister's commitment to the deal and the passion with which she is selling it. In the early part of her statement, she twice referred to the status of Northern Ireland, saying that the deal is a good one for Northern Ireland. I come from Northern Ireland—I am a Catholic and a Unionist; I understand it pretty well. Can she explain why that passion for the deal as good for Northern Ireland is not shared by those who should understand Northern Ireland best?

The Prime Minister

My hon. Friend raises a point. I recognise that there are representatives of Northern Ireland in the Westminster Parliament who are concerned about aspects of the deal. It is this Parliament's and this Government's responsibility to provide some reassurance about those elements that have caused concern. I wish to continue to discuss the matter with representatives from Northern Ireland.

Lady Hermon (North Down) (Ind)

Although the Democratic Unionist party has 10 MPs in the House, it campaigned for leave and the majority of people in Northern Ireland, like me, campaigned for remain. The DUP does not speak for the majority of people in Northern Ireland. I can reassure the Prime Minister that her withdrawal agreement has considerable support in Northern Ireland, particularly among farmers, businesses and fishermen. [Interruption.] I am sorry that people feel that that is funny. It is not. It is really serious for the people of Northern Ireland.

Reassurance is needed from the Prime Minister on the constitutional guarantee of the Good Friday agreement, which the Labour party should be proud of. It is guaranteed in the withdrawal agreement and the political declaration, so why the Labour party chooses to vote against the withdrawal agreement beats me. Will the Prime Minister please give an assurance to the people of Northern Ireland that nothing in the deal threatens the consent principle or the constitutional status guaranteed in the Belfast agreement?

The Prime Minister

I am happy to give the hon. Lady that absolute assurance. The issue was referenced in the December joint report, it is in the withdrawal agreement and it is clear in the political declaration. Nothing in the relationship and the deal with the EU will affect that position. We will continue to uphold the Belfast agreement.

The Prime Minister

I give way to the leader of the DUP.

Nigel Dodds (Belfast North) (DUP)

I am very grateful to the Prime Minister. Of course, the referendum was for the whole United Kingdom, and as a Unionist, I respect the result across the UK—Manchester, London, Scotland—[Hon. Members: “They voted remain.”] Whatever way they voted, the UK voted, and we should respect the result. In terms of the views in Northern Ireland, I am quite happy to put them to a test any time. We will happily go to the electorate and put our views to the people if needs be. I am quite certain that we would be returned in greater numbers than we are today, so I am quite happy to take on the challenge that has been put down.

In terms of guaranteeing Northern Ireland’s position, the Prime Minister will remember that in paragraph 50 of the joint report, which we spent four days negotiating, guarantees were given to Northern Ireland. Never mind the words that have been said in this House today, they were in the actual text. Why have they been deleted? Why has she not kept them in the withdrawal agreement? Why have they not been translated? That is what we have a problem with. Words are good. It is the legal text, what is in the agreement, that matters.

The Prime Minister

The right hon. Gentleman is absolutely right: there was that reference to the consent of the Northern Ireland institutions in relation to any potential new regulatory differences between Great Britain and Northern Ireland. That is a matter we will be looking at and can look at in this House with regards to the parliamentary arrangements between the institutions within the United Kingdom for the future. It is exactly on these issues, the question of potential new regulatory divergence, that I believe it will be possible to give reassurance to not just representatives in this Chamber, but the people of Northern Ireland for their future.

The Prime Minister

I will continue to take interventions, but I am going to make some more progress now.

The withdrawal agreement ensures a fair settlement of our financial obligations. I want to turn to the most contentious element of the withdrawal agreement. Perhaps this is a neat segue, as my last intervention was from the right hon. Member for Belfast North (Nigel Dodds), because I want to turn to the Northern Ireland protocol. It is important to remember what is at the heart of the protocol. It is our commitment to the people of Northern Ireland. It is about saying that whatever happens as we leave the European Union we will, as I have just said to the hon. Member for North

Down (Lady Hermon), honour the Belfast agreement. The hard-won peace that has inspired the world and the detailed arrangements that have delivered and sustained it will not be lost. The people of Northern Ireland and Ireland will be able to carry on living their lives as before. To deliver that, we need a solution in the future partnership that ensures there is no hard border between Northern Ireland and Ireland.

Both the UK and the EU are fully committed to having our future relationship in place by 1 January 2021, but there is still the possibility that it is not ready before the end of the implementation period. The only way to absolutely guarantee no hard border on the island of Ireland at the end of the implementation period is to have a backstop in the withdrawal agreement as a last resort insurance policy. Let us be clear: this is true not just for the deal we have negotiated. Whether you want a model like Canada's or whether you want to see the UK as a member of the European Economic Area, any future relationship will need to be negotiated and will need an insurance policy if that negotiation cannot be completed in time. Put simply, there is no possible withdrawal agreement without a legally operative backstop. No backstop means no deal.

Mr John Baron (Basildon and Billericay) (Con)

The Prime Minister is well aware that many of us have wished her well in these negotiations, but does she understand and recognise that many of us also have concerns about the backstop and equate it to entering a contract of employment that gives the sole right of termination to the other party?

The Prime Minister

I recognise the concerns there are in the House and, if my hon. Friend will permit me, I want to go on to reference them a little later.

Mr Speaker

May I just very gently exhort the Prime Minister to face the House? In answering her hon. Friend, her hon. Friend can hear very well but Opposition Members cannot.

The Prime Minister

I understand that some colleagues are worried, as I have just said, that we could end up stuck in the backstop indefinitely. In the negotiations, we secured seven separate commitments in the withdrawal agreement and political declaration to ensure that that is not the case. First, there is an explicit legal duty to use best endeavours to reach an agreement by the end of December 2020 that avoids the backstop coming into force in the first place.

That is not just a political commitment. As the Attorney General has set out, this is a recognised approach in international law, and we have the right to seek independent arbitration if this duty is not upheld. Secondly, if despite this, the future relationship is not ready in time, the backstop can be replaced by alternative arrangements. The political declaration makes it clear that we will seek to draw upon all available facilitations and technologies that could be used to avoid a hard border, and preparatory work will be done before we leave so that we can make rapid progress after our withdrawal. Thirdly, if neither the future relationship nor the alternative arrangements were ready by the end of 2020, we would not have to go into the backstop at this point. Instead, we have negotiated that there would be a clear choice between the backstop or a short extension to the implementation period.

Fourthly, if we do go into the backstop, the legal text is explicit that it should be temporary and that the article 50 legal base cannot provide for a permanent relationship. Fifthly, if the backstop is no longer necessary to avoid a hard border, we have the right to trigger a review through the Joint

Committee. Sixthly, as a result of the changes that we have negotiated, there is an explicit termination clause that allows the backstop to be turned off. Finally, the legal text is now clear that once the backstop has been superseded, it will cease to apply, so if a future Parliament decided to move from an initially deep trade relationship to a looser one, the backstop could not return.

Mr Shailesh Vara (North West Cambridgeshire) (Con)

I am grateful to the Prime Minister for giving way—indeed, she is being very generous in giving way to a lot of people. We are told that the EU does not wish to exercise the backstop, Ireland does not wish to exercise it and certainly, the UK does not wish to exercise it. Is it not the case, therefore, that this is a matter not of renegotiating the withdrawal agreement, but of the European Union showing good will and good faith towards the United Kingdom by allowing us one additional line in the withdrawal agreement? This could be words to the effect that in the event of the backstop being triggered, the United Kingdom can, say, at three months' notice, leave the customs union. To allow that one line would show enormous good faith and good will on the part of the EU, and nothing else.

The Prime Minister

I recognise the degree of concern that there is about this issue, and I will go on to speak about it further in my speech. The withdrawal agreement has been negotiated. It is clear from the European Union that this is the deal, and I just ask those colleagues who wish to reopen the withdrawal agreement to recognise that were it to be reopened, it would not simply be a question of what the United Kingdom then wanted to change; it would also be a question of enabling others to change elements of that withdrawal agreement. Given the rigorous fight that we had in the negotiations to ensure that there were certain elements that were in the interests of the United Kingdom, notably around fisheries and other issues, I caution hon. Members that not only has the EU made it clear that the withdrawal agreement cannot be reopened—we have agreed the deal and the deal is there—but it is not the one-way street that hon. Members would perhaps wish it to be.

Daniel Kawczynski (Shrewsbury and Atcham) (Con)

Will my right hon. Friend give way?

The Prime Minister

If I could finish this point, it might respond to some of the comments. Rather than focusing on the legal mechanisms that we now have to avoid the backstop and ensure that if it is used, it is only temporary, the real question that the House needs to ask itself is whether it is in the EU's interest for the backstop to be used, and if it is used, for it to endure. The EU's original proposal for the backstop would have split the UK into two customs territories and given only Northern Ireland tariff-free access to its market. It barely changed the EU's orthodoxy. It was wholly unacceptable to us, but the backstop that we have succeeded in negotiating no longer splits the UK into two customs territories. It gives the whole UK tariff-free access to the EU's market without free movement of people, without any financial contribution, without having to follow most of the level playing field rules, and without allowing the EU any access to our waters. The backstop is not a trick to trap us in the EU; it actually gives us some important benefits of access to the EU's market without many of the obligations. That is something the EU will not want to let happen, let alone persist for a long time. I recognise that, as is clear from the contributions from my hon. Friends, some Members remain concerned. I have listened to those concerns, I want us to consider how we could go further, and I will continue to meet colleagues to find an acceptable solution.

George Freeman (Mid Norfolk) (Con)

rose—

Daniel Kawczynski
rose—

The Prime Minister

I give way to my hon. Friend the Member for Mid Norfolk (George Freeman).

George Freeman

As the Prime Minister confronts the inevitable contradictions at the heart of this process on behalf of the nation, is it not worth remembering that the vast majority of Members, including on the Opposition Benches, voted to trigger article 50 and voted for the referendum in the first place? Could I also remind her that out in the country her commitment to pursuing this is hugely admired? Given that this issue divides all parties in this House—indeed, on the Government Benches it even divides the factions—would it not be sensible next week, as Parliament begins to take back control, to consider a free vote?

The Prime Minister

It is important that all hon. Members remember not only that the House voted overwhelmingly to give the decision on whether to leave the EU to the people in the referendum, but that the House voted by a significant majority to trigger article 50 and so to continue that process of leaving the EU and that, as I said earlier, at last year's general election about 80% of the vote went to parties that had in their manifesto a solid commitment to deliver on the Brexit vote. We should all remember that when it comes to voting on the motion next week.

Daniel Kawczynski

Will my right hon. Friend give way?

The Prime Minister

I will give way to my hon. Friend, who has been trying valiantly for some time to intervene, and then I will make some progress.

Daniel Kawczynski

Yesterday, we tried to ask the Attorney General for his legal advice as to how much of the £39 billion we were legally and contractually obliged to hand over. He refused to give us a specific figure. Will the Prime Minister now give that specific figure, given that we are to hand over this £39 billion to the EU when we are facing shortages in our own constituencies.

The Prime Minister

There are different elements to the £39 billion in terms of the liabilities to which they refer. Of course, roughly £20 billion of that sum relates to the payments that will be made during the implementation period, which is about ensuring the smooth and orderly exit that is good for businesses. Obviously, there are other liabilities within that where it is determined that we have legal obligations, but, as I say—it is £34 billion to £39 billion; everybody quotes the higher figure, but it is £34 billion to £39 billion—it is from within that range that the final figure will come.

We have five days of debate, but I recognise that hon. Members will want to contribute in today's debate, so I will make some progress. The second part of this deal is the political declaration. This is a detailed set of instructions to negotiators that will be used to deliver a legal agreement on an ambitious future relationship after we have left. I know that some Members worry that the political declaration is not already legally binding. It cannot be a legal agreement at this stage because the EU cannot legally agree a future relationship with us until we are a non-member state. Through the

negotiations, however, we have ensured that we have the framework for an ambitious new economic and security partnership that is absolutely in our national interest.

At the outset, the EU said we would have a binary choice—Norway or Canada. The political declaration concedes that there is a spectrum, and we will have an unprecedented economic relationship that no other major economy has. The EU also said we could not share security capabilities as a non-member state outside of free movement and the Schengen area, but we have secured the broadest security partnership in the EU's history. If this deal is passed, the task ahead of us will be to turn this ambitious political declaration into our new legal agreement with the EU.

Alison McGovern (Wirral South) (Lab)

I must intervene at this point. The Prime Minister claims that this political declaration is detailed and specific. If that is the case, why was the Treasury Select Committee told today that it was not even possible to produce an economic analysis of the document because it was not specific enough?

The Prime Minister

The economic analysis that was produced by the Government last week made it very clear that within the political declaration is a spectrum on which the balance of obligations in relation to the rights of access—the balance of obligations on checks at the border in relation to market access—must be addressed. It is clear that that will be ambitious, and we will continue to work for frictionless trade, which is indeed what was put forward in the White Paper in the summer. However, it was only right and proper that in our economic analysis we indicated a midpoint on that spectrum, which gave an indication to people of the impact of trade barriers should they be put up.

Yvette Cooper (Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford) (Lab)

I thank the Prime Minister for giving way—she is being very generous—but does she not understand that by over-claiming what is in the political declaration, she is undermining trust? She is asking for our trust in her, and in the UK, to determine what will happen in future, because so little is resolved. Not only on the spectrum on the economics, but also on the security issues, she is over-claiming. She suggested to my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff South and Penarth (Stephen Doughty) that she had effectively secured agreement to SIS II, but she knows that she has not, because she tried to do so. Paragraph 87 of the political declaration does not refer to SIS II; it simply says that “the Parties” will “consider” the arrangements, and if we are lucky we will get something that will “approximate”. That is not the same as SIS II, and the Prime Minister knows it. Will she be straight with the country and with Parliament about the political declaration?

The Prime Minister

I have said this to Members before, and I will say it again. There is a difference between ensuring that we have the security capabilities that we need in the future, and simply saying that we will be doing that in a particular way. What paragraph 87 makes clear is the intent to have

“exchange of information on wanted or missing persons and objects and of criminal records, with the view to delivering capabilities that, in so far as is technically and legally possible, and considered necessary and in both Parties' interests, approximate those enabled by relevant Union mechanisms.”

Ms Angela Eagle

Will the Prime Minister give way?

The Prime Minister

No; I am sorry.

This is a fundamental issue which has underpinned the approach to these negotiations. We could have approached the negotiations by saying, “We are going to take the models that already exist, and in all cases we are going to say that we have to be in those models in exactly the same way as we are today.” What we have said is that we look to ensure that we can have the capabilities that we have where we need those capabilities, and that is exactly what we are delivering—

Yvette Cooper

Will the Prime Minister give way on that point?

The Prime Minister

No. I am sorry.

That is exactly what we have in the political declaration.

The Prime Minister

I will give way to the right hon. Member for Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford (Yvette Cooper) on that point, but then I will make further progress.

Yvette Cooper

I am hugely grateful to the Prime Minister for giving way, but she tried to get exactly the same thing: she tried to get SIS II. She should be honest with the House, and say that she tried to get SIS II and failed. She got other things, but I ask her to tell us whether she tried to get SIS II.

Mr Speaker

I am sure the right hon. Lady will want to make it clear that she is not suggesting that the Prime Minister has been other than honest. She is presumably encouraging forthrightness, is she?

Yvette Cooper

I certainly am encouraging forthrightness. I would not challenge the Prime Minister’s integrity, because I know that she has worked immensely hard on this, but I am asking her to give accurate information to the House. Will she tell us whether she tried to get SIS II, rather than pretending that she was trying to get parallel capabilities?

The Prime Minister

We are clear about the capabilities that are currently available to us as a member of SIS II and within ECRIS. It is still open to us to seek to have the same relationship in relation to SIS II and ECRIS as we currently have, but we want to ensure that we have the capabilities that underpin SIS II and ECRIS.

I am tempted to say that the right hon. Lady might like to cast her mind back to the time when I was Home Secretary and she was shadow Home Secretary, and I stood at this Dispatch Box moving the motion that ensured that we could rejoin 35 measures on justice and home affairs matters, including SIS II and ECRIS, while she, I seem to recall, was working with my right hon. Friend the Member for North Somerset (Dr Fox) to prevent the Government from rejoining those measures.

If this deal is passed, the task ahead of us will be to turn this ambitious political declaration into our new legal agreement with the EU. [Interruption.] No, I am going to make more progress, and the next section of my speech might be of interest to Members of this House. In doing so, I want to build the broadest possible consensus both within this House and across the country. So for the next stage of negotiations we will ensure a greater and more formal role for Parliament. This will begin

immediately as we develop our negotiating mandate, building on the political declaration ahead of 29 March 2019. The Government will consult more widely and engage more intensively with Parliament as we finalise the mandate for the next phase of the negotiations. Ministers will appear before Select Committees between now and March in each relevant area of the political declaration from fisheries to space to foreign policy. So Members across the House will be able to contribute their expertise to the detailed positions we take forward with the EU, and the whole House will be consulted on the final version of that full mandate. We will also provide the devolved Administrations with a similar degree of detailed engagement. We will undertake targeted engagement with business and civil society to help inform our detailed negotiating positions.

Hilary Benn (Leeds Central) (Lab)

Will the Prime Minister give way on that point?

The Prime Minister

I give way to the Chairman of the Exiting the European Union Committee.

Hilary Benn

The Prime Minister is being extremely generous in giving way. She said a moment ago that the House of Commons would be consulted on the mandate; can she give a very simple assurance that the House of Commons will get to vote on whether to approve that mandate, or not?

The Prime Minister

The outline of that mandate will be set in the political declaration; that is the deal that has been agreed with the European Union. What we are looking for is to have the expertise of the House and the views of the House when we go into that negotiating position. I also say to the right hon. Gentleman the Chairman of the Select Committee that I stated that Ministers will appear before the Select Committee, but of course Ministers will have to be invited by the Select Committee to appear before it. I hope, however, that Select Committees will indeed accept that it is important for Ministers to appear before them on these matters. Taken together, these arrangements will support a national mission to forge the strongest possible future relationship with our European partners, commensurate with our wider global goals and in the interests of the whole country.

Let me turn to the amendment proposed by the Leader of the Opposition. First, it argues for a permanent customs union. The benefit of a customs union is that it means no tariffs, fees, charges, quantitative restrictions or rules of origin checks. All of these are explicit in our deal, but, importantly, it goes further, because it also gives us the crucial ability to have an independent trade policy beyond our partnership with the EU, which membership of the customs union would not. So the Leader of the Opposition needs to explain why he does not share our ambition for a global Britain.

Secondly, the amendment argues for a strong single market deal. If that means being close to the single market but not part of it, then it is our deal which delivers the closest possible partnership. If it actually means being in the single market, the Leader of the Opposition is opposing taking back control of our borders and ending free movement. That not only contravenes the democratic instruction of the British people, but it contravenes his own manifesto.

Thirdly, the amendment claims our deal would

“lead to increased barriers to trade in goods and services”.

Unless the Leader of the Opposition's policy is to stay in the single market as well as the customs union, some increase in barriers is inevitable. But our deal is the best deal outside the single market and it gives us the opportunities that come from an independent trade policy and increased regulatory freedom.

Joseph Johnson (Orpington) (Con)

As the UK will have lost the ability to influence EU rule-making on financial services directly, it is vital that we can play a full part in defending our interests in international bodies that set standards globally such as the Basel Committee on Banking Supervision and the International Organization of Securities Commissions. Does the Prime Minister therefore share my concern that article 129 of the draft treaty, which clearly states that the EU may not take a contrary position to the EU in such bodies, will prevent us from doing so?

The Prime Minister

Article 129 is about the joint committee responsible for the management, administration and supervision of dispute resolution in the future. [Interruption.] I say to my hon. Friend that we have been very clear in the area of financial services that it is important, because of the significance of financial services to the United Kingdom, that we are able to ensure that we have the ability to set the regulations that we need to set as a global financial centre, working with the other regulatory bodies and doing that in the interests not just of the United Kingdom, but of financial stability across the world.

We are now at the stage in this process where we must all engage with the hard choices we face. Simply pretending that everything can stay the same as we leave the EU, as Labour's amendment does, does not face up to those hard choices and amounts to not being straight with the people of this country.

Fourthly, the amendment claims that our deal would not protect workers' rights and environmental standards. This is simply wrong. Our deal does protect them. As part of the single customs territory in the Northern Ireland protocol, we have committed to ensuring that there will be no reduction in standards in this area, including on labour and social protection, fundamental rights at work, occupational health and safety and fair working conditions. We have said that we will improve on this in developing our future relationship with the EU.

Indeed, we already go further than EU minimum standards, including on annual leave, paid maternity leave, flexible leave, paternity leave and pay, and parental leave, because we know that the first responsibility for protecting those rights sits with this Parliament. As we take back control of our laws, we will not only honour that responsibility, but go further still, including, for example, by implementing the recommendations of the Taylor review. So we will not just protect workers' rights: we will enhance them.

Fifthly, the amendment claims that our deal allows the diminution of our security. The Leader of the Opposition knows full well that, if we fulfil the democratic decision of the British people to leave the European Union, we cannot have exactly the same rights as a third country that we currently have as a member. The question is: which deal represents the broadest security partnership in the EU's history? It is our deal. What is he doing? He is opposing it.

Sixthly, the Leader of the Opposition's amendment appears to reject the backstop— even though businesses, farmers and people from across the community in Northern Ireland support this insurance policy. There is real anger in Northern Ireland at the approach Labour is taking.

Finally, the amendment opposes leaving without a deal. But the EU have been crystal clear that no backstop means no deal. So the amendment is simultaneously opposing no deal and proposing a policy that would lead to exactly that. At this critical moment in our history, the Leader of the Opposition is not making a serious proposition for the future of this country. He is simply trying to force a general election. The right hon. Member for Hayes and Harlington (John McDonnell) admitted it when he said:

“Our view is we should have a general election.”

At a time when we should be delivering on the vote of the British people, the Leader of the Opposition wants to ignore that and have another vote. At a time when the Government are working in the national interest, the Leader of the Opposition is playing party politics. At a time when we should all be focused, at this historic moment, on what is best for our country, the Leader of the Opposition is thinking about what gives him the best chance of forcing a general election.

Let me turn to the amendment from the right hon. Member for Leeds Central (Hilary Benn). This also seeks to reject our deal, as well as to reject no deal. But the House cannot unilaterally rule out no deal. The only way to avoid no deal is to agree a deal—and that requires the agreement of the House and the European Union.

The Prime Minister

I have been very generous with interventions, and I will take further interventions in a few minutes after I have made this point. If you reject what the other side have described as the only deal on offer, then, whatever you say to the contrary, you put this country on course for no deal. This is doubly so when the amendment is silent on what alternative deal we should strike.

The EU27 member states have made it clear that this is the best deal available, and that there is neither the time nor the inclination to reopen negotiations and ensure that we leave in good order on 29 March next year. The choice before Parliament is clear: this deal, no deal, or the risk of no Brexit. Investing parliamentary time in seeking to create an alternative to these choices will only endanger our ability to deliver Brexit at all.

Vicky Ford (Chelmsford) (Con)

I congratulate the Prime Minister on two years of the trickiest negotiations in our lifetime. Some of my colleagues in this House seem to think that, if they reject this deal on Tuesday, the other EU27 leaders will come back and give us something better, but why should they?

The Prime Minister

My hon. Friend raises a very important point. Exactly. They certainly do not intend to do that. They have made it very clear that this is the deal on the table.

Dr Sarah Wollaston (Totnes) (Con)

I welcome the Prime Minister's commitment to engage further with the Select Committees. When she came to the Liaison Committee last week, she will have heard one Committee Chair after another pointing out to her the catastrophic consequences of no deal and asking whether she would rule that out, if and when the House rejects this deal, because we cannot inflict that kind of catastrophe on our people.

The Prime Minister

If my hon. Friend is concerned about no deal, the way to ensure that there is a deal is to support the deal that is on the table.

Stewart Malcolm McDonald (Glasgow South) (SNP)

This feels like the fall of the ancien régime this afternoon—[Interruption.] No, I think the right hon. Member for Derbyshire Dales (Sir Patrick McLoughlin) was there. May I take the Prime Minister back to the bit that I think was supposed to be the Scotland part of this speech, on devolved Administrations? The Scottish Parliament will not be interested in Ministers making day trips to Scotland for a number of hours in order to come over with meaningless waffle. If we are to be convinced that our views will genuinely be taken into account, what will change? That has not happened up to this point.

The Prime Minister

The hon. Gentleman knows full well that we have had a high degree of engagement with the Scottish Government, and indeed with the Welsh Government, on all these matters as we have been going through. We will continue to have that high level of engagement. There are areas where there is a disagreement. The Scottish Government want, ideally, to remain in the European Union, but that would deny the vote of the British people—[Interruption.] That would deny the vote of the British people, so we do have a difference of opinion on that.

Let me now deal with another question that has been raised, which is the question of another referendum. I understand the argument that, if this House is deadlocked, we could give the decision back to the British people, but I ask the House to consider what that would say to those in our constituencies who put aside decades of doubt in the political process because they believed that their voice would finally be heard; what it would say about the state of our democracy if the biggest vote in our history were to be rerun because a majority in this House did not like the outcome; what it would do to that democracy; and what forces it would unleash.

This House voted to give the decision to the British people and this House promised that we would honour their decision. If we betray that promise, how can we expect them to trust us again? Even if we held a referendum, what would it achieve? It would not bring the country together; it would divide us all over again. It would not end the debate, because if it were close like last time, whichever side lost out would soon start to call for a third referendum. It would not take us forwards; rather, it would take us back to square one. This country cannot afford to spend the next decade going round in circles on the question of our relationship with the European Union. We have already spent too many years with divisions on Europe simmering in the body politic. We must deliver on the referendum that we have already had, focus on the day-to-day concerns of the people and take this country forward.

Rebecca Pow (Taunton Deane) (Con)

I thank the Prime Minister for her generosity in giving way. My youngest child has just gone to university. Can she give an assurance that, when he leaves, he will be able to walk out and make his way in this world and in this country? Will she give an assurance that this Government will have the ship back on track, will have respected the democratic view of this country, will have trusted the people, as we expect them to trust us, and will respect the European Union and have a close relationship with that great trading bloc? Will she also assure us that we will be able to hold our head up on the global stage and that we will not be diminished, but even greater?

The Prime Minister

I thank my hon. Friend, who may have anticipated what I am about to say. I can absolutely give her that assurance, because I want to be clear about what this deal delivers for the country. There will be an end to free movement once and for all, an end to the jurisdiction of the European Court of

Justice in the UK, an end to those vast sums we send to Brussels every year, a fair settlement of our financial obligations—less than half what some predicted—

The Prime Minister

I am conscious that I have now been speaking and taking interventions for an hour. Many Members want to contribute to the debate, and I will make some progress.

We will have a new free trade area with no tariffs, fees, quantitative restrictions or rules of origin checks—an unprecedented economic relationship that no other major economy has. At the same time, we will be free to have an independent trade policy and to strike new trade deals all around the world. This deal means being out of EU programmes that do not work for us. We will be out of the common agricultural policy and out of the common fisheries policy as an independent coastal state once again, with full control over our waters. It means jobs protected, citizens' rights protected, the integrity of our United Kingdom protected, the sovereignty of Gibraltar protected, and our security protected, with the broadest security partnership in the EU's history, working together with our friends and neighbours to keep all our people safe. The British people want us to get on with a deal that honours the referendum and allows us to come together again as a country, whichever way we voted. This is the deal that delivers for the British people.

The Prime Minister

No, I am not going to take any more interventions.

Mr Speaker, I have spent nearly two years negotiating this deal. I have lost valued colleagues along the way. I have faced—

The Prime Minister

No, I am concluding. I have faced fierce criticism from all sides. If I had banged the table, walked out of the room and delivered the same deal that is before us today at the end of the process, some might say I had done a better job, but I did not play to the gallery. I focused on getting a deal that honours the referendum and sets us on course for a bright future, and I did so through painstaking hard work. I have never thought that politics was simply about broadcasting your own opinions on the matter at hand—[Interruption.]

Mr Speaker

Order. Mr MacNeil, I am concerned—[Interruption.] No, you were chuntering noisily from a sedentary position. I saw you, and I heard you. Your apprenticeship to become a statesman has still a substantial distance to travel.

The Prime Minister

Politics is as much about listening to people from all sides of the debate and then doing what you believe is in our national interest. That is what I have done, and sticking to the task has delivered results for the British people. When the EU gave us a choice between off-the-shelf models, I won us a bespoke deal. When in Salzburg the EU tried to insist on a backstop that carved out Northern Ireland from the rest of the UK, I faced them down and they backed down. Right at the end, when Spain tried to make a move on Gibraltar, I stood firm and protected Gibraltar's sovereignty. That is why the Chief Minister of Gibraltar has said that no friend of Gibraltar should vote this deal down.

Do not let anyone here think there is a better deal to be won by shouting louder. Do not imagine that, if we vote this down, a different deal is going to miraculously appear. The alternative is uncertainty and risk—the risk that Brexit could be stopped; the risk we could crash out with no deal.

And the only certainty would be uncertainty—bad for our economy and bad for our standing in the world. That is not in the national interest.

The alternative is for this House to lead our country forward into a brighter future. I do not say this deal is perfect. It was never going to be, and that is the nature of a negotiation. Yes, it is a compromise. It speaks to the hopes and desires of our fellow citizens who voted to leave and of those who voted to stay in. We will not bring our country together if we seek a relationship that gives everything to one side of the argument and nothing to the other.

We should not let the search for the perfect Brexit prevent a good Brexit that delivers for the British people. And we should not contemplate a course that fails to respect the result of the referendum, because that would decimate the trust of millions of people in our politics for a generation.

The Prime Minister

I am concluding.

To all sides of the debate, to every Member in every party, I say that this deal deserves your support for what it achieves for all of our people and our whole United Kingdom—one Union of four nations, now and in the future. And this is a debate about our future. It is not about whether we could have taken a different road in the past, but about which road we should take from here.

If we put aside our differences and remember what unites us, if we broker an honourable compromise in the interests not of ourselves but of those we were sent here to serve and if we come together to do our duty to our constituents, we will pass the test that history has set for us today. It is not easy when the passions run so deep, but looking around this Chamber, I know we can meet this moment. So I promise you today that this is the very best deal for the British people. I ask you to back it in the best interests of our constituents and our country and, with my whole heart, I commend this motion to the House.

18:52:00

Jeremy Corbyn (Islington North) (Lab)

This is a seminal debate in the history of this House and for the future of our country. I have been in the House since 1983, and this debate and the decision we will take next week is one of the most important we will ever take as Members of this House.

The deal before us would make our country worse off. Taken together with the withdrawal agreement and the future partnership, it represents a huge and damaging failure for Britain. The Prime Minister says this is a good deal, and is so confident of that that she attempted to refuse to publish the Government's legal advice—she was forced to publish it by votes in this House today.

However, the economic assessments and other assessments that we will see indicate that this is actually a bad deal. These documents are the product of two years of botched negotiations, in which the Government spent more time arguing with itself than it did in negotiating with the European Union. It is not only on Brexit where they have failed. The economy is weak, investment is poor, wage growth is weak, our public services are in crisis and local councils are collapsing because of this Government's refusal to fund them properly. More people in this country are living in poverty, including half a million more children, since 2010. The Government should be ashamed of themselves for that. Poverty is rising, homelessness is rising and household debt is rising, too.

It is against that backdrop that the Government have produced this botched deal, which even breaches the Prime Minister's own red lines. Across the House the deal has achieved something—it has united Conservative remainers, Conservative leavers and Members of every Opposition party in an extraordinary coalition against the deal.

Mr Chris Leslie (Nottingham East) (Lab/Co-op)
rose—

Jeremy Corbyn

Mr Speaker—[Hon. Members: “Give way.”] Mr Speaker, it could have all been so different. Following the 2017 election, the Prime Minister—[Interruption.]

Mr Speaker

Order. Calm yourselves. Some of these antics are rather undesirable and to be deprecated. They may have a role on the playing fields at some public school—I do not know—but they have no role in this Chamber. [Interruption.] No, they are just unseemly and inappropriate.

Jeremy Corbyn

It could have all been so different. Following the 2017 general election—[Interruption.]

Mr Speaker

Order. I am going to say it once, but I will say it as many times as necessary, and colleagues who want to speak will be prevented from doing so by that sort of pathetic self-indulgence. The right hon. Gentleman will give way when he wants to give way. If you don't like it, frankly, you can lump it.

Jeremy Corbyn

Thank you, Mr Speaker. It could have all been so different. Following the 2017 general election, the Prime Minister could have attempted to build a consensus, recognising the new arithmetic of Parliament, and sought a deal that brought people together. Instead, just like her predecessor, who called a referendum without preparing for the eventuality of a leave vote, the Prime Minister has seen these negotiations only as an exercise in the internal management of the Conservative party, and that did not work out very well at all. When the two previous Brexit Secretaries, who, theoretically at least, led the negotiations—well, they did theoretically—say that they cannot support the deal, how can she expect anyone else in this House or in this country to have faith in a deal that has been rejected by two of the people who were involved in the negotiation of it?

Mr Leslie

Will my right hon. Friend allow me, on that point?

Jeremy Corbyn

Mr Speaker, no deal is not a real option, and the Government know that, because they are not seriously prepared for it. Eleven out of the 12 critical infrastructure projects that would need to be in place by the end of March 2019 to manage a no-deal Brexit are at risk of not being completed on time, according to the National Audit Office.

Mr Philip Dunne (Ludlow) (Con)
rose—

Mr Leslie
rose—

Jeremy Corbyn

I give way to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr Dunne

I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for having the courage to give way to someone on this side of the House, when he refused to give way to the former shadow Chancellor three times running. Will he explain to the House why he has not got the courage to debate with my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on Sunday?

Jeremy Corbyn

I am quite happy to debate with the Prime Minister. I notice she was not very keen to debate with anybody during the general election, but we understand that.

The Government have been forced to publish their full legal advice, as voted for by this House. I hope and assume that that advice will be published tomorrow, because Members ought to be in possession of all the facts. In 2007, the Prime Minister then argued, and I absolutely agreed with her, that the full legal advice should have been made available before the Iraq war. Why did she push it right to wire here and lose two votes in the House in order to try and prevent the publication of the legal advice, which is so necessary to inform us in our debates?

This withdrawal agreement is a leap in the dark. It takes us no closer to understanding what the future of our country post Brexit would look like, and neither does the future partnership, which I will come on to. The Prime Minister states that the transition period ends in December 2020. Article 132 actually says it can be extended for up to two years, to 31 December 2022.

Mr Leslie

rose—

Dr Rupa Huq (Ealing Central and Acton) (Lab)

rose—

Jeremy Corbyn

I give way to my hon. Friend.

Dr Huq

I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for giving way. He makes a very good point: Brexit is painted as dividing our nation, but it has actually united our party in opposition to the Prime Minister's proposals. It has also united many Conservative Members against her proposals, including two former Brexit Secretaries, the former Foreign Secretary and two former science and higher education Ministers. I wanted to ask the Prime Minister who the new science and higher education Minister is, but she did not take my intervention. Perhaps battling for that sector is incompatible with her Brexit, and indeed any form of Brexit.

Mr Speaker

Before we proceed, may I say very gently to the House that interventions should be brief, not mini speeches.

Jeremy Corbyn

I thank my hon. Friend for her intervention. The Labour party discussed this issue at great length at party conference and agreed that we would oppose this deal. We said that if the Government cannot

govern and cannot command a majority of the House, then the great British tradition is that those Governments resign and we have a general election.

Mr Leslie
rose—

Mike Amesbury (Weaver Vale) (Lab)
rose—

Jeremy Corbyn
I give way to my hon. Friend.

Mike Amesbury
I thank my right hon. Friend for giving way. Does he agree that this Santa Claus letter of a deal offers no protection for workers' rights, jobs, the environment or frictionless trade? Vote it down.

Jeremy Corbyn
My hon. Friend is right, because the deal does not ensure that if there are changes across the EU that improve workers' rights and conditions, they are necessarily mirrored in this country. When the Prime Minister talks so grandly about workers' rights in this country, what comes to my mind is a million people on zero-hours contracts; what comes to my mind is people trying to make ends meet by doing two or three jobs just to feed their children.

As I said, the Prime Minister states that the transition period ends in 2020. Article 132 actually says that it can be extended for up to two years, to December 2022. The Business Secretary is already clear that it is likely to be extended to that period, and under this bad deal we would have to pay whatever the EU demands to extend it for those two years.

Mr Leslie
Will my right hon. Friend give way on that bad-deal point?

Jeremy Corbyn
Under this deal, in December 2020 we will be faced with a choice: either pay more and extend the transition period, or fall into the backstop. At that point, Britain would be over a barrel. We would have left the EU, have no UK rebate and be forced to pay whatever was demanded. Alternatively, article 185, on the Northern Ireland protocol—the backstop—would apply. Not only would that mean that Northern Ireland would be subject to significantly different regulations from the rest of the UK, but the EU would have a right of veto—a right of veto—over the UK's exit from the backstop arrangement. Far from taking back control, that is actually handing control to somebody else. That is what the Prime Minister is asking us to support. Whether in a backstop or an extended transition, the UK would have no say over the rules. By that time, we could have already given up our seat on the Council of Ministers, our commissioner and our MEPs, without having negotiated any alternative say in our future. This Government are not taking back control; they are losing control.

Vicky Ford
The one item that is in the control of all of us is which way we vote on Tuesday. The right hon. Leader of the Opposition has said that he does not want no deal. The EU leaders have made it clear that it is this deal or no deal. Does he realise that it will be his vote that pushes us into no deal? That is what he is asking us to vote for.

Jeremy Corbyn
rose—

Angus Brendan MacNeil

On a point of order, Mr Speaker. I distinctly heard Donald Tusk say at the weekend that the options are no Brexit, no deal or this deal, so to say that it is a binary choice is not right.

Mr Speaker

We are extraordinarily grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his elucidation, but that intervention suffers from one notable disadvantage: it was not even tangential to a point of order. His intervention and points of order are not even nodding acquaintances, in my experience.

Jeremy Corbyn

It really is not credible for the Government to come to this House with this deal, that does damage a great deal of our economic interests, that does reduce our powers to decide our relationships in the future, and that does damage our trade, and then say there is no alternative. This House will make its decision next Tuesday. I hope and expect this House will reject that deal. At that point, the Government have lost the confidence of the House. They should reflect on that. They have either got to get a better deal from the EU or give way to those who will. No wonder the former Minister of State for Universities, Science, Research and Innovation, the hon. Member for East Surrey (Mr Gyimah), resigned, saying that this deal will cost us

“our voice, our vote and our veto.”

Mr Kenneth Clarke (Rushcliffe) (Con)

If the right hon. Gentleman is so emphatic that we will not have a no-deal exit if we reject the Prime Minister’s deal, what deal does he suggest that we will put in place between now and March next year that will avoid it?

Jeremy Corbyn

Well, if the House rejects this deal, as I hope it will, it is then up to the Government to go back and negotiate something, like a new comprehensive customs union, which would be backed by both the TUC and the CBI, and which is necessary to defend jobs and also have access to a strong single market. We cannot be told that this is the only thing we can do. The process of negotiation is to be accountable. The Government will be held to account. I hope this deal is rejected, in which case we will force the Government to go back and negotiate.

Mr Leslie

Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Jeremy Corbyn

Oh, all right. Yes, okay.

Mr Leslie

rose—[Interruption.]

Mr Speaker

Order. I want to hear the intervention. There is a lot of noise.

Mr Leslie

Actually, I wanted to agree with my right hon. Friend that this is a bad deal. Does he not agree that our country would be better off remaining in the European Union than exiting on the basis of this deal?

Jeremy Corbyn

The referendum took place. We fought the election respecting the result of the referendum. We are opposed to this deal. We think there is the possibility of getting an agreement that would be better for this country and give us the control that this Government's proposals do not give us.

The past two years gives us no confidence that the Government can do a deal in under two years, taking us up to the transition period. So, at some point before December 2020, the focus would then inevitably shift from negotiations on the future relationship to negotiations on an extension of the transition period, including negotiating what further payments we would have to make to the EU. So, we are over a barrel—either paying whatever is demanded, or negotiating away fishing rights and who-knows-what else. This is a terrible failure of negotiation by this Government.

Janet Daby (Lewisham East) (Lab)

Does my right hon. Friend agree that the Prime Minister will not take her political declaration for this deal to the people because she is afraid that her Brexit ship would sink?

Jeremy Corbyn

We will know the outcome of that next Tuesday, when the vote takes place in this House, but any analysis of this deal would show that it is unacceptable and should be defeated in this House.

Should the backstop come into force, there is no time limit or end point. It locks Britain into a deal from which it cannot leave. Remember that: it cannot leave without the agreement of the EU.

Mr Iain Duncan Smith (Chingford and Woodford Green) (Con)

Will the right hon. Gentleman clarify his answer to the hon. Member for Nottingham East (Mr Leslie)? He says that the Labour party stood on a manifesto that accepted the result of the referendum; he was clear on that. Yet since then, the right hon. Member for Hayes and Harlington (John McDonnell) has suggested that the Labour party's position would now be to support a second referendum. Will the Leader of the Opposition now clarify, for the sake of the House: is the Labour party's position to support a second referendum, or is it that it accepts the result of the first referendum and will not support a second referendum?

Jeremy Corbyn

I am sure that the right hon. Gentleman read the Labour manifesto with great caution and detail. [Interruption.] Oh, he did. We were quite clear that we respected the result of the referendum. In our conference motion we discussed the whole issue at great length, and at the largest Labour party conference in our history, our party agreed unanimously to back the composite motion that we put forward. That motion opposed the process that the Government are bringing forward, and suggests that if the Government cannot govern—and it looks increasingly like they cannot—they should make way and have an election. That is our priority.

Should the backstop come into force, there is no time limit or end point. It locks Britain into a deal from which it cannot leave. As was said during proceedings on the Attorney General's statement yesterday, this is the first time ever in the history of this country that we have signed up to a treaty that we could not leave of our own volition. That is quite a serious indictment of this Government. In the backstop, restrictions on state aid are hard-wired with an arbitration mechanism, but no such

guarantee exists for workers' rights, and new state aid rules could be brought in, whether they were in Britain's interests or not. The Attorney General made that very clear yesterday.

Angus Brendan MacNeil

Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Patricia Gibson

Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Jeremy Corbyn

I give way.

Angus Brendan MacNeil

rose—

Patricia Gibson

rose—

Mr Speaker

Order. Members of the same party do not need to bicker as to whom the Leader of the Opposition is giving way to. I think it is the hon. Member for Na h-Eileanan an Iar (Angus Brendan MacNeil) who has been invited to intervene. Just before he does, I remind colleagues that it is legitimate to use mobile devices without impairing decorum, but it has just been brought to my attention that there is a very widespread use of them, and I gently remind colleagues that they most certainly should not be taking photographs in the Chamber. [Interruption.] Yes, I know exactly what I am doing and saying, and upon what advice. It requires no comment or contradiction, simply a recognition of the validity of the point.

Angus Brendan MacNeil

The Leader of the Opposition talks about respecting the referendum. Fair enough—that is his point of view. I have a different perspective in Scotland. Will he respect the mandate of the Scottish Government and the Scottish Parliament's will to have a second independence referendum? How far does his respect go?

Jeremy Corbyn

That is not actually relevant to today's debate. We are talking about the deal that the Government have brought back, and that is what the debate is about. In the backstop, regulatory frameworks dealt with by non-regression clauses are non-enforceable by EU institutions or by arbitration arrangements, and would give the Government the power to tear up workers' rights and damage environmental protections and consumer safeguards.

Chris Bryant (Rhondda) (Lab)

Is not one of the most extraordinary things about the debate so far that we have not had a single mention of the word immigration, and yet it was meant to be one of the most important aspects of the referendum? The Government have not even published an immigration Bill. We do not know what our immigration policy will be next year. Do we not really want to stand up for the rights of young British people to be able to study, work and live elsewhere in the European Union? It is British people who have used that right more than any other country in Europe.

Jeremy Corbyn

I was coming to that in my speech, but my hon. Friend is absolutely right: young people need that right to travel and study. The Erasmus scheme has worked very well, giving a lot of people opportunities to study. I will come back to that issue. I just think we should reflect on the massive work done by European Union nationals who have come to make their homes in this country and helped us to develop our health service and many other services.

The backstop would apply separate regulatory rules to Northern Ireland, despite the fact that the Prime Minister said that this is something that

“no UK Prime Minister could ever agree to”.—[Official Report, 28 February 2018; Vol. 636, c. 823.]

That is another of her red lines breached. In fact, the list of the EU measures that continue to apply to Northern Ireland runs to 75 pages of the agreement.

Wayne David (Caerphilly) (Lab)

Does my right hon. Friend agree that this is bad deal, and that one of the reasons for that is that the Prime Minister has spent much of the past two and a half years discussing the deal with her colleagues in the Conservative party rather than negotiating with the European Union?

Jeremy Corbyn

My hon. Friend is so right. This has been a negotiation with the Cabinet, with Conservative MPs and within the Conservative party. That is where all the concentration has been. Indeed, one of the Brexit Secretaries hardly ever went to Brussels anyway, presumably being more interested in arguments within the Conservative party.

It is also clear that the Prime Minister’s red line regarding the jurisdiction of the European Court of Justice has been torn up. Under the Prime Minister’s plan, by 2022 we will either be in a backstop or still in transition, where we will continue to contribute to the European Union budget and follow the rules overseen by the European Court of Justice. Indeed, the Foreign Secretary said on 25 November that the deal only “largely” ends the jurisdiction of the ECJ. It is crystal clear that the Prime Minister’s claim that this plan means that we take control over our laws, money and borders is utterly far-fetched.

On the future partnership, let us be clear: there is not a deal; there is a framework for a future partnership. Our trading relationship with Europe is still to be negotiated, and it will take years to do that. We still do not know what our long-term relationship with Europe would look like. That is why so many MPs across Parliament are not willing to vote for this blindfold Brexit and take a leap in the dark about Britain’s future. There is no mention of the Prime Minister’s favoured term, “implementation period”, anywhere in the 600 pages of the withdrawal agreement—and no wonder, as there is precious little new to implement spelled out either in the agreement or in the future partnership. The agreement does call for a transition period, but there is nothing to transition to. It is a bridge to nowhere. As the 26-page document says, it

“can lead to a spectrum of different outcomes...as well as checks and controls”—

and we are expected to endorse that as a basis of our future relationship with the European Union. After two years of negotiations, all the Government have really agreed to is a very vague wish list. Only three of its 26 pages deal with trade. It is not a trade deal; it is not even close to a trade deal. The trade deal recently signed between the EU and Canada took seven years to negotiate and ran to

1,600 pages. In two and a half years, this Government have agreed to three pages of text on trade. It is hardly an encouraging start to our future trade relationships.

The former Brexit Secretary committed to a “detailed”, “precise” and “substantive” document. We had the right to expect one. What we got contains no mention of frictionless trade, promised at Chequers, or even trade “as frictionless as possible”, promised before that. There is no ambition to negotiate a new comprehensive customs union with a British say that would protect jobs, trade and industry—and so uncertainty continues for business.

Bambos Charalambous (Enfield, Southgate) (Lab)

Does my right hon. Friend agree that this deal does not deliver frictionless trade and that this will have a negative impact on the economy and risk jobs as well?

Jeremy Corbyn

It certainly does not deliver frictionless trade, and those working in industry are extremely worried about what will happen, because they do not see this deal as protecting their jobs or their futures.

The demand for a new comprehensive customs union has united both the Confederation of British Industry and the TUC, because it protects manufacturing supply chains. The decision to rule out a customs union and the lack of clarity in the deal risks deferring business investment on an even greater scale than at the moment, costing jobs and living standards. Many companies may decide that the lack of certainty means they will explore their contingency plans to relocate elsewhere.

The First Ministers of both Wales and Scotland have made clear to the Prime Minister that they would support participation in a customs union to protect the economy and jobs. A commitment to a new and comprehensive customs union could, I believe, have found support in this House, but the Government did not seek it.

Alberto Costa

The Leader of the Opposition talks about uncertainty, but I put to him just one example of why I encourage him to support the Prime Minister’s deal. If the deal does not go through, we could face a situation at 11.1 pm on 29 March where 1 million UK citizens living in the EU27 will no longer have their rights guaranteed. What would he do in that position?

Jeremy Corbyn

I imagine that the hon. Gentleman supports the Prime Minister’s deal because he is incredibly loyal to his party, with a blindness about the dangers of this deal for the rest of the country and the jobs that go with it.

The lack of clarity around these proposals also means that there is no guarantee of a strong deal with the single market, to ensure continued access to European markets in services. There is merely a vague commitment to go beyond the baseline of the World Trade Organisation.

As both the Attorney General and the Environment Secretary made clear in recent days, the commitments to workers’ rights, environmental protections and consumer safeguards are very far from secure. The social Europe that many people supported and continue to support was not part of why people voted to leave. All of that is at risk from this deal. This deal fails to give so many economic sectors and public services clarity about our future relationship with several European Union agencies and programmes.

Caroline Lucas (Brighton, Pavilion) (Green)

Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that the Prime Minister's deal seriously undermines environmental protection in this country, because it does not replace the European Court of Justice with anything like the strength of an enforcement body? Instead of the promised watchdog, we have little more than just a lapdog.

Jeremy Corbyn

The hon. Lady is absolutely correct. The environmental protections that we have are essential. We cannot protect the environment inside national borders; it has to be done across national borders. We have to have the toughest possible environmental protection regulations, and the suspicion many of us have is that there is an appetite on the Government Benches to remove many of those protections as time goes on.

Mike Hill (Hartlepool) (Lab)

Does my right hon. Friend agree that the Government's obsession with clamping down on state aid is the wrong focus, and they should be focusing on all the important protections that we are discussing?

Jeremy Corbyn

The state aid rules of the European Union are something that this Government have been very happy to sign up to and, indeed, use as a means of not defending the steelworks at Redcar, when they could have done something about it and defended those jobs. This Government should be condemned for their failure to do anything to protect those steelworks and those jobs. I thank my hon. Friend for his intervention and the work he did to try to protect those jobs.

Let us take, for example, the Galileo programme, to which the UK has so far contributed £1.2 billion, but from which we now seem set to walk away. Then there is the lack of clarity about whether we will continue to participate in the European arrest warrant, Europol or Eurojust. The Chequers proposal argued for the UK maintaining membership of the European Aviation Safety Agency and the European Medicines Agency, but the future partnership merely allows for co-operation.

Afzal Khan (Manchester, Gorton) (Lab)

Does my right hon. Friend agree that, while the Prime Minister seems proud to claim that freedom of movement has ended, she cannot tell us what it will be replaced with? Is it not right that we see the Government's immigration White Paper before the meaningful vote?

Jeremy Corbyn

I am coming on to that in just one second.

We lack similar clarity about many other areas, including Horizon 2020 and Erasmus—it was mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Rhondda (Chris Bryant)—which have been so brilliant in providing students with opportunities to study in other countries. That is why so many young people are so concerned at this present time about what is happening.

There is no clarity about any future immigration system between the UK and the European Union, and it now seems that the immigration White Paper we were promised in December 2017 will not even appear in December 2018. Following the disgraceful Windrush scandal, many prospective migrants will have no confidence in the ability of this Government to deliver a fair and efficient system.

Janet Daby

I thank my right hon. Friend for mentioning immigration. Immigration is a serious concern for our young people, especially to do with Brexit. As he has mentioned the Windrush scandal, does he agree that learning the lessons is not good enough? We need a public inquiry if we are really to understand the Windrush scandal and the “hostile environment”. When we get that, we will understand more about how far the Government are committed to immigration and getting things right, especially at times like this.

Jeremy Corbyn

I thank my hon. Friend for her intervention, and as the daughter of a Windrush generation migrant to this country, she fully understands how horrible it felt in her community when this Prime Minister, as Home Secretary, deliberately created the “hostile environment”, which was so damaging to community relations all across our country.

Many EU nationals already here have no faith in this Government to manage the process of settled status fairly or efficiently. These are people who have contributed to our country, our economy, our public services and especially our NHS. We all meet them in hospitals and doctors’ surgeries. It is these people who are now so anxious about their future.

To our negotiating partners in the European Union, I say: “We understand why, after two years of negotiations, you want this resolved, but this Parliament represents the people of this country and the deal negotiated by this Government is not good enough for the people of this country, so if Parliament votes down the deal, then reopening the negotiations cannot and should not be ruled out.” There is a deal that I believe can win the support of this House and bring the country together, based on a new comprehensive and permanent customs union with a UK say and real protection of workers’ rights and environmental and consumer safeguards.

Jeremy Corbyn

I have been very generous in giving way, particularly to Conservative Members.

As I conclude, I want to pay tribute to my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Holborn and St Pancras (Keir Starmer), the shadow Brexit Secretary, and his team of shadow Ministers. He is now facing his third Brexit Secretary, but he has stayed the course in holding this Government to account. I thank him and his wonderful team, and their supporters, for what they have done, and for the success today in forcing the Government to release the legal advice they were trying to withhold from us.

This is not the deal the country was promised and Parliament cannot—and, I believe, will not—accept it. The false choice between this bad deal and no deal will also be rejected. [Interruption.]

Mr Speaker

Order. The Leader of the Opposition is not currently giving way; he is developing his point. [Interruption.] No, he is developing his point. Hon. Members do not need to set themselves up as though they are conducting an orchestra. It is not necessary. Mr Hoare, for example, you are an incorrigible individual. Your assistance in this matter is not required. I am afraid that you are a veteran of Oxford Union badinage and you have never really overcome it.

Jeremy Corbyn

As I said, this is not the deal the country promised and Parliament cannot, and I believe will not, accept it, and the false choice between a bad deal and no deal will also be rejected.

People around the country are very anxious. Businesses and workers are anxious about the industries they work in, the jobs they hold and this country's stability.

Jeremy Corbyn

I have given way a great many times, and I will draw my remarks to a close soon.

The responsibility for the state of anxiety lies solely with the Government. Two years of botched negotiations have led us here. Members of this House have a very important decision to make one week today. To vote for the deal would be to damage our economy, to make our constituents poorer and to take a leap in the dark with the future of this country. Do not take my word for it—the Government published their own economic assessment, which found that the Chequers proposals would make our economy nearly 4% smaller than it would otherwise be, thus knocking £100 billion out of our economy within 15 years. For those who like to break down those sorts of figures into weekly amounts, that is nearly £2 billion a week less. That definitely was not seen on the side of a bus.

Labour will vote against this deal. It is a bad deal for Britain, a bad deal for our economy and a bad deal for our democracy. Our country deserves better.

19:32:00

Boris Johnson (Uxbridge and South Ruislip) (Con)

It is perfectly clear from listening to the leader of the Labour party that he is joining the shadow Chancellor and the shadow Brexit Secretary and is now determined to frustrate Brexit and the result of the referendum in 2016. That is absolutely clear from what he just said.

I must regretfully say to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister that I cannot believe that a single Member sincerely believes that the deal before us is good for the UK.

Mr Edward Vaizey (Wantage) (Con)

rose—

Boris Johnson

There is one. I said “sincerely”. [Interruption.]

Mr Vaizey

On a point of order, Mr Speaker. I sincerely believe it. I have no stake in this Government any more, but I still think it is the right thing to do.

Boris Johnson

In which case, I am happy to acknowledge my right hon. Friend's sincerity. However, I have to say that the Government's heart does not appear to be in this deal. From listening to those who are sent out to defend and explain it, they know that it is a democratic disaster.

As has been said, after two years of negotiation, the deal has achieved an extraordinary thing: it has finally brought us together. Remainers and leavers, myself and Tony Blair, we are united—indeed, the whole Johnson family is united—in the belief that the deal is a national humiliation that makes a mockery of Brexit. I am sorry to say this—these are hard truths—but there will be no proper free trade deals and we will not take back control of our laws. For the Government to continue to suggest otherwise is to do violence to the natural meaning of words. We will give up £39 billion for nothing. We will not be taking back control of our borders. Not only have we yet to settle the terms

on which EU migrants will in future come to this country, but we will be levying EU tariffs at UK ports and sending 80% of the cash to Brussels. In short, we are going to be rule-takers. We are going to be a de facto colony. Out of sheer funk—I am sorry to have to say this to the House—we are ensuring that we will never, ever be able to take advantage of the freedoms we should have won by Brexit.

Under the terms of the backstop, we have to stay in the customs union, while Northern Ireland, and therefore the rest of the UK if we want to keep the Union together, will stay in regulatory alignment unless and until the EU decides to let us go. And why should they let us go? By handing over £39 billion, we lose all our leverage in the talks. With the £95 billion surplus they have with us in goods alone, the EU has absolutely no interest or incentive to allow us—

Vicky Ford

The Prime Minister gave us seven reasons why the EU will not be using the backstop. Yesterday, the Attorney General made it completely clear that the backstop, if it ever came into place, would be challengeable under EU law itself. I say to my greatly respected colleague that I think he is promoting “Project Fear”. What is his option—

Mr Speaker

Order. Resume your seat. I am sorry to have to bark at the hon. Lady, but the intervention is just too long—end of. Enough.

Boris Johnson

A very good point none the less, Mr Speaker. It is exactly on the point. As I have been saying, the EU has no incentive whatever to let us out of this backstop precisely because they have a massive trade surplus with us. Furthermore, when they look at UK manufacturing and UK business, they realise that they will have, in that backstop and through the whole of the implementation period and beyond, unchecked and unmediated power effectively to legislate for the UK with no UK representation.

Stephen Gethins (North East Fife) (SNP)

Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Boris Johnson

If the hon. Gentleman thinks that that is an ideal situation for this country to end up in, then let him speak now.

Stephen Gethins

The right hon. Member talks about an ideal situation. He was a senior member of Vote Leave. He was Foreign Secretary for two years. We are in this mess because of him. Does he take no responsibility?

Boris Johnson

I am grateful to the hon. Member, but the fact is that I was not able to continue to support this process for precisely that reason.

Boris Johnson

If the House will allow me, I will make some progress.

The EU knows that having that regulatory control over us, they would have no incentive, as it were, to take the foot off our neck. They will have us in permanent captivity as a memento mori, as a

reminder to the world of what happens to all those who try to leave the EU. This is a recipe for blackmail and it is open to any member of the EU to name its price for Britain's right to leave the backstop. The Spanish will make a play for Gibraltar. The French will go for our fish and our bankers. The Germans may well want some concessions on the free movement of EU nationals—and so it goes on.

Daniel Kawczynski

Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Boris Johnson

I will give way in just a second.

The worst of it is that we have not even tried properly to leave or show any real interest in having a different future.

Alberto Costa

rose—

Boris Johnson

I will give way to my hon. Friend.

Alberto Costa

The Prime Minister, at the Dispatch Box today, was generous. She made very clear that for us to unify the country we have to bring the 48% who voted to stay, as well as the 52%. Can I ask my right hon. Friend, someone who was regarded in London as a unifying political figure, what he would do to bring the 48% and the 52% together?

Boris Johnson

As I say, remain and leave have been, to a very large extent, united in their dismay at what I think is a wholly undemocratic deal. The thing that really pains me—the hon. Member for North East Fife (Stephen Gethins) asked about the role of Ministers in this—is that we on the UK side of the negotiation have been responsible for forging our own manacles, in the sense that it is almost as though we decided that we needed to stay in the customs union and in the single market in defiance of the wishes of the people.

Sir Roger Gale (North Thanet) (Con)

Will my right hon. Friend allow me to intervene?

Boris Johnson

I will give way in a minute to my hon. Friend, who has been chuntering away from a sedentary position behind me. We should be careful about claiming any kind of subterfuge—we have lost two Brexit Secretaries in the course of these negotiations, and it is very hard to understand how the former Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union could have been kept in the dark about the crucial addition to paragraph 23 of the political declaration. This country agreed in paragraph 23, apparently without the knowledge of the elected politician concerned, that our future relationship would be based on the backstop. No one campaigned for that outcome. No one voted for this type of Brexit. This is not Brexit, but a feeble simulacrum of national independence.

Boris Johnson

I will give way in a second to my hon. Friend the Member for North Thanet (Sir Roger Gale). It is a paint and plaster pseudo-Brexit, and beneath the camouflage, we find the same old EU

institutions—the customs union and the single market—all of it adjudicated, by the way, by the European Court of Justice. If we vote for this deal, we will not be taking back control, but losing it.

Sir Roger Gale

I am very grateful to my right hon. Friend for giving way. He appears to be one of those who prefers the grievance to the solution. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has come up with a solution. What is his big idea? [Interruption.]

Boris Johnson

I was coming to that. [Interruption.]

Mr Speaker

Order. Members must not shout across the Chamber at the right hon. Gentleman. It is extremely unseemly—[Interruption.] Order. I have no doubt that he is well able to look after himself. I am not really concerned about him; I am concerned about the reputation of the House.

Boris Johnson

I have been told, by your leave, Mr Speaker, that I have an unlimited time to speak, so I will come to the solution that my hon. Friend the Member for North Thanet craves in just a minute.

Boris Johnson

I must make some progress. If we vote for this deal, we are not taking back control. Indeed, I say to colleagues and friends across the House of Commons that we are part of a representative democracy, and voting for this deal would be not just like, as it were, turkeys voting for Christmas; it is actually worse than that. There is a sense in which we would be voting for Turkey, or Turkish—[Interruption.] That is exactly true. We would be voting for Turkish-style membership of the customs union, obliged to watch as access to the UK market is traded by Brussels, but with no say in the negotiations. Of course, the kicker is that with its veto, the EU ensures that the backstop that they impose on us is more subservient even than the arrangements that the Turks have—[Interruption.] That is absolutely true. It is a wonder, frankly, that any democratic politician could conceivably vote for this deal, and yet I know that many good colleagues are indeed determined to do so in the belief that we have no alternative or that we have run out of road, and as we heard earlier, that Brussels will offer us nothing else.

Simon Hoare

rose—

Boris Johnson

And I want respectfully to deal with those anxieties, which I am sure my hon. Friend shares.

Simon Hoare

Given that my right hon. Friend appears to be unwilling to enter into an understanding of what a negotiation is, can we take it that he has only ever meant that no deal is a good deal because he does not believe in having a deal with an institution—this windmill at which he tilts at every turn—to which he is philosophically opposed?

Boris Johnson

I have great respect and admiration for my hon. Friend, but I do not philosophically oppose the EU; I simply think that membership is no longer right for the UK. That was what I campaigned on, and I think the British people were completely right. I do not believe that no deal is the option we should be going for automatically, but I will come to that in just a minute. I want to deal with the anxieties

that I know that he shares, because I think that he is profoundly mistaken, as indeed are other colleagues, in thinking that we have absolutely no option but to go ahead on this basis. We have plenty of other options. In order to see the way ahead, we need to understand what happens if next Tuesday this great House of Commons votes down this deal, as I very much hope it does. I will tell hon. Members what will happen, but they have to put themselves in the mind of our counterparts across the table in Brussels. In Brussels, they think they've got us beat— they do.

Carol Monaghan (Glasgow North West) (SNP)
rose—

Boris Johnson

They think our nerve will eventually fail, that the Prime Minister will come to the summit next week and, in the event of the deal having been voted down, ask for some cosmetic changes, and I expect they will think about granting some cosmetic language that is intended to be helpful but which does not change the legal position.

In Brussels, they are confident that some time before next March, the Government will come back to the House and that the deal will go through somehow or other—by hook or by crook—because, as everybody keeps saying, there is allegedly no alternative. The Norway option will be seen for what it is—an even worse solution than what is currently proposed—and the notion of extending article 50, thereby delaying the date of Brexit, will be greeted, I think, with fury by the electorate, as would any attempt to amend the terms of exit so as to plunge us back into the customs union. That would be rumbled by the electorate as well.

Colin Clark (Gordon) (Con)

Is my right hon. Friend not concerned that, in trying to win 7-0, he might lose 4-3?

Boris Johnson

No, although I understand exactly my hon. Friend's analogy. I have heard it said by defenders of the Government that we may be 1-0 down at the end of the first half of the negotiations, but that we will win 2-0—I mean 2-1—by the end.

Carol Monaghan
rose—

Boris Johnson

I do not see it that way. If we go on like this, with the backstop as it is, we will be thrashed out of sight. [Hon. Members: "Let Carol in!"] I will come to Carol in a minute. Having studied the UK's negotiating style in detail, I do not think that it believes—[Interruption.]

Mr Speaker

Order. There is excessive noise in the Chamber. My understanding, in so far as I can hear—[Interruption.] Order. Calm yourselves. My understanding is that Mr Johnson is not currently giving way.

Boris Johnson

I think the House will agree that I have given way quite a lot so far, and I am very happy to do so again in the future, but I want to come to the point that has been raised by my hon. Friends.

Boris Johnson

Just one second. In Brussels, they think we have nothing left in our tank and that we want to do a deal at any price. As we all think about this vote and what we are individually going to do, and thinking about the attitude in Brussels towards us, now is the time for us to show them that they grossly underestimate this country and this House of Commons and our attachment to our liberties. There is an alternative. There is another way. We should not pretend, after two years of wasted negotiations, that it is going to be easy, but it is the only option that delivers on the will of the people and also, I believe, maintains our democratic self-respect as a country. That option is obvious from this debate, and from every poll that I have seen. We should go back to Brussels and say, “Yes, we want a deal if we can get one, and yes, there is much in the withdrawal agreement that we can keep, notably the good work that has been done on citizens.”

Tom Tugendhat (Tonbridge and Malling) (Con)

When you went to Russia, did Lavrov give Ukraine back?

Boris Johnson

My hon. Friend, from a sedentary position, compares the European Union to Lavrov and Russia. I think that that is an entirely inapposite comparison. These are our friends. These are our partners. To compare them to Russia today is quite extraordinary.

We should say that we appreciate the good work that is being done to protect the rights of citizens on either side of the channel, but we must be clear that we will not accept the backstop. It is nonsensical to claim that it is somehow essential to further progress in the negotiations. The question of the Irish border is for the future partnership, not the withdrawal agreement. It was always absurd that it should be imported into this section of the negotiations. We should use the implementation period to negotiate that future partnership, which is what I believe the Government themselves envisage—and, by the way, we should withhold at least half that £39 billion until the negotiation on the new partnership is concluded.

Ian Murray (Edinburgh South) (Lab)

May I ask the right hon. Gentleman a simple question? Is the deal that is currently on the table better or worse than staying in the European Union?

Boris Johnson

I am afraid that that is a finely balanced question. [Interruption.] Much will depend on what happens after the vote on Tuesday. I believe that if we say what I propose, the EU will understand that the Government have found their resolve and are willing to be tough at last, and I believe that the EU will do a deal on those terms.

Mr Kenneth Clarke

rose—

Boris Johnson

I am going to anticipate the intervention of my right hon. and learned Friend. I bet I know what he is going to say. In case the EU does not agree, we must be absolutely emphatic now that we are preparing urgently for the possibility that we will indeed have to leave before we reach a final agreement.

Mr Clarke

What we are voting on is the withdrawal agreement, and three points that must be settled before the big, wide, grown-up negotiations start on the future relationship. There will be a very wide agenda over the next few years. My right hon. Friend is suggesting that we reject the withdrawal agreement

now, in December, before we leave in March, and that we go back and say, “We are not going to pay our contribution to any legal liabilities and any continued access, and we are not at this stage going to guarantee an open border in Ireland.” Does he think there is the faintest chance of that being listened to seriously by any other member Government? If he gets his way, will he not doom us to rushing into a no-deal arrangement?

Boris Johnson

I do not agree with that at all. Obviously we should state what is agreed among all—that there will be no hard border in Northern Ireland. All sides agree on that. As for the legal liabilities to pay the £39 billion, they are, to say the least, contested. I believe it is additionally vital to do what we have failed to do so far, which is to show that we have the conviction and the willingness to leave without an agreement. Yes, I agree that that will mean a great national effort if it comes to that point, and yes it will mean that we have to make sure we get all the goods to our ports in addition to Dover, and ensure that the planes can fly and we address all the other questions.

Carol Monaghan

I thank the right hon. Gentleman for finally giving way. He is presenting an illusion of the EU not being good for the UK. Does he also think Euratom is not good for the UK, and if so can he explain to those currently waiting for cancer diagnosis and treatment where they are going to get their radioactive sources from?

Boris Johnson

I am glad to have given way because that is the kind of scaremongering about the consequences of leaving the EU that does no favours to the debate. In the event of our coming out without an agreement, the Treasury will have an opportunity to use the £39 billion to ensure that we can support the economy rather than talking it down, and I believe it will be far better to make that effort now and at least be responsible for our destiny than to agree to give up our right to self-government forever—because that is effectively what we will be doing—just because of our lack of short-term competence or confidence. Frankly, the EU will not treat us as a sovereign equal in these negotiations unless and until we are willing to stand up for our own interests now and in the future.

I think our country is ready for us to take this stand. [Interruption.] I think it is, because I think it has had enough of being told that we cannot do it—that the fifth or sixth biggest economy in the world is not strong enough to run itself. If we fail now, it will not be good enough—

Boris Johnson

I have given way a great deal.

It will not be good enough to say to our fishermen that we cannot actually take back control of our fish because in the end it all proved to be too difficult and it will not be good enough to say to the people of Northern Ireland that after all those promises we accept that they must be treated differently from the rest of the UK.

Kevin Hollinrake

My right hon. Friend talks about avoiding a hard border in Northern Ireland. Speaking to the DUP conference at the weekend before last, he said that if Great Britain chose to vary regulations, there would be a need for regulatory checks and a customs border between Great Britain and Northern Ireland. Does he accept then that in some future world where the UK can vary its regulations as a whole that would inevitably lead to regulatory checks between Northern Ireland and the rest of Ireland?

Boris Johnson

I am glad my hon. Friend has raised that point, because it is very important. Michel Barnier himself has said that technical solutions to implement such regulatory checks—not necessarily customs checks but regulatory checks—away from the frontier can be found, and that is what we should be doing. Frankly, that is what we should have been doing for the last two years; that is where our effort and our energy should have gone. And on that point about regulation, it will not be good enough to tell the people of Northern Ireland they are now going to be treated differently and it will not be good enough to tell the businesspeople of the UK that now and in the future they will be burdened with regulation emanating from Brussels over which we will have absolutely no control, and we could not stop it because we could not see an alternative. I must say to colleagues that if they think it is too disruptive to go now for the super-Canada option—to go now for freedom—just wait until we feel the popular reaction that will follow when people realise the referendum has been betrayed.

Anna Soubry (Broxtowe) (Con)

Can my right hon. Friend tell us how his cunning plan, which will end up with no deal, will secure the 485,000 jobs that rely on the automotive sector and the just-in-time supply chains that he first heard about some six months ago from the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy?

Boris Johnson

I will not comment on when I heard about just-in-time supply chains, but it was many years ago. The objective, as my right hon. Friend knows, is to create a zero-tariff, zero-quota deal with the EU, which is readily deliverable when we consider that we already have zero tariffs and zero quotas. As for her anxiety about job losses, we have already heard a lot of prophecies about job losses. I think it was said that we would lose 500,000 jobs in this country if the British people had the temerity to vote leave. Actually, we gained 800,000 jobs, so I take such prophecies with a pinch of salt.

The sad thing is that too many people—indeed, some of the people who have been negotiating this deal—seem to regard Brexit as a disaster to be managed, rather than an opportunity. They see bad news as a vindication of that judgment and talk up bad news as a result. In taking that attitude, they badly misunderstand the instincts of the people of this country, who did not vote for Brexit out of hate, as the Prime Minister's chief of staff tweeted after the referendum. They voted to take back control of our laws because they believe—I think, rightly—that if we govern ourselves and legislate in the interests of the UK economy, they have a better chance of good jobs, higher wages, cheaper food and clothes, and a brighter future, all of which are possible under a proper Brexit, and none of which can be delivered by this deal.

Above all, if we vote through this apology for Brexit, we will be showing that we have treated the 17.4 million people—the highest number of people ever to vote for a single proposition—with contempt. We will be turning our backs on those people. We must understand that when people voted to leave in 2016, they voted for change. They did not vote for an endless transition or a thinly disguised version of the status quo: they voted for freedom, independence and a better Britain—and for a country where politicians actually listen to what the people say. If we try to cheat them now—as I fear that we are trying to cheat them—they will spot it, and they will never forgive us.

20:03:00

Ian Blackford (Ross, Skye and Lochaber) (SNP)

It is difficult to be here today. It is in many respects a debate that many of us wish was not happening. It is with real sorrow that I rise to respond to the Government's motion. The reality of

Brexit is now laid before us—broken promises of taking back control from a Government that are so out of control; 21 ministerial resignations; countries, communities and households divided; our politics stale; and a Prime Minister fighting for her political life.

The past number of months have been filled with political drama—theatre, squabbles and chaos—and from crisis to crisis, the Government hang on by a thread. Beneath all that is the reality, the hard, cold truth, that this is a moment of self-harm in our history. History has a way of teaching us lessons. If only we would listen.

In moments such as these, I reflect on someone we regard as an icon: Winnie Ewing—Madame Ecosse—who came into this House 51 years ago to represent the seat of Hamilton. She represented the Highlands and Islands in the European Parliament and fought hard to ensure that Scotland benefited from its membership of that Parliament. I can see those benefits throughout my constituency in all the projects that were funded by European money. We had a welcoming ear in the European Parliament, and Winnie played an important part in the development of that institution.

We have heard today about the importance of Erasmus, and it holds a special place in the Scottish National party's heart because it was Winnie Ewing who chaired the European Parliament's education and culture committee when Erasmus was established in the 1980s. It is the legacy of someone who fought hard to ensure that all of us benefited from that European membership. In contrasting the approach that we have had from Europe with that of this place, I want to quote the great lady herself. She said:

“Time after time, on matters great and small, we are still standing on the sidelines, mutely accepting what is decided elsewhere instead of raising our voices and making our own choices. Scotland's much vaunted partnership of Jonah and the whale.”

Respect for human dignity, human rights, freedom, democracy, equality and the rule of law are the core values of the European Union. Those values have united, not divided, us as citizens of Europe for many years. They are now ingrained in our society, and they are to be cherished and protected, not discarded or eroded. I am proud and privileged to be a citizen of the European Union. The European Union has been the greatest peace project in our lifetime. It was born out of the horrors of two world wars that ripped Europe apart, and it is a project that has gone on to change the course of our communities and improve citizens' rights and opportunities across the continent. It is a project that I still believe is worth defending, and those of us on the SNP Benches will defend it. It is a project that has enabled our generations to travel, to work, to live and to thrive across all the countries of the European Union.

I come here today with a heavy heart and with the deepest regret that the opportunities I had to work in Amsterdam, to travel throughout Europe in my working career and to learn from the best and the brightest across Europe will be taken from our children. That is what we are doing. Embracing the diversity of European culture has enriched so many of us. We have had exciting opportunities to live and work in Amsterdam, Barcelona, Brussels, Berlin, Copenhagen, Vienna and so many other places. Our generation has had so many choices and opportunities to work and develop friendships across Europe, to learn from the rich diversity that Europe has to offer, to benefit from the experiences of different cultures and to form friendships with those like us who celebrate being European citizens with shared rights. The right to live and work across the EU is to be ended as a right for the next generation.

I have in the Gallery today an ex-colleague from Amsterdam, where I worked for a bakery ingredients company. My friendship with him was formed out of the opportunity I had to work in Amsterdam, and it is a celebration of the success of the opportunities that EU membership gave to all of us. That right to live and work together across the EU is to be ended as a right for the next generation. That automatic right to benefit from those career opportunities is to be removed. The opportunities to benefit from an inclusive Europe are to be swapped for the constraints of an inward-looking United Kingdom.

Dr Philippa Whitford (Central Ayrshire) (SNP)

Most people in this Chamber know that my husband is German, but not all of them know that his mother was Polish and that his parents were not allowed to marry. The child they had together was taken from them. His mother was a forced labourer and his father was lifted by the Gestapo. Long before we ended up in this mess, he used to celebrate the fact that after one generation, he could live and work where he wanted and marry who he loved. In one more generation, we are taking all that away. It is shameful.

Ian Blackford

I thank my hon. Friend for that explanation of what we are doing. Colleagues, we must reflect on where we are. I appeal to everyone throughout this House to stop and think about that erudite explanation of what has happened in Europe over the past 70 or 80 years. We should enshrine the benefits of free movement of people that have enriched so many of us. It is not too late to turn back.

Daniel Kawczynski

I am proud to be the first ever Polish-born British Member of Parliament and to celebrate the contribution that 1 million Poles have made to our country. However, by offering or proposing another referendum, does the right hon. Gentleman not share my concern that we could be giving wind to UKIP's sails? The party is currently withering on the vine and falling apart, but there will be a renaissance for UKIP if we have another referendum that overturns the previous result.

Ian Blackford

I respectfully say to the hon. Gentleman that we have to take that argument on. Migration has enriched us. Scotland's population has barely grown over the past 100 years. We have gone from 4.8 million to just over 5 million people. If we do not have access to the free movement of people, we will be unable to deliver sustainable economic growth. I again say respectfully to the hon. Gentleman that thousands of Poles have come to work in Scotland over the past few years, and I say to each and every one of them who may be watching tonight, "You are welcome." They are welcome because of the contribution that they make to our lives, our culture and our economy. The thought that we would take up the drawbridge and prevent people from coming to participate in the growth of the future of our country is, quite frankly, repugnant. I will fight along with my colleagues to ensure that we remain an open society and that we can continue to be enriched by those who want to come, live and contribute to our economy. They are welcome and will remain welcome.

In April 1988, when the single market campaign began, one prominent speaker stated:

"A single market without barriers—visible or invisible—giving you direct and unhindered access to the purchasing power of over 300 million of the world's wealthiest and most prosperous people... We are putting the European Community to work for ordinary people: for cheaper air fares, for more and better services, for consumer choice and product safety."

That was Margaret Thatcher. Even Margaret Thatcher recognised that shared markets, collaboration and partnership in Europe was in all our interests.

Many people may be puzzled as to why I begin by expressing the sentiment and not the content of the Government's motion, but I do so because it is right. It is right to remember the real loss that we all will feel. That loss is down not simply to this deal or any other, but to the fact that any deal will mean a loss to our economy, our society and our children. The SNP has long argued and continues to believe that staying in the European Union is the best option for Scotland and, indeed, for all parts of the United Kingdom. When I hear the Prime Minister say that if we vote down this deal or no deal, that means staying in the European Union, I say, "Yes, please."

There is no option that will be better for our economy, for jobs and for our communities than staying in the EU. It is the height of irresponsibility for any Government to bring forward a proposition that will make their people poorer and mean that people will lose their jobs. We heard earlier from the previous Foreign Secretary, the right hon. Member for Uxbridge and South Ruislip (Boris Johnson), that the warning on jobs was part of project fear, but let us look at the reality and at what we already know: 1,000 jobs lost from the European Banking Authority and 1,000 jobs lost from the European Medicines Agency. That is not project fear. That is the reality, and it has already happened.

Stewart Malcolm McDonald

I commend the open nature of my right hon. Friend's speech, in stark contrast to the capricious and solipsistic nonsense from the former Foreign Secretary, the right hon. Member for Uxbridge and South Ruislip (Boris Johnson).

Will my right hon. Friend join me in calling on the Government, even at this late stage, to drop the charge they intend to impose on EU nationals to keep rights they already enjoy in this country right now? The cost of a passport might not be much to them, but it should be dropped as an act of good will.

Ian Blackford

My hon. Friend is correct. We simply should not be charging people to exercise the right they should have to be here. I go further, because of course we are discussing rejecting this deal, but we are also ruling out no deal. The Government should make it crystal clear that, in any scenario, the rights of all our EU citizens here will be protected.

There is another factor when we discuss the rights of EU citizens here, because there are also UK citizens in Europe. UK citizens who are currently in Europe will only have the right to stay, live and work in that one territory. The rights they have had up until now, of living, travelling and working throughout the European Union, are to be ended. What a disgrace. I know of people who live in Belgium but work throughout the European continent, and they are going to have those rights countermanded. That is a disgrace.

Tom Brake (Carshalton and Wallington) (LD)

rose—

Angus Brendan MacNeil

rose—

Ian Blackford

Let me make some progress.

Although we respect that England and Wales voted to leave the European Union, we ask that the Government respect that Scotland did not. However, it is clear that the UK Government have no intention of respecting the will of the Scottish people, as the deal we are asked to support will do nothing but bring harm and hardship—socially, economically and politically—to Scotland.

We must remember that this fight, this huge struggle and this burden on our society we now face from Brexit come from the Tory party, and from the Tory party alone. The European debate was an internal battle for the Tories, and they drove it into the public discourse, on to a bigger battlefield, not because of the interests of the citizens of this country but because of the deep divisions and narrow interests within the Tory party itself, not outside it. We know today that it does not have to be so. We know that the Prime Minister's deal will be voted down—we know it and she knows it—and this House should also vote to remove no deal from the table. There is no scenario where we will be wealthier with Brexit. No Government should expose their citizens to economic risk, which is what will happen with Brexit. The Government's own analysis shows that to be the case.

We must stop this madness. We can go back to the people of these islands and be honest with them on the consequences of Brexit. Today the advocate-general, Manuel Campos Sánchez-Bordona, has advised that EU law would allow the UK unilaterally to revoke article 50. We can hit the reset button. That, Prime Minister, is called leadership.

Tom Brake

The right hon. Gentleman touched on this earlier, but does he agree that perhaps the people who are most affected by this are UK citizens who live in the EU? It will require 27 countries in 27 different ways to address their concerns and their issues, so they are perhaps most vulnerable in what the Government are seeking to impose on us.

Ian Blackford

I fully agree, and I touched on that earlier. It just shows how this Brexit deal is a complete shambles and how we need to think again.

“A future in which Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and England continue to flourish side-by-side as equal partners.”

Those words are not mine; they are the words of the Prime Minister. A Prime Minister who promised we would be equal partners, but her rhetoric is in ruins, as her Government's record has shown time and again that the Tories believe Scotland to be not an equal partner but a second-class nation worth only second-class treatment. Throughout the entire negotiating period, the UK Government have treated Scotland with contempt. As I look around the Chamber, I can see the shaking of heads, but where are the 13 Scottish Tory MPs who were to stand up for Scotland? In this debate, which is so crucial to Scotland's future, the Tories are not just found wanting—they are simply not here; they have disappeared.

Hannah Bardell (Livingston) (SNP)

My right hon. Friend is making an incredibly powerful speech. On contempt for the Scottish people and for our Parliament, does he agree that, if this Government and their MPs continue to treat Scotland with the kind of disrespect we have seen throughout this Brexit process, it will only make independence for Scotland more likely and come sooner?

Ian Blackford

I thank my hon. Friend for that. I will make a prediction to this Parliament that Scotland will become an independent country. I say simply to the UK Parliament: keep going. Since we have come here, we have had English votes for English laws and the power grab that is taking place. The people of Scotland will one day make their judgment on what is happening.

Ian Blackford

I want to make some progress, as I am aware that many others wish to speak.

Throughout the entire negotiating period, the UK Government have treated Scotland with contempt. Scotland voted overwhelmingly to remain, yet the will of the Scottish people means nothing—absolutely nothing—to this Prime Minister. Instead of engaging meaningfully with Scotland during this critical time, she chose last-minute photocalls and stage-managed events in Scotland—all smoke and mirrors to dress up the fact that her Government could not care less about Scotland, and we can see it tonight. The Tories think they can do whatever they want to Scotland and get away with it. They think they can railroad through this deal against our will and against our interests. The Tories' mask has well and truly slipped. Scotland is not a second-class nation and our people do not deserve a second-class deal. This proposed deal is a non-starter and a no-deal Brexit is unthinkable. That means the priority now must be to stop Brexit and the SNP has made it clear that we will support any steps that would secure Scotland's place in the European Union, in line with the votes of the people of Scotland. But we have also said that, if the UK is to leave the EU, by far and away the least damaging option is to stay in the single market, which is eight times bigger than the UK alone, and the customs union.

Sir Roger Gale

The right hon. Gentleman has nailed his saltire to the mast. He has been very clear and we know what he is saying: he wants to stay in the EU. How is he going to get out of the common fisheries policy? What is he going to do for Scottish fishermen?

Ian Blackford

Well, well, well, Scottish fishing. Scottish fishing was sold down the river in the 1970s because Ted Heath made sure that our fishing interests were sold out. I have to say to the hon. Gentleman that the deal the Government have brought forward is the worst of all deals because in the transition period the UK would remain in the CFP but would have no effect on the rules. Let us look at what the EU has made clear because you are going to enter into a transition but you are not holding any cards in terms of the future relationship, and the EU27 have said that the starting position for the negotiations on fishing will be the existing quotas. The Scottish fishermen have been sold out by the Tories, who have duped them into thinking that they are going to be taking back control of their waters—nothing could be further from the truth.

Ian Blackford

I am going to make some progress.

Not content with ignoring the Scottish Government's compromise option for two years, the Prime Minister now wants to shut Scotland's voice out entirely. She cannot go on ignoring Scotland. Tomorrow, the Scottish Parliament will debate a cross-party motion that rejects this deal and a no-deal Brexit. Perhaps there are lessons for this place because at Holyrood parties have come together against a damaging Brexit, with a consensus and a desire to work collectively to defend Scotland's interests. How many of the 13 Tory MPs from Scotland will stand up with us to defend Scotland's interests? Where are they? I think we know the answer from the failure of the Scottish Tory MPs to stand up against a power grab when Westminster voted to take back control from the Scottish Parliament. We saw, when our powers over fishing, farming and the environment were to be

trampled all over by Westminster, that the Scottish Tories turned a blind eye—Scottish Tories standing silent as the Scottish Parliament, our Parliament, which the people of Scotland voted for in such huge numbers in 1997, had its powers constrained.

The Prime Minister boasts that her deal has support, but her deal does not have the support of the people of Scotland. A poll published earlier this year found that almost two thirds of Scottish voters believe that the Westminster Government are ignoring their concerns during the Brexit negotiations. There is now more support in Scotland for remaining in the EU than there was at the time of the 2016 referendum. According to research carried out for the people's vote campaign, 66% of Scottish voters support staying in the EU. The Prime Minister, like her predecessors, is out of step with the feelings of the Scottish people.

It is not just Scottish people: countless experts and professionals throughout the UK have said that it is a bad deal. Why is the Prime Minister not listening? Her proposed deal is unacceptable and must be defeated in this House. Some 80,000 jobs in Scotland will be put directly at risk as a result of Brexit. [Interruption.] I can see Ministers shaking their heads, but that is the analysis of the Fraser of Allander Institute. Indeed, the UK Government's own economic analysis points to the fact that a no-deal Brexit would damage the Scottish economy and wipe out more than 8.5% of our GDP. How any Government can impose these risks on Scotland is simply breath-taking.

The UK Government's intention to end the free movement of people will be hugely damaging to our economy. Inward migration has made an overwhelmingly positive contribution to Scotland's economy, meeting our needs for workers in sectors such as health and social care, as well as in the tourism industry in the highlands and islands. Any reduction in EU migration could have a serious effect on Scotland's population growth and its demographic composition. All the projected increase in Scotland's population over the next 25 years is due to migration. According to the Scottish Fiscal Commission, with 50% less EU migration, the working-age population would decline by almost 1% and the proportion of children would decline by 4.3%. The Prime Minister's deal totally fails to meet Scotland's needs.

Angus Brendan MacNeil

An example of exactly what my right hon. Friend is talking about came to my ears today. A pilot who works for a Scottish airline has a choice between having a strong EU Dutch passport or a UK passport. Having a UK passport would mean that he would have to pay around £10,000 for himself, his wife and his children to stay in the UK, and he would be left with a weaker passport. Or he can go with a Dutch passport and work internationally in the airline industry. That is the very damage that my right hon. Friend is talking about. The Government do not care about what they will do to the transport infrastructure of the highlands. They will carry on blindly, as they have been doing.

Ian Blackford

My hon. Friend is absolutely right. We must make the point right across Scotland that there is an existential threat to our living standards and our workers. We must make sure that we stop Brexit. If we cannot stop Brexit for the United Kingdom, we have to take seriously our own responsibility to protect Scotland.

Brexit uncertainty is already damaging our economy to the tune of £600 per household per year, as the value of the pound falls and inflation rises. That is not "Project Fear"; that has happened. That is what has happened since the sheer irresponsibility of the Vote Leave campaign, with ridiculous statements on the side of a bus, promoted by the ex-Foreign Secretary, the right hon. Member for Uxbridge and South Ruislip, who should be hanging his head in shame.

There is no certainty in the Prime Minister's deal on future trading arrangements for goods and services, no certainty on future mobility, no clarity on law, and no guarantee on continued participation in the EU funding programmes that support our universities, communities, non-governmental organisations and businesses. Uncertainty leads to risks for investment and further risks for our economy. Under a free trade agreement, GDP would be £9 billion lower by 2030 than if we stayed in the European Union. That is equivalent to £1,600 per person in Scotland. That is what Brexit risks per year, making the people of Scotland poorer. That is why the Scottish National party, in all good faith, has offered a compromise. If we are to be dragged out of the European Union against our will, then, at the very least, we must remain in the single market and the customs union to protect our economy. Without single market and customs union membership, the future relationship can only be a free trade agreement, introducing barriers to Scottish companies' abilities to trade. That will damage jobs, investment, productivity and earnings.

The Government's own analysis proves that Brexit is bad for Scotland: trade volumes, GDP and wages would all fall, while Government borrowing and trade costs would increase. All the analysis shows that a no-deal scenario would be catastrophic and it is likely that the corporate sector in general is not well equipped to deal with a no-deal Brexit. It is more important than ever that we are not faced with a false choice between a bad deal and a no deal. We need to have more time. We must extend article 50 and take an alternative route to protect our economy. This deal and no deal are not options. Only those reckless enough to risk economic hardship will back this deal.

Despite what the Prime Minister said here today, her own Chancellor agrees with the SNP. He admitted on Radio 4 that, in economic terms, we will be worse off after Brexit and after leaving the single market. Even more telling is the admission from the Prime Minister herself in the House last week. In response to the right hon. Member for Belfast North (Nigel Dodds), she said:

"What we want to be able to do in the future is to have our independent trade policy. One of the issues in relation to the backstop is whether or not we would be able to do that—that is one of the issues that we would not want to see us continuing to be in the backstop for."—[Official Report, 26 November 2018; Vol. 650, c. 32.]

So the Prime Minister is clear. There is a concern from this Government over their ability to be able to strike and implement free trade deals if the backstop comes into force. Why then is she arguing here that this deal delivers? Again, I ask the House: how can we support a deal and back the Government on delivering an outcome that would make our economy smaller and our communities poorer?

Ministers have tried to spin support in favour of this deal, citing the support from sectors across the United Kingdom. However, let me say this to those who believe that this deal is the only option: it is not and we deserve better. We know that frictionless trade at the border is crucial for Scotland's food and drink exports, but there is no guarantee of that as, under the deal, border checks and controls will depend on the extent of the UK's alignment with EU customs and regulatory regimes. Yet the declaration contains no commitment to a common rulebook on regulation. The SNP believes that our food and drink sector deserves assurance. It deserves cast-iron protections for the industry, not a false binary choice between a no Brexit and a blindfold Brexit.

Yet again, another UK Tory Government in Westminster have bargained off our fishing sector. The utterances from No. 10 are false assurances. The UK is reneging on its promises to support Scottish fishing by accepting a link between UK waters and access to EU markets. Its commitment to a separate fisheries agreement as part of the economic partnership could mean the UK ceding access for EU vessels to UK waters, or accepting tariffs and customs barriers on trade and fish, seafood

and farmed salmon with the EU. That is not acceptable. That will mean that, again, Scottish interests are being traded off against each other. That is absolutely unacceptable and those Scottish Tories who profess to want to protect Scottish fishermen should hang their heads in shame. If the Tories go through the Lobby to protect this Government, they will once again have sold Scotland out for party political gain and they will not be forgiven for it.

The UK Government must respect the will of the Scottish people who voted overwhelmingly to remain in the EU. It is a democratic outrage that Scotland has been dragged out of the EU against its will. The withdrawal agreement sidelines Scotland and sells out our vital national industries. How could any representative in good conscience support such a move? Let me be clear: next week, the SNP will reject the withdrawal agreement because it will leave Scotland poorer and rip opportunities away from future generations. Does the Prime Minister show any respect at all for our mandate? No. Does this Government have respect for the fact that every Scottish local authority voted remain and that the nation voted 62% in favour of staying in the EU? No. Well, in Scotland we will make our voices heard once again.

Northern Ireland has been given a differential deal that will put Scotland at a competitive disadvantage. There is no reason why a similar arrangement cannot be afforded to Scotland. The SNP will table an amendment to ensure that the voice of Scotland is well and truly heard in this place. Those who claim to be democrats—those who claim to have respect for the people of Scotland and for the mandate of the Scottish people and Parliament—cannot vote with the UK Government on this deal. It is clearer now than ever before that the only way to protect Scotland's interest is to be an independent nation.

The First Minister has been very clear that she will set out the next steps on Scotland's future once the terms of the Brexit deal are clear. The process of Brexit has demonstrated weaknesses in the UK's constitutional arrangements. Scotland has been ignored, sidelined and undermined through the entire Brexit process. The costs to the people in Scotland of not being independent have been laid bare.

Today is a moment of huge historical significance. For decades to come, people will remember what this place decided to do—whether we, as public representatives with the responsibility to protect our communities and constituents, voted for a deal that would harm and hinder their opportunities, or whether we stood up for them. This is no ordinary time in our history and it is no ordinary time for our politics. Brexit has cast the politics of Westminster into a landscape of crumbling certainties.

We are at a defining moment. We must stand up for our constituents. We cannot ignore the economic analysis. We cannot drive blindfolded off the cliff edge. We must take back control in this place. We must have the courage of our convictions and wield the power gifted us to do the right thing. We must stop this deal and this Government railroading recklessly over our rights, our freedoms and the opportunities of our people. There is another way, there is time and we must take it.

Alex Chalk (Cheltenham) (Con)

On a point of order, Mr Speaker. I am sorry to trouble you with this, but in the course of proceedings yesterday, you gently rebuked me for intervening from a sedentary position on the hon. Member for Brighton, Pavilion (Caroline Lucas). You went on to suggest that there had been general shouting and braying, and the Gloucestershire Echo is now reporting that I was admonished by you for participating in such behaviour. Would you be kind enough to confirm that there was no

suggestion of braying or other disrespectful behaviour from me? It is not my style and I would be grateful if the position could be clarified so that the record and the Echo can be set straight.

Mr Speaker

I am very happy to set the record straight for the benefit of the hon. Gentleman. In all my experience of him, which is now quite considerable, I think I can say authoritatively that the hon. Gentleman and braying are complete strangers; they have never met. Indeed, other than by virtue of the fact that he is a well-educated fellow, I would question whether he would even know the meaning of “to bray.” The hon. Gentleman is in every other respect a good citizen. He did heckle, but he was not braying, and his behaviour is ordinarily not in any way unseemly, so he can tell his local newspaper to put that in their pipe—if they still have one—and smoke it.

20:38:00

Sir Graham Brady (Altrincham and Sale West) (Con)

Mr Speaker, there may not be room in the Gloucestershire Echo for the whole of your ruling in response to my hon. Friend the Member for Cheltenham (Alex Chalk). I am grateful to be allowed to speak so early in the debate, and I will be brief out of consideration for the many Members on both sides of the House who wish to participate.

Following the right hon. Member for Ross, Skye and Lochaber (Ian Blackford), I have to wonder how he has apparently not realised that the British economy has been growing steadily since the vote to leave in the referendum in 2016. If the Scottish economy is failing in the way that he suggests, perhaps it has something to do with the Scottish Government and their failure to provide the services that are needed north of the border, rather than having anything to do with the Brexit vote.

The right hon. Gentleman spoke at length about the tradition of democracy and respect for the rule of law. He called them European traditions without noting that they are actually strongest in this country—in Britain—and have been for a very, long time. I wonder whether he might reflect for a moment, as he thinks about that respect for democracy and the rule of law, what damage could be done to that respect and to those values that are so precious in our country if he and his hon. Friends were successful in ignoring the biggest democratic mandate in British history.

Stephen Gethins

rose—

Stewart Malcolm McDonald

rose—

Angus Brendan MacNeil

rose—

Sir Graham Brady

Blimey—what a choice. I give way to the hon. Member for Na h-Eileanan an Iar (Angus Brendan MacNeil).

Angus Brendan MacNeil

I hope that the hon. Gentleman will reflect for just a tiny moment on the fact that Ireland, which became independent of the UK 96 years ago, will this year be growing five times faster than the

UK. For further understanding of that, it will take the UK five years to do what Ireland does in one year.

Sir Graham Brady

The hon. Gentleman will know, I am sure, what is the fastest growing major European economy at the moment. He also knows the difficulties that Ireland had some years ago as a result of its membership of the euro—something that would be inflicted on Scotland by the nationalists if they had their way.

I think the Prime Minister has enormous good will on both sides of the House. I think that Members on both sides of the House know that she has worked phenomenally hard to try to secure the best agreement. I also think she is correct when she makes the point that the country feels ready to move on. There is palpable tiredness with this subject. People the length and breadth of the United Kingdom want to know that we are going to move forward and put into effect the referendum that took place two and half years ago.

I listened earlier to the Leader of the Opposition as he talked about fear and concern in business and said that uncertainty was affecting investment in our country. It is important that Members on both sides of the House understand that if there is fear and uncertainty in boardrooms in this country, it is because of the concern about what would happen if the right hon. Gentleman were ever to form a Government in this country, and if there is capital flight going on at the moment from our country, it is because of that concern, not because of concern about Brexit. Certainly, we on this side of the House are in no doubt that it is better to have a Conservative Government led by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister than the alternative.

Stephen Gethins

rose—

Stewart Malcolm McDonald

rose—

Sir Graham Brady

I think we have probably heard enough from the Scottish nationalists for all five days of the debate.

But more remarkable, perhaps, is the number of Labour Members who feel that it would be much safer for the country to continue to have a Conservative Government led by the Prime Minister than one—

Stewart Malcolm McDonald

rose—

Sir Graham Brady

Oh, go on then.

Stewart Malcolm McDonald

The hon. Gentleman says that he hopes that his right hon. Friend the Prime Minister will continue to see the deal through, but of course only he knows whether that is going to be the case—so can he enlighten us?

Sir Graham Brady

The hon. Gentleman knows perfectly well that I am not going to enlighten him on that, although I could enlighten him on so many other things.

There is so much that is good and sensible in the proposed withdrawal agreement. Crucially, the implementation period gives business a degree of certainty and the time to accommodate to changes. That is critically important. Also, I think that Members on both sides of the House absolutely welcome the mutual protection of citizens that is embodied in the agreement. That has been very important to Members on both sides of the House ever since the referendum over two years ago.

The Prime Minister was clear in her assessment when she said that there are those Members who would like to see much closer integration than is proposed in the withdrawal agreement. There are also those who would like to see a much looser relationship than is proposed. I am firmly in the latter camp. I find much in the agreement disagreeable. I think that it does propose to tie us in too closely to the European Union in the future. But like many others in this House, I recognise that there is a need to compromise. I recognise that at a time when we are negotiating with 27 other countries, and at a time when there is no overall majority in the House of Commons, some compromise is necessary.

But—this is my central point for my right hon. Friends the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union—while recognising that compromise is necessary, there is one compromise beyond all others that makes this withdrawal agreement very difficult for many of us to support. It is the possibility, however remote, that we might be leaving a treaty that allows us to give notice to quit to join one that can only be left with the consent of the other party. To do that in the name of taking back control is very difficult for many of us to accept.

Over the next seven days, I urge the Secretary of State and the Prime Minister in the strongest possible terms to redouble their efforts to find a way to give real reassurance that we, the United Kingdom, could leave the backstop in the event that we have to enter it and to recognise that if negotiations on a future trading arrangement were to break down, there has to be a way to leave that backstop agreement. We have seven days of debate and discussion ahead of us. Many of us are hoping to hear that reassurance and are willing the Secretary of State and the Prime Minister well in that process.

20:46:00

Margaret Beckett (Derby South) (Lab)

Over 20 years ago, as the new President of the Board of Trade, my first overseas visit to a major trade partner—Japan—was dominated by the most overwhelming concern. Business and politicians alike wanted reassurance that the then new Labour Government would not be leaving the European Union. They were polite, but they were blunt. They had invested in the UK because the UK was in the European Union, and if we left, so would they. Just today, their ambassador re-emphasised their nervousness.

So in 2016, I could foresee serious economic harm to Britain's interests, but I accepted that we had to abide by the referendum result and concentrate our energies on damage limitation. Despite the mixed messages from the Government, I voted to trigger article 50 and the process of withdrawal, but frankly, since then, it has been downhill all the way. First, it became clear that those who had clamoured for us to leave the European Union had not the faintest idea what to do next. There was no concrete plan for the nation's future—just a series of sweeping assertions about how easy, swift and painless leaving would be and the golden future that awaited us.

Then we saw that the Prime Minister's decisions were being taken not in the best interests of the country, but to satisfy her Brexit extremists. The withdrawal Bill then proposed that the control we were taking should be returned not to Parliament but to Ministers, with little, if any, real parliamentary scrutiny. Asserting Parliament's legitimate role has been an uphill struggle, as we saw in the most recent Division today.

Article 50 allows only a two-year window for negotiations, so I expected the Government to seek the fastest possible progress. I agreed with them that withdrawal and future partnership were best considered side by side, but when that was rejected, concluding negotiations on part one—the withdrawal agreement—became all the more urgent. Leaving is one thing; what matters more is where we are going and on what terms, and that dialogue has yet to begin in earnest.

If anyone had said that we would reach the end of our two-year window struggling to reach any deal at all, I would never have believed it. But it is hard to negotiate successfully if we cannot agree on what we want, wilfully throw away our negotiating flexibility and sack people who tell us what we do not want to hear.

Over these two years, while the Government have wrangled endlessly about how to proceed, one disastrously unforeseen consequence of leaving the EU after another has been revealed. Government Members keep insisting that everyone who voted knew exactly what they were doing and what the possible consequences would be. It may be so. All I can say is, I did not.

When I heard the Prime Minister pontificating about escaping the jurisdiction of the European Court of Justice, it never crossed my mind that that meant leaving Euratom—the watchdog not just for cancer treatment, but for the safety of nuclear power stations. I know from ministerial experience that we have, and have had for years, a shortage of people across the world with those skills and capacities, and we are about to leave behind some of those on whom we presently rely. However, whatever I did not know, I did know how much we rely on Dover for our import and export trade. I had not focused either on the losses to our scientific and medical research, or things such as the Galileo project.

As each of these problems emerges, I keep hearing that it is all right because the Government will continue all this investment—for example, to support our farmers—all on our own, so clearly the Prime Minister has found another of those magic money trees. Much of our consumption—for example, our food consumption—relies on the frictionless trade that we now enjoy, so, too, does modern manufacturing. Key goods and components are perpetually whizzing around the European Union and back to the UK, and thousands of jobs across Britain depend on this just-in-time delivery. That is why I was appalled to hear the Prime Minister announce, casually, that Britain would leave both the single market and the customs union—and, what is more, that these were red lines.

The economist Professor Patrick Minford declared the other day that just as the Thatcher years saw the demise of major industries such as coal and steel, so, too, leaving the EU, which he nevertheless supports, will probably—and, in my view, disastrously—see the end of what is left of UK manufacturing. I know that, nevertheless, most of the business community urges us to vote for this deal to provide the certainty that business always, understandably, seeks. I understand that totally; I have dealt with it for years. But no one should be under any illusions. Bluntly, these are not commitments to invest or stay in Brexit Britain. These are perfectly justifiable attempts to keep business going for the next two to three years to give them a breathing space, without disruption, to make their long-term decisions, which may not be in our favour.

I recognise, too, the concern that staying in a customs union may restrict our ability to negotiate other trade deals, say, with the United States. Personally, I am not starry-eyed about such deals. For a start, it is frankly inconceivable that any American President, let alone this American President, would do a trade deal with the UK without making it a key condition that giant US health corporations be allowed unfettered access to our national health service. I can well imagine that that might suit some right wingers who hanker after a privatised NHS and would let those companies use a free trade deal to accomplish exactly that, along with in other public services, while leaving the hands of Tory politicians clean. Equally, we would face demands to admit chlorine-washed chicken and hormone-fed beef, and no doubt other delights on which we have not yet focused.

Other trade deals would not be consequence-free either. India and China, to name but two, would, again understandably, want additional visas for their citizens—I have no quarrel with that—but the Prime Minister’s emphasis on the end of free movement may give some people the misleading impression that she is offering an end to immigration. She is not. According to the most recent figures, it is non-EU immigration that is increasing.

Not satisfied with the grave red lines misjudgement, tying her own hands and restricting her room for manoeuvre, the Prime Minister added to that the crass folly of selecting a date—not just a date, but a time—for our leaving and, to please and reassure her Brexiteers, she put it into the Bill. As that self-inflicted deadline approached, some began to say that it would be best to leave the EU at the end of March, giving up our prime negotiating cards and our strength, and work out afterwards what would be in our interests in future. I do not think that I have ever heard anything so criminally irresponsible from any Government or the supporters of any Government.

The Prime Minister says that people just want it to be over. Of course they do. Heaven knows, I think we all probably share that sentiment. But it is a con, perhaps the biggest con of all. If we pass the deal, it will not be over. The really serious stuff has not even started and it will go on for years.

Of course, to guide us, we have the political declaration. We have already heard from the Governments of France and Spain how binding they believe its warm words to be. The point is that it settles nothing. All is to be “explored”, “continued”, “considered” or “discussed”. Nothing is settled.

From the outset, the Prime Minister resisted the idea that this sovereign Parliament should have the chance to vote and express its opinion on any deal she might secure. She forcefully resisted the notion of a meaningful vote, and now that we have one, she is doing her utmost to make it meaningless by insisting that there is only one way for MPs to vote: for her deal.

The outcome of the series of votes is unpredictable and could well be indecisive. I have seen such a thing happen in this House before. Should there now be a further people’s vote? I hear “no” from most Conservative Members. But I am in no doubt that I know infinitely more now about the potential consequences of leaving the EU than I did in 2016, and I think, having been in the Cabinet for some 11 years, I probably knew a little bit about it before. I know, too, that what leave campaigners promised is not on offer, mostly because it was undeliverable.

The hon. Members for Totnes (Dr Wollaston) and for Bracknell (Dr Lee) have reminded us that a major medical intervention must be preceded by an assurance that informed consent has been given. Consumer protection law gives a 14-day cooling-off period for people to make sure they know what they are doing. This time, the very future of our country is at stake.

There has been a determined effort to keep people in the dark. Economic assessments of Brexit's impact prepared for Ministers were withheld, like the Government's legal advice. The real-life consequences of leaving with no deal, which clearly still attracts some Conservative Members, are not being fully spelt out. The Chancellor, like the Governor of the Bank of England, publicly accepts that we would be economically better off staying in the EU, but he points out—and this is fair—that many who voted leave thought that a price worth paying to recover our sovereignty. But the deal on offer, which the Prime Minister says is the only deal on offer, does not recover our sovereignty. It leaves us rule takers from the European Union without any voice in shaping those rules. It represents what may well be the biggest transfer of sovereignty ever proposed by any British Government, because this time sovereignty is not being shared—it is being surrendered.

None of us can know today just what decisions or options, if any, will emerge from next Tuesday's votes. The Prime Minister demands—she repeated it today—of all MPs that, when we vote, we do so not in any party or personal interest, but for what we honestly believe to be the interests of our country. I shall, Mr Speaker, and it will not be for this deal.

Mr Speaker

Order. With immediate effect, an eight-minute limit will now apply.

21:01:00

Anna Soubry (Broxtowe) (Con)

It may be that I can shorten my comments, because I want wholeheartedly and thoroughly to adopt the outstanding and excellent analysis and conclusions of the right hon. Member for Derby South (Margaret Beckett). She does indeed speak with great authority. She of course knows, as a proud representative of the city of Derby, the Rolls-Royce plant in her own constituency. She also knows the Toyota plant near Derby. When she speaks about the just-in-time supply chains and our manufacturing, I suggest that there are few who could speak with so much genuine authority and knowledge. In her analysis and conclusions, she is absolutely right. I am delighted that she and I also agree that we should now have a people's vote on this, the most important decision that our country faces and will take for decades.

Mr Speaker, I also want to say this. You, I think, understand perhaps more than many how that consensus, that agreement, was here in this House shortly after the referendum result. The great failing—it gives me no pleasure to say this of my own Government—was from the outset, when instead of reaching out across this House and across our country to heal the divisions, to bring together the 48% and the 52%, I am afraid and sorry to say the exact opposite was done. The 48% were tossed aside. We were abused. We were sidelined. If we had even the temerity to question almost anything we were called remoaners. It is supremely ironic that it is because of brave colleagues, who normally sit here in what is called the naughty Chamber, who about a year ago stood up to the abuse from those calling us traitors and mutineers—and yes, the death threats—and voted, with some courage, that hon. Members will be able to debate in the way that we will and then to vote. The irony is not lost on me that some of those who were most ardent in their opposition to what we did 12 months ago are now the most keen to take advantage of it.

I will not vote for this deal on any other basis than it goes to the people for their approval. This is not a good deal. In fact, as many have already observed, it is not a deal. It is certainly not what we were promised, not even by our Prime Minister. Shortly after the triggering of article 50, she was interviewed by Andrew Marr. The tape exists. He questioned whether it would be possible in the next two years to begin to get anywhere near securing all the various deals that had to be secured or even get to the beginning stage. She was confident that it could all be done within two years. Well,

here we are today and what do we know? We have a political declaration that can be ripped up by any Prime Minister or any Government that come in once we have left the European Union. The withdrawal agreement is the only legally binding part of the so-called deal. As we know, there is nothing to implement, and certainly nothing that we were promised. The so-called transition period is to an unknown destination, because after two and a half years, we still do not know what our eventual relationship with the European Union will be. That is simply not good enough.

The withdrawal agreement is indeed a blindfolded Brexit that fails to deliver on the promises made not just by the leave campaign but, I am sorry to say, by my own Government. As the right hon. Member for Derby South said so beautifully and eloquently, the right hon. and hon. Government Members who think that we should just get on with it, do it, and that we can all go home for Christmas and it will all be over, are—with great respect—completely and utterly fooling themselves. We have already heard speeches from those who prefer a no deal, hard Brexit, and people can be assured that if we leave next March with nothing more than this withdrawal agreement and a political declaration that can be torn up, they will carry on and on and on for years in their quest to sever all ties with the European Union. As I say, they will do that because of the non-binding nature of the political declaration.

How poor is that political declaration? As others have observed, it is so vague that the Government could not even apply their assessments to it to try to inform us of its financial consequences.

Dr Wollaston

Does my right hon. Friend agree that this is exemplified in article 107 of the future framework document? It just says:

“The Parties should consider appropriate arrangements for cooperation on space”—

and that is it.

Anna Soubry

Indeed, it is nothing more than warm words of good intentions. There is no mention of the frictionless trade that we were all promised. Services that make up 80% of our economy barely get a mention, and of course, the political declaration is the high point as we now go to the negotiations in March.

The worst part of the withdrawal agreement and the political declaration is that it will make our constituents and our country poorer, and I did not come to this place and will not vote to do anything that makes my constituents poorer, especially when a far better alternative exists. On their own admission, the Government are urging people to vote for this so-called deal in the clear knowledge that it will reduce the future economic prospects of the people of this country. And that is on their best assessments—or rather, guesses—because we know of the inherent problems and inaccuracies, in effect, of the impact assessments and the forecasts that have been made. Those just give us the best assessments when, in fact, many believe that it will be far worse than even those estimates.

No one should be under any illusions about how bad a place the backstop will be. I will not rehearse some of the arguments that have been put forward very well by others. This is not just vassalage; it will convey only a bare bones customs union, with none of the regulatory alignment that is so critical for business. Northern Ireland will have limited benefits, but those benefits will be better than the rest of the United Kingdom, which is clearly a threat to the Union of our country. I say to Members on the Government Benches: as members of the Conservative and Unionist party, on what

possible basis can you vote for that? As others have observed, we will not be able to deliver any of the unicorn trade deals that have so far eluded us, but which will apparently magically appear in the next two years; nor, it seems, will we be able to benefit from the dozens of great trade deals that we already have because we are a member of the European Union. That is the reality.

This is not what leave voters in Broxtowe voted for. They have seen through the lies on buses and they now know of the broken promises. They see that whichever way we cut it, Brexit will make them poorer and reduce the life chances of their children and grandchildren. Now that they see the reality of Brexit, they are entitled to change their minds and have a final say by way of a people's vote.

It is said that this Brexit is a price worth paying, but I reject that. I understand the political consequences—many hon. Members have mentioned the need to deliver this—but we must all put our country and our constituents first. If we do that, we will understand that the best deal with the EU is our current deal with the EU. It is not just good for trade; it is also about the country we are—open-minded, open-hearted. I fear for our country if we set course now, agree to this deal and make the grave mistake of leaving the EU, which has conveyed so much prosperity and delivered peace and a better country.

21:10:00

Hilary Benn (Leeds Central) (Lab)

Next Tuesday will be the House's opportunity to have its say, and I rise to move amendment (c), which stands in my name and that of my right hon. and hon. Friends and colleagues.

I want to begin by acknowledging the effort that Ministers, including the Prime Minister, and civil servants have put into trying to negotiate a deal. The fact that so many of us object to what has been brought back reflects not on that effort, but on the decisions that the Government have made. First, as we have heard, the Government embarked on the negotiations with the cries of those who argued for Brexit ringing in their ears. We need to remember the point made by my right hon. Friend the Member for Derby South (Margaret Beckett). We were told that

“we will hold all the cards”;

that this

“will be one of the easiest trade deals in history”;

that

“getting out the EU can be quick and easy”;

that

“within two years...we can negotiate a free trade area massively larger than the EU”.

How slowly the truth has been revealed, and how painful a process it has been.

Secondly, while the referendum result made it clear that we would leave the institutions, it did not determine the future of our economic relationship. Thirdly, I believe that history will record the Prime Minister's red lines to have been an absolutely catastrophic mistake, because they created the

problem of the border in Northern Ireland and removed the Government's room for manoeuvre. They boxed the Prime Minister in. These illusions and decisions resulted in the plague of disagreement that affected the Cabinet and led to so many ministerial resignations, including the loss of not one but two Brexit Secretaries. Goodness me! They exited the Department before we even exited the EU.

The Government spent two years trying to agree what to ask for, and the result was the contortion that was the Chequers proposal—an attempt to keep the border open and save friction-free trade. The problem was it was rejected by the EU. The Prime Minister spoke about home truths. Now is the time for some honesty. If we wish to maintain an open border in Northern Ireland, we will have to stay in a customs union and observe most, if not all, of the rules of the single market, but not a single Minister is prepared to acknowledge that truth.

As was demonstrated by the right hon. Member for Uxbridge and South Ruislip (Boris Johnson) in his contribution, those who argued for Brexit have been exposed as having absolutely no plan for it at all. A Canada deal would fail to solve the Northern Ireland problem and would not give us friction-free trade, and as to the suggestion that we should leave the EU on WTO terms—no deal—I will turn to that in a moment.

The problem with the deal is the political declaration. We were assured that it would be substantive and detailed. It is not. It is merely words and aspirations that have no legal force. We have no idea where we are going, no idea where we will end up, no clarity and no certainty, and for business and future investment, which hate uncertainty, what kind of a deal is that?

The Prime Minister was questioned by my right hon. Friend the Member for Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford (Yvette Cooper), who chairs the Home Affairs Select Committee, about security. She was asked why there was no reference to ECRIS or SIS II in the deal. In 2016, the police in Britain made 100,000 requests to ECRIS. In 2017, we made 500,000 queries to SIS II. That tells us how important those two sources of information are to the protection of our security, but neither is mentioned in the political declaration.

What about services, foreign policy co-ordination, policing and information-sharing, taking part in EU agencies, fisheries, data, recognition of professional qualifications, broadcasting rights, intellectual property, public procurement, consumer safety, aviation, freight, energy, medicines, scientific co-operation, and lots of other things? What is the answer on all those? “We do not know.” “We cannot be sure.” “It is yet to be sorted out.” The truth is that that will not do.

The Treasury figures published last week, showing the reduction in GDP that would result from a no deal compared to what would otherwise happen, are sobering and speak for themselves. Those who try to wave all that away by saying, “It would not be the end of the world”, or “There would be some disruption initially”, simply fail to do justice to the economic consequences of taking such a highly damaging step. They pay no heed to the fears and concerns of businesses that know it would be a disaster, and they do not respect the importance of the Good Friday agreement and the open border in Northern Ireland.

Anna Soubry

Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that the use of the slogan “No deal is better than a bad deal” was most unfortunate, given that no deal is in fact the very worst thing that could happen to our country? Was that not verging on the irresponsible?

Hilary Benn

I completely agree with the right hon. Lady. That is a nonsensical argument that the Government have advanced for the last two years. Ministers know that we cannot leave with no deal: they know that we are not ready. I do not think that any responsible Government would allow this country to leave the EU with no deal, but they are unwilling to say that, because no deal must be kept alive as the bogeyman to frighten the House of Commons into voting for the Prime Minister's deal.

Jeremy Lefroy (Stafford) (Con)

Does the right hon. Gentleman also agree that no deal—cutting ourselves off in that way—would have serious repercussions not only for our politics, but for our relations with our European neighbours?

Hilary Benn

Absolutely. I do not believe that there is a majority in the House for leaving with no deal, and we will have an opportunity to demonstrate our view in our vote next week.

This decision will define the present generation of Members of Parliament and shape the future for our children and our grandchildren. From the very beginning, our nation has been divided on the subject of Europe. From Hugh Gaitskell's speech about the end of 1,000 years of British history, to Edward Heath's argument that joining the Common Market was a

“great step forward towards the removal of divisions in western Europe”,

from Harold Wilson's renegotiation and referendum to David Cameron's, the British people have shown support for and reticence about Europe in almost equal measure.

I argued for remaining in the European Union, but not because it is perfect. It is far from perfect, and it needs reform. The result of the referendum told us and the rise of populism across Europe is telling Governments that too many people feel that the balance between sovereignty, self-determination, control—call it what you will—and co-operation with other countries is not quite right. That thirst for control is a reflection of the lack of control that many of our constituents feel they have over their lives, given what has happened to their jobs and the changes that they have seen. But at this moment in our history, in this century, working with our neighbours and our friends is an absolute necessity if we are to address the great challenges that we all face on this small and fragile planet: the challenges of trade, dealing with threats to peace and security, preventing the climate of our earth from running out of control with devastating consequences for all the people whom we represent, and dealing with the tide of humanity that is travelling across the globe in search of a better life.

I will not dissemble, and I will not pretend. I think that leaving the European Union is a terrible mistake. It will damage our economy and discourage investment; it will hurt our constituents; it will make it much more difficult to do something about the many reasons why people voted to leave; it will reduce our influence in the world; and it will disregard the extraordinary achievement of the European ideal in bringing peace to a continent on which centuries of war had seen blood shed for no purpose, and generation after generation laid beneath the earth. In this year of the centenary of the end of the first world war, we should remember that, as well as remembering them.

We have to deal with the situation we find ourselves in, and my final plea to the House is as follows. Now is the moment to tell each other the truth. We owe that to a nation that has shown itself to be divided almost exactly down the middle. We have to bear in mind our responsibility to the 48% as well as the 52%, and no one is going to get out of this mess everything they wanted. No one is going to get everything they thought they would get. No one is going to receive all the things

they were told they would receive. All of us are going to have to compromise, and we are going to have to find a way forward that a majority can agree upon.

The reason I would ask the House next week to vote for my amendment if it is selected is that the sooner we are able to say to the Government that we are not prepared to support the motion before us and we are not prepared to leave with no deal, the sooner we can move forward and find a solution to this problem in the time that remains. Thanks to the amendment successfully moved by the right hon. and learned Member for Beaconsfield (Mr Grieve) earlier today, the House can at least end this debate secure in the knowledge that, as and when that time comes, we will have an opportunity to have our say, and so it should be.

Mr Speaker

Order. I am extremely grateful to the right hon. Member for Leeds Central (Hilary Benn). He began his speech by saying he was moving his amendment and I know what he meant was that he was speaking to it. Simply for the avoidance of doubt, I should emphasise to the House that under the motion agreed earlier today—that is to say the business of the House motion, in respect of which the right hon. and learned Member for Beaconsfield (Mr Grieve) did indeed move an amendment—no amendment will be selected by me until next Tuesday, and it will be on that day of course that the votes take place. I say that simply for purposes of clarification.

Still with the eight-minute limit, I call Sir Roger Gale.

21:21:00

Sir Roger Gale (North Thanet) (Con)

It is always a pleasure to follow the right hon. Member for Leeds Central (Hilary Benn). I do not agree with everything he said, but let me start with a point of definite agreement: the European Union needs reform. I personally believe that the EU is corrupt, bureaucratic, meddlesome and wasteful, but for all of that I voted remain. I did so because I believe my children and grandchildren and my constituents' children and grandchildren would be better off within than outwith the European Union in terms of the economy and security.

That is how I voted, but unfortunately 52% of the British public did not. I have accepted that result, although I understand that others take a different view and would like to rerun the referendum or have a people's vote or try to overturn the decision. But I believe we do have a duty now to honour the expressed wish of the British people, and for that reason I shall be supporting the withdrawal agreement. It is not perfect—no compromise ever is—but I listened very carefully to what the Attorney General said yesterday and his words were, to paraphrase slightly, that it is a risk, but a risk we have to take when we consider all the alternatives.

If we look at all the alternatives—I tried to goad my right hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge and South Ruislip (Boris Johnson) into offering one this evening and got nothing—such as the hard Brexit and if we have to rule out, as I do, a return to no Brexit, we are left with the withdrawal agreement. I believe my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister was absolutely correct in saying it is not possible to go back to the Commission cap in hand. We might get a tweak here and a tweak there, but the idea that anybody is going to offer a radical reassessment of what is on offer today is baying at the moon. I spend a certain amount of time leading the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe delegation, and I meet European parliamentarians, as I have in the past few weeks. They are astonished, looking through the other end of the telescope, at how much has been given to the United Kingdom, and my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister is absolutely right to say that if she goes back and tries to reopen the deal, 27 other countries will all say “Me, too,” and then

we shall have a raft of changes that will not be to our advantage. So for all that the withdrawal agreement is not perfect, I shall support it.

I want to touch briefly on the hard Brexit because this is part of my equation and now I need to be parochial. I am proud to be a Member of Parliament representing the garden of England—Kent. Other people do not seem to have grasped this fact, but quite a lot of trade comes through Dover and into the rest of the country and goes out through Dover. The fact of the matter is that probably 20 years ago 85% of the lorries going out were British, whereas now 85% of the lorries coming in and going out are continental.

A hard Brexit means a hard border. We have heard a lot about hard borders in Northern Ireland, but we have not heard about hard borders in England—a hard border between Dover and Calais. That shutter will come down. There will be controls, if we go for a hard Brexit. Kent Members visited the Dover Harbour Board last week and we spoke with the Freight Transport Association and Kent police, and I spoke personally with a freight forwarder. If those shutters come down, the traffic backs up at about a mile an hour. That is out of the port of Dover, up the M20, up the M26 and on to the M25, and then we are stuffed.

If the M25 comes to a grinding halt, south London comes to a grinding halt and soon Birmingham will come to a grinding halt. No car parts for the just-in-time car industry, no life-saving pharmaceuticals, no construction materials—rockwool, which is used extensively in construction, comes through Dover—and no food. The good people of North East Somerset and of Uxbridge may not care whether Kent is turned into a lorry park, but I do. What I also know is that the people of Somerset and Uxbridge will scream blue murder when they find that they cannot buy their new Chelsea tractor, their life-saving drugs or the foodstuffs that they enjoy that come in from mainland Europe. We will hear those screams from the west country and west London in Westminster.

We have three options. I rule out no Brexit, because I believe that it is not what people voted for. I have had to rule out, for the reasons I have just given, hard Brexit. I believe that it would be immensely damaging. Even my miserable maths says that two out of three leaves one, and that one is the withdrawal agreement that will be before us on Tuesday night. I believe that I owe it to my constituents' children and grandchildren to vote for it, get behind it and then let this great country move forward. That is what I shall do on Tuesday.

21:27:00

Sir Vince Cable (Twickenham) (LD)

I wish to say a few words on behalf of the Liberal Democrats' position that we should have a people's vote with the option to remain in the European Union. We shall campaign to remain in the European Union, as we believe unambiguously that that is in the national interest and the right thing to do.

I think that I am one of the relatively few people left in the House who actually campaigned to join the European Union and in support of membership during the Wilson referendum. It was my privilege at the time to campaign alongside some very fine British and Scottish statesmen, such as Jo Grimond, John Mackintosh and, perhaps above all, John Smith, who strongly believed that Britain's future lay in the European Union. John Smith in particular would be pleased with the amendment that my Liberal Democrat colleagues have tabled, which fully endorses the Labour party's amendment, but would add a small section that the leader of the Labour party either forgot or was embarrassed to refer to. It would add

“including a public vote as endorsed by the Labour Party Conference”.

He did not mention that this evening.

My other relevant experience, which I share with the right hon. Member for Derby South (Margaret Beckett), is of having worked as President of the Board of Trade, for five years in the coalition Government. There were several important lessons from that experience. The first was the importance to Britain—and this was recognised by both parties in the coalition and the Labour party—of its membership of the single market. It stemmed originally from an insight in the 1980s under Mrs Thatcher and was taken up by the Blair Government, that the future of the British economy lay with services, not just financial services but more generally. It was an area in which Britain had a considerable competitive advantage, and was in the national interest to promote. We did so, and we lectured countries such as Germany that were dragging their feet on issues such as mutual recognition of professional qualifications. At the end of the campaign for the single market, in 2015, we reached a provisional understanding on a digital single market, which was very much in the interests of Britain’s emerging digital economy and creative industries. The Prime Minister herself said recently that this was something that Britain should be part of, until it was pointed out that we cannot be part of it if we leave the single market.

The other major lesson of that period comes from having negotiated with General Motors over Ellesmere Port and Luton, with Ford over its plants in the UK, with Toyota, with Jaguar Land Rover over its expansion, with Airbus over its big investments here, and with Siemens over its investment in wind turbines. In each case, the company made it absolutely clear that it was making its investments in the UK manufacturing sector in order to be part of the wider European market. Many of those investors, who invested here in good faith, now feel somewhat betrayed. The Japanese have said that very clearly, having been told by successive Governments that our membership of the European Union single market, on which the future of their investment here depended, would be maintained.

Looking forward, there are overwhelming arguments for remaining a member of the European Union. Some of them have already been expressed, including the arguments about peace, put forward by the right hon. Member for Leeds Central (Hilary Benn), and about high environmental standards. The fundamental point, however, is the impact on our living standards. It has been acknowledged—even by the Government in the past two weeks, as a result of their assessments—that however Brexit is constructed, we will be worse off if we leave the European Union. We can have different scenarios and assumptions, but there is none that shows that we would actually benefit from leaving the EU. We can see the signs of this already in what has happened since 2016. We have seen the biggest devaluation since the second world war, the cut in real incomes, the stifling of business investment and the decline in productivity. These things will continue on a bigger scale.

We are offered the fantasy of a clutch of trade deals, but we need to look at what that actually means. There will be some trade deals that can be negotiated. Small countries in the Caribbean will certainly sign up for trade deals to get better access for their bananas and sugar. Some countries will find it relatively easy to come to an agreement. They include Japan, Korea and Canada, but they already have trade agreements with the European Union, so we would gain nothing from that.

Norman Lamb (North Norfolk) (LD)

Does my right hon. Friend share my concern about our participation in the world-leading Horizon 2020 programme and the Horizon Europe programme that will follow it? When I questioned the

Prime Minister last week at the Liaison Committee, there was no clarity as to whether we would be part of that successor programme, which will be vital for our science base in this country.

Sir Vince Cable

My right hon. Friend is absolutely right, and he speaks with the authority of his Select Committee. Many universities will be among the biggest casualties of Brexit precisely for this reason. The loss of the Horizon and Erasmus programmes, and in some sectors the loss of Galileo, will be a major blow to the UK economy.

On the specific issue of trade deals, the countries that really matter are the United States, India, China and possibly Russia. We know about the United States, which has made it absolutely clear that an “America first” trade agreement will mean fewer British exports to the United States and more imports to Britain from the United States. It is quite unambiguous about how it defines a successful trade deal. When the right hon. and learned Member for Rushcliffe (Mr Clarke) and I negotiated with the United States on the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership agreement, even the milder Obama Administration made it clear that they wanted British food standards to be shredded and that they could offer very little in return because public procurement, which is a key issue in the United States, is a state function.

Agreement with India is also difficult to achieve, as we have already heard. It is a very protectionist economy, and it would offer limited access for whisky and financial services in return for a substantial increase in visas for relatively low-paid Indian professional workers, which the Prime Minister has already specifically ruled out. The Chinese might reach an agreement, but only if we turned a blind eye to Chinese practices on intellectual property and the rest, and we are trying to impose more sanctions on Russia, so what kind of a trade deal could we possibly get there? This really is a fantasy. However, we need to be careful—this is where the amendment of the right hon. Member for Leeds Central (Hilary Benn) is so important—that we do not allow the development of the argument that we must have the possibility of no deal. There was an argument for saying that the no-deal option must be kept on the table when we were negotiating with the European Union, but an agreement has been reached and no better terms are going to be obtained. The Prime Minister is now negotiating with the House, and that is why no deal is there. It is not to threaten the Europe, but to threaten us, and we must stand up to that and reject it absolutely.

Finally, a people’s vote is essential because we must give people the choice now that we know what Brexit means. We need informed consent, not just an opinion expressed on promises made at the time. The perfectly reasonable argument has been advanced that we want to bring the country together, and the Prime Minister spoke eloquently about that. We do not want to perpetuate division, but the brutal truth is that the country is bitterly divided, and it will be bitterly divided if we leave under the terms that the Government have negotiated. We will be entering into a set of conditions in which the economy will deteriorate relative to how it would have performed in the European Union. The younger generation coming through will bear the brunt of the costs. Most of them voted to remain in the EU—an estimated 80% of 18 year olds wish to remain—and there will be great bitterness and resentment about what the older generation has imposed upon them. The issue will not go away, and there will be continued demand for a further vote on the question.

Layla Moran (Oxford West and Abingdon) (LD)

Does my right hon. Friend share my concern that the Prime Minister’s gambit that this will somehow be the end of the matter is not true? The 26-page political declaration is just the start of further negotiations, and people deserve the right to say whether they want to continue talking about Brexit and to suck the air out of this Parliament’s ability to tackle the big issues in this country.

Sir Vince Cable

That is absolutely right, and none of us should be under any illusion that this issue is going to die in March next year. As my hon. Friend points out, we will have five or 10 years of continued negotiation about what type of trade relationship we have, and there will be bitter divisions around that. We will have a great deal of disillusionment with the costs that Brexit will inevitably entail and continued demands to return to the issue. Let us agree to have another vote on Brexit now that we know what it is. That is the least damaging and least hurtful way that we can proceed as a country.

21:37:00

Mr Dominic Grieve (Beaconsfield) (Con)

I am conscious that one should pay tribute to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister for the selfless devotion that she has shown over the past two and a half years in trying to carry out Brexit. I say that particularly because of the view that I have taken that I cannot support the deal that she is bringing before this House, but it would be wrong not to acknowledge the appalling hand that she was dealt at the start of the negotiation or, indeed, her good intentions in trying to carry it out.

I want to explain briefly to the House why I cannot lend the Government my support on this matter. The reality is not so much the Prime Minister's red lines, but the rather harsher truth that the decision that underpinned Brexit was built upon a fantasy. It was a fantasy about the nature of the United Kingdom, about its apparent lack of interdependence with other states, and about our ability to get a deal from the EU, which seemed to presuppose that we were separating ourselves from a sovereign entity not, as we are in reality, trying to detach ourselves from an international treaty organisation organised by a complicated rulebook and with limited scope for movement.

A consequence of that can be seen in the way in which, over a period of time, the ambitions that my right hon. Friend set out had progressively to be narrowed, particularly when she was also being attacked from her own side by some of my colleagues, who wanted to restrict her and imposed on her the red lines that underpinned much of her negotiation. The consequence of that is where we are now. Quite frankly, we might have been led by archangels to get a better outcome, because all negotiations move towards the mean centre, and it is where the power lies that you end up getting the agreement.

The consequence is that, far from detaching ourselves from a complicated international treaty, we only have to look at the 585-plus pages of the document that has been brought back, plus the 26 pages of the political declaration, to see that we are in the process of enmeshing ourselves in another very complex international treaty, but one that is much more disadvantageous to this country than the one we are leaving.

One only has to look at this, perhaps with a lawyer's eye, to see the arbitration mechanisms, the continuing role of the jurisprudence of the European Court of Justice and the complex issues underpinning Northern Ireland, where what we are effectively doing is substituting a bilateral treaty with the Irish Government, which was underpinned for its legitimacy by a referendum north and south of the border, and replacing it with an international treaty that makes the EU the guarantor of certain aspects of it. Where is the recovery of sovereignty in that?

Far from it giving us greater freedom of action, the entirety of this document restricts it. Of course I understand that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister hopes that, in the political negotiations to follow, some of those problems may be overcome. I cannot make a prediction, but it is possible that they may be overcome, because I acknowledge that the EU may wish it, too. But the reality is that there is enough of a challenge that it ought to give this House real pause for thought.

Of course if there were total consensus, I might be reassured that, despite the fact I see this as a second-rate outcome, it may be worthy of support, but I only have to listen to so many of my hon. and right hon. Friends to realise, and I agree with what has been said, that in reality, far from bringing this debate to an end, we are only just embarking on it. And it will destroy this country over years of sterile debate about a future relationship, with the very real possibility that, at the end of it, we are still left in a relationship of dependency, because that comes from our geography, without any of the advantages of full participation. I do not consider that I can look my sons in the eye and say that I am simply prepared to sign this off.

The point has been made that we are living at a time when the will of the people should be respected and that we cannot ignore the result of the 2016 referendum, and I certainly acknowledge that it cannot be ignored. Many people voted for a multiplicity of reasons and the majority of them voted to leave, but when one ends up with a deal that is so markedly different from the things that were discussed in the referendum, it does not seem undemocratic to say that if the Prime Minister wishes to have this deal, the proper course of action is to go back to the people of this country and ask them whether it is what they really want.

There is an alternative, which is remaining in the EU, and I acknowledge there might even be one or two other alternatives beyond that, although renegotiating this package looks to be a pretty fantastic idea. As for no deal, a moment's look at the economic projections shows that it would plunge this country into chaos for the sake of satisfying the ideological fixations of a tiny minority of this House, and that I will not let happen.

I do not know what will happen if the Government lose the motion. I have no desire to hurt the Government, and I want my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister to continue leading this country, but at least it would provide an opportunity for this House to rise to the occasion, to put party political considerations to one side and to start to work together to see if we can achieve a better outcome. The opportunity is there. I am pleased that hon. Members supported my amendment this afternoon and I am grateful to them, as it provides a foundation, at least by means of process, for taking that forward. I will vote for the amendment in the name of the right hon. Member for Leeds Central (Hilary Benn) in due course, because it also takes matters a further step forward. I am certainly prepared to engage with any right hon. and hon. Member in this House as to what other options than my own ideas might be available, although I come back to a basic point: we cannot be seen to be cheating the electorate of the 2016 outcome, and we have to recognise and acknowledge the consequences of that in the way in which we consult them. Subject to that, with reluctance, because it is certainly not an easy matter for me to find myself diverging from my own party, I have to say that this is a matter on which the national interest must come first. I am absolutely firm in my conviction that this deal is not good for the future of our country.

21:45:00

Nigel Dodds (Belfast North) (DUP)

This House has, fundamentally, a duty to respect the clear will of the people of the United Kingdom as delivered in the referendum and to deliver our exit from the EU as one United Kingdom. I regret to say that the withdrawal agreement put forward by the Prime Minister and a majority but not all of the Cabinet falls short of that objective. To enter into this arrangement, first through the transition period, as proposed, and then the backstop provisions, means we enter a twilight world where the EU is given unprecedented powers over the UK, certainly in the transition period, and massive leverage in the negotiations on the future trade relationship. And we would have to rely on the good will of others to let us ever leave these arrangements. Under these terms, the UK's future as a strong

and independent global trading nation, standing together, is in real and imminent jeopardy; this is an outcome that does not honour the result of the referendum or take back control of our laws, money and borders.

David Simpson (Upper Bann) (DUP)

I am sure my right hon. Friend will agree that it is ironic that while the Prime Minister is out on her roadshow trying to sell this deal to the great and the good, the place where it actually matters is this House and she has managed to unite it against this deal.

Nigel Dodds

I thank my hon. Friend for that intervention. There is a point here, in that this deal does not satisfy anybody. Leave voters are outraged at what they see as the betrayal of Brexit and remain voters are asking, “What on earth is the point of losing all our say but still taking all the EU rules?” The political declaration, despite previous promises, does not set out a clear, precise future relationship and raises significant issues in its own right. As for the legally binding withdrawal agreement, we are somehow now told to take on faith that it might never be used, even though 18 months has been spent negotiating it, as nobody actually wants it. But as the Attorney General made clear yesterday, in a forthright and candid session before the House, there is “no unilateral” exit clause and

“no unilateral right...to terminate”.—[Official Report, 3 December 2018; Vol. 650, c. 557.]

He said it is indefinite and that the whole thing was “undesirable”, “unsatisfactory”, “unattractive” and “a calculated risk”. That is hardly the most ringing endorsement for reasons why this House should vote for it.

Paul Girvan (South Antrim) (DUP)

Commitments were given in paragraph 50 of the joint report to both our party and to the House, but there does not seem to be any reference to them in the document that has been produced.

Nigel Dodds

Again, I am grateful to my hon. Friend, because I have said this on a number of occasions. I have asked the Prime Minister about that point but have yet to receive a reason for it. Hundreds of detailed legal clauses in hundreds of pages are devoted to the Northern Ireland situation and the backstop, but there is not a single line and not a single word in relation to paragraph 50, which followed paragraph 49, of the joint report in December. That provision was inserted specifically to allow that the final say in and decision on any regulatory differences between Great Britain and Northern Ireland should rest with the Northern Ireland Assembly and Executive, yet none of that appears anywhere in the withdrawal agreement. We have received no satisfactory explanation as to why that has been deleted. Indeed, the assurance was given at the time that the backstop would be UK wide—that there would not be this sort of special carve-out or provision for Northern Ireland—so the whole concept of the backstop is nonsense. Deciding a fall-back position, an insurance policy, before even starting the talks or reaching any decisions on the final arrangements was always nonsense. The whole process has been bedevilled by the fact that so much time has been spent on negotiating something that we are now told that nobody wants and that nobody will ever want to see introduced, and we are now told that other arrangements will be put in place.

Quite frankly, this is an issue of trust, because some of the words that have been spoken and some of the things that were told to this House and to us directly as a party during the negotiations have not come to pass. I remind the House of what the Prime Minister said to the House on 28 February 2018. She said that we cannot

“undermine the UK common market and threaten the constitutional integrity of the UK by creating a customs and regulatory border down the Irish sea, and no UK Prime Minister could ever agree to it.”—[Official Report, 28 February 2018; Vol. 636, c. 823.]

A customs and regulatory border—that is precisely what the Government now propose. The Prime Minister said in terms on 28 February that no UK Prime Minister could ever accept that.

We are now being asked to take on trust the word of the Government. Who knows who the Government will be in two, three or four years’ time, whenever these negotiations come to an end? Who knows what the European Commission and European Parliament will look like at that time? We do know, though, that the final text of the withdrawal agreement will remain. It will be the thing that will stand and endure. It will be the only reference point that will be used, and it commits that after we come to the point at which we decide to go into this transition period of two years—and even if we do not get a deal after that, and there is absolutely no guarantee that we would have any such deal after that period of time—we will automatically go into the backstop arrangements. That will include large swaths of rules and laws in relation to the single market for goods and agri-food. It will not just build on the regulatory differences that are there now, because the existing regulatory differences between Northern Ireland and the rest of the United Kingdom were decided by this Parliament and by the Assembly and the previous legislatures, and they are there for health reasons, not because we are in a different regime. The reason we would have checks and differences would be that Northern Ireland would be in a different regime—the single market regime, subject to enforcement by the European Commission and to oversight by the European Court of Justice.

On the customs arrangements, it is simply untrue to say that somehow we are all in one big customs union together. Northern Ireland is in the EU customs union, but a special customs arrangement is created with the UK and the EU, and Northern Ireland is therefore part of that. Quite frankly, that is unacceptable to me as a Unionist. We were told by the Prime Minister in her six declarations to the people of Northern Ireland in December that she would ensure that Northern Ireland left the European Union with the rest of the United Kingdom, that no part of the United Kingdom would be left in the single market or the customs union, and that no part of the UK would be left subject to the jurisdiction of the European Court of Justice. Whether or not we agree that that is a good thing, the fact is that these commitments and pledges were made and are now being broken.

Let me go back to what the Attorney said yesterday, because it is important. We look forward to the legal advice that will be published tomorrow as a result of the Government’s finally acceding to the will of the House on this issue. The fact of the matter is that there is no get-out clause from the withdrawal agreement. It is in the gift of the European Union as to how we get out, when we get out and on what terms we get out. Many of us are concerned that whatever the short-term consequences of entering the backstop may be, the real danger lies in the future. When it comes to the point at which a final arrangement—a final trade deal—is agreed, whatever that may look like, it is clear that there will be those in other jurisdictions and Governments who will say, “Well, UK, you can have whatever arrangements you like, but one thing is certain: as far as Northern Ireland is concerned we still do not accept that there can be no hard border through the use of technology, so Northern Ireland is going to have to stay in the customs union and single market.” Leverage will be exercised by other Governments on other issues, but I have no doubt that that will be the argument that will be used. It will not be our decision, even if we disagree with that, even if we put forward counter arguments and even if we put forward other proposals. No one in Northern Ireland and no one in this House will have the final say over what happens; it will be the decision of the European Union as to whether or not it allows us to leave on whatever terms it may be.

Lots of contradictory arguments are being put forward by the Government in Northern Ireland. We are told here all the time that nobody wants this—the Irish Republic do not want it, the European Union does not want it, and the UK does not want it—and yet, in Northern Ireland, the Secretary of State is going around telling everybody that it is the best possible solution and the best possible outcome. If it is the best possible outcome, why is everybody else saying that it should never be used, that it is temporary? We are told that it is temporary, but we now know that, legally speaking, although there may be a desire for it to be temporary, it is indefinite.

There are many things that I could say, but I do not have any time to develop them. Quite frankly, many people in Northern Ireland feel that the pledges that have been made by the Government and the Prime Minister have not been honoured. We are sad about that and we deeply regret it. I admire the Prime Minister's stamina, her resilience and the work that she is doing, but on this she has misjudged the mood of the country and the mood of the House.

21:56:00

Mr Owen Paterson (North Shropshire) (Con)

It is a pleasure to follow the right hon. Member for Belfast North (Nigel Dodds), and I agreed with every word that he said.

Let us go back. David Cameron promised that if people voted Conservative in the 2015 election, there would be an in-or-out referendum; the people would decide—no ifs, no buts, no second choice, they would decide. To his horror, he won and had to deliver the referendum after a botched negotiation. What happened? We had a referendum—absolutely clear. All the processes in the House said, “You, the people, will be sovereign. We the MPs will give you the decision. You will decide.” We then had project fear mark 1. The people were bombarded with propaganda. Leaflets worth some £9 million were sent—crazy stuff from George Osborne's Treasury—and the people voted to leave. A total of 17.4 million people voted to leave, the largest vote in British history on any single subject. We then had from those who lost: what does leave mean?

Mr Vaizey

What does it mean?

Mr Paterson

Like me, my right hon. Friend was elected on a particular platform at the general election, because the Prime Minister very helpfully said, “Leave means leave the single market, leave the customs union and leave the remit of the European Court of Justice. Every single Conservative member was elected on that platform and, helpfully, it was endorsed by the Labour party, so 85% of the votes in the general election endorsed the fact that leaving meant leaving those three things.

We then had the Lancaster House speech, which said that there would be no halfway house. What we have in this latest document does not deliver that. If this is passed, there will be the most appalling disillusion with our institutions. The people will have been thwarted and deprived by the establishment. We have seen it this evening: the political establishment hates Brexit; the commercial establishment—the CBI—hates Brexit; and the media establishment hates Brexit. None the less, the damage to our institutions will be grievous.

What we have in this document is worse than where we are at the moment. I was the Secretary of State for the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and represented the country for the common agricultural policy negotiations. We worked with our allies in Germany, Hungary and wherever. We stopped some of the more stupid proposals going through in the CAP reform, but we

had to swallow an awful lot because we always got outvoted eventually in the qualified majority voting. We will not be there from now on. We will have law imposed on us. We will not be able to amend it or to repeal it in this House. The idea that we can sign trade deals is, sadly, nonsense. I was in Washington two weeks ago. Democrats, Republicans and senior members of the United States Trade Representative made it absolutely clear that countries cannot do trade deals with other countries that do not set their tariffs or their regulatory regimes. We will not set our tariffs and we will not set our regulatory regime.

Then there is the horror of the backstop, so eloquently described by the right hon. Member for Belfast North. This really is disgraceful, especially given the difficulties in getting the Belfast agreement signed. The absolute pillar of the agreement was the principle of consent that the status of Northern Ireland would never change without the majority of the people in Northern Ireland voting for that change. And what do we have? Something ghastly called UK(NI) has been created. Northern Ireland will be under a different regime. That is a breach of the Acts of Union 1800. It is extraordinary that this has been allowed through.

There are only two solutions to the Northern Ireland border. The first is that we stay in the customs union as full members, as the right hon. Member for Derby South (Margaret Beckett) said. The second is that we address the reality that customs has moved on. I have spent a lot of time on this issue. I wrote a paper with the European Research Group that we published in mid-September. I discussed that paper with the Government and sent a copy to Monsieur Barnier, resulting in a very fruitful meeting. The fact is that there is currently a border—a VAT border, an excise duty border and a currency border—and that it is all done with technology.

Mr Steve Baker (Wycombe) (Con)

There is also an Intrastat border, so companies already have to declare their exports under Intrastat. While I have the floor, does my right hon. Friend agree that it is extremely concerning that the political declaration includes reference to a single customs territory, and that this is just another name for a customs union, in clear breach of our manifesto promises?

Mr Paterson

My hon. Friend, having been a Minister in the Department for Exiting the European Union, knows this subject in great detail and he is spot on. We cannot be in any customs territory like that because it is a breach of the promise to the people, and we will never do trade deals around the world. Sadly, the right hon. Member for Twickenham (Sir Vince Cable) is not in his place; it is pathetic to say that we cannot do trade deals with India, America and China, when we are the great international country and these people want to buy from us. We will not be able to do this if we are in some sort of customs territory.

Jim Shannon (Strangford) (DUP)

I congratulate the right hon. Gentleman on his remarks so far. Has he heard, as I have, various Government Ministers assuring Unionist MPs from Northern Ireland that we have nothing to worry about, even though they do not like the agreement themselves? In the Lobby this afternoon, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland told us that she did not like what was put forward. When we put it to her that this could only be annulled by the Republic of Ireland, the EU and the UK together, she had no answer. The fact of the matter is that this is what it means; the backstop will be there forever.

Mr Paterson

The hon. Gentleman is absolutely right. There is no way out of the backstop. As we heard from the Attorney General yesterday, whether we support this is ultimately a political decision because we

do not get out unless the European Union agrees, and it is not going to let us go while we are stumping up the cash, nor while it has us trapped in an arrangement whereby it can impose law on us that is perfidious and can damage our economy but benefits the EU, which has an £100 billion surplus with us.

Before we get off the question of the economy, let me say that so many Members who have spoken this evening think that the EU is the most wondrous organisation and that the economy is booming in Europe. There is one continent in the world with a slower rate of growth: Antarctica. The European Commission says that 90% of world growth is going to be outside the EU, and that is where we want to be. But we have got hung up on the Northern Ireland border, where there is already a border that is handled with modern technology. The turnover—incredibly important locally—is tiny, at 4.9% of Northern Ireland's sales. That is 0.2% of UK GDP and 1.6% of the Republic of Ireland's exports north. This can all be done with modern techniques.

I have engaged with real-world experts at an organisation called CLECAT, which represents—[Interruption.] Opposition Members are laughing. I think that an organisation with a membership of 19,000 customs brokers and freight forwarders that handles 80% of customs transaction in Europe knows a lot more than the Labour Front Bench. CLECAT recommends very clearly that we should move on. We should recognise that borders are no longer inspection points, but tax points. Inspection happens before goods are shipped. Earlier, we heard about just-in-time delivery. One thousand trucks will turn up at the border tomorrow with car parts, and they have all been pre-cleared. Pre-clearance will carry on. The border inspection point in Rotterdam is 40 km from where the containers land. If that were the distance from Newry, we would be looking at somewhere well north of Lisburn, into the suburbs of Belfast. Looking at the most contentious products—food and agri-tech—landing in Rotterdam, there are 30,000 containers a year, and they are all inspected. They go to the border inspection post, some for less than a minute, and 97% or 98% of them whizz through. Of the remaining 2% or 3%, only 10% are physically opened up. People have this ludicrous idea of borders—that we have a man in a tricorne hat stopping the stagecoach with a ladle and testing the brandy. That does not happen. Goods are tested in advance. They are pre-cleared. We have modern systems like REX—the registered exporter system—on rules of origin. We have Transit, and records that are so accurate that I saw when I went to Larne that only two goats went through there in 2016. That is the sort of modern system that could work not just on the Northern Ireland border but at Dover-Calais.

We must vote against these ghastly proposals. This is absolutely appalling, and I am delighted that so many Members from across the House are going to vote against it. So what is the alternative? The answer is to go back to what President Tusk offered us on 7 March—a wide-ranging free trade deal that foundered on the issue of the Northern Ireland border. Using existing techniques and technologies within the existing customs code, we can resolve the problem of the border and go back and take up that offer. It was very clear at the meeting with Monsieur Barnier and his senior colleagues that that offer is still on the table.

The European Union will have to face the fact that if this proposal goes down, as I hope it will this time next week, we should go straight back and take up that offer. I am glad to see that the Secretary of State is here. He should go straight back and do that. We can solve the problem of our borders. We can immediately start negotiating for this wide-ranging free trade deal. Just to show that we are serious, he should also make it very clear that we are going to make preparations for what “Project Fear” calls no deal, which means World Trade Organisation terms. Those are the terms on which 164 countries conduct 98% of world trade. It is absolutely childish to describe this as “leaping off a cliff” and a “catastrophe”.

We should show that we are deadly serious because obviously we are not going to get the free trade deal done by March. If we have a short temporary period in which we have set up a genuine agreement with the European Union, then we can invoke article 24—which I am not sure many people have heard of—of the general agreement on tariffs and trade, which enables us to go on at the current rate of zero tariffs for a reasonable length of time, potentially up to 10 years, so we can carry on exactly as we are. Goods will carry on moving. We will prosper and grow at a tremendous rate, as has been proposed by various forecasters. That is the alternative and that is the way ahead.

22:07:00

Mr Roger Godsiff (Birmingham, Hall Green) (Lab)

Thank you, Mr Speaker, for the opportunity to speak in this momentous debate, which will determine the direction of our country for decades to come.

I strongly support our system of representative democracy, whereby electors send their representatives to Parliament to exercise their judgment and then to vote as they think fit, whereas referendums are, as far as I am concerned, direct democracy, where power moves from Parliament to the people. I have to say that I am not a fan of direct democracy or referendums. I much prefer representative democracy, but there are occasions, as occurred on the EU, where it is right that the decision is put straight to the people. There was a precedent for that because, under the Labour Government in 1975, a referendum was called on whether we remained in the Common Market.

Like everybody else in the country, I had to make my mind up as to how I was going to vote in the referendum. On balance, I took the view that it was better for the long-term future of the UK if we left the European Union. My main reasoning for that was that I did not believe that attempts to create a European superstate modelled on America were going to be in the long-term best interests of the people of Europe. I was particularly concerned by the fact that the people of Europe, in all the countries, had never been asked whether they wanted the EU to evolve into a “United States of Europe”. I also did not believe that the EU was capable of reform from within, and that has been shown by the failure of Governments of both parties to reform what even The Guardian calls the “ridiculous” common agricultural policy.

However, if the EU had become a confederation of independent states working together on common issues and sharing best practice, with a small secretariat in Brussels or somewhere else, I would have been more than happy to support it. But that was not going to happen, because the project people were never going to allow it to happen, nor were they going to tell the people of Europe exactly what the ultimate objective of the EU was. It had to be integration by stealth, which I believe has contributed to the rise of populist parties on both the left and right throughout Europe over the last 10 years.

After the result was announced, I made it clear that, now that representative democracy had reasserted itself, I would respect the views of the 66% to 34% majority opinion in my constituency in favour of remain and I would not vote to trigger article 50; that I would press for a meaningful vote on the final deal to be put to Parliament; and that I was not opposed to having another referendum on the finally agreed package, so that the people could make the final decision. Therefore, I did not vote to trigger article 50; I pressed the Government, along with others, to have a meaningful vote on the finally agreed package, which was accepted by the Government; and I added my name to the amendment to the Lords amendment, which was tabled by the right hon. Member for Carshalton and Wallington (Tom Brake) and called for the finally agreed package to be put to another referendum.

All four wards in my constituency of Birmingham Hall Green voted to remain, so I believe that it was incumbent on me as their representative—whatever my personal views—to vote the way that I have, but I respectfully point out to my colleagues on the Labour Benches that 70% of them represent constituencies that voted leave. Six out of 10 Birmingham constituencies voted leave. All the other cities and large towns of the west midlands—Coventry, Dudley, Sandwell, Solihull, Walsall and Wolverhampton—voted leave. I am not convinced that there has been a seismic shift of opinion and that those people would now vote differently.

The finally agreed deal has now been put before the House. From the discussions I have had with my constituents and the representations I have received, I do not believe that it is acceptable to the majority of my constituents, and I will therefore not be voting for it.

Extricating ourselves from the political straitjacket of an embryonic European superstate was never going to be easy, and the Prime Minister and our civil servants deserve credit for their efforts in putting this deal together, but I do not believe that it will command a majority in the House. Unless another option wins majority support, I can see no other way forward but to put the decision back to the people in another referendum. We must be under no illusions—if we do that, it will have profound constitutional repercussions for this country. However, the electorate made the original decision through the direct democracy of the referendum and, if Parliament cannot come to a decision, it is up to the British people to make their choice as to whether they wish us to remain, to leave or to accept the terms put before the House by the Prime Minister.

22:14:00

Mrs Maria Miller (Basingstoke) (Con)

If the contents of this withdrawal agreement had been secured by the then Prime Minister, David Cameron, in 2016, it would have been heralded on both sides of the House as a great success. I think that it is a huge pity that people in Brussels did not take that opportunity more seriously.

As in any negotiation, Members of Parliament have to weigh up the merits of and concerns about every option before us. I voted remain and I fear the impact of leaving the EU not only for business reasons, but for issues of peace and security. However, we have to look for compromises and a way forward. What I have found most disturbing about the debate tonight is the lack of that compromise coming through in Members' contributions.

Where should that compromise lie? It has to lie where we feel that people wanted us to act as a result of the referendum. What did people want us to do as a result of that vote to leave? Many people voted to remain, but most voted to leave. They voted for a return of control of our borders and an end to the freedom of movement. They voted to stop vast sums of money being sent to the EU. They voted for an end to the European Court of Justice's jurisdiction in the UK. What nobody voted for is uncertainty in our businesses and threats to our jobs. The sort of threats the hon. Member for Birmingham, Hall Green (Mr Godsiff) has outlined could well be realistic for people working in the manufacturing sector in his constituency.

Mr Jonathan Lord (Woking) (Con)

I think this is still there on the official Vote Leave website, but it mentioned being out of the customs union, out of the single market, a comprehensive free trade deal with the EU and free trade deals around the world. So it was there. That was the mandate and that is what the people want us to see through.

Mrs Miller

My hon. Friend has every right to say that. I am saying to him: should we not be looking for a way forward in reality, rather than in the theory of the words set out in a manifesto? We have to look at the reality of what we are dealing with in terms of negotiation. A negotiation cannot happen by one side alone; it has to happen with the second partner as well. I would agree with anybody who has spoken today to say that leaving the EU is inherently risky, but the option before us at least has the detail behind it for us to be able to consider more closely.

How do we move forward? We could take the view of my right hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge and South Ruislip (Boris Johnson), who sounded rather like Micawber in saying that something will turn up. I certainly will not be holding my breath. The people we represent would not expect us to enter into something as risky as hoping that the EU changes its mind.

We could embrace uncertainty; I am referring to some of the comments made by SNP and Liberal Democrat Members. They talked about no Brexit—remaining in the EU—and perhaps having a second referendum. I believe that that would do very little to enhance democracy in our country and I certainly would not support that. I was pleased to, I think, hear from Labour that it will not be supporting that either.

We could embrace the uncertainty of no deal. I think the catastrophic impact of that is recognised by many people in the House today. I do not believe that there would be a majority in this place for a situation where we have no transitional period in which to forge the trade deals with the EU or beyond, and indeed no protection for EU citizens or for UK citizens living in the EU as a result of having absolutely no deal in place in March.

What is the least risky option and the thing that we should be responsibly advocating? Surely it is what the Prime Minister called “an unprecedented economic relationship” with the EU—the withdrawal agreement that is before us. It is the option that we know most about. It is the option where we actually have details to debate today in the Chamber. As the Prime Minister has set out, it delivers far more than the Canada deal could do and far more than a Norway deal could do. It would mean an end to freedom of movement, an end to the EU Court’s jurisdiction in the UK, a single market and a framework for our future relationship.

I am not going to stand here and say that this is without risk. Of course, there is risk—that is the territory within which we are operating—but a trade deal with the EU has to be something that is of value to our EU neighbours as well as to ourselves. I simply do not buy the argument that we would fall into a backstop as a result of lack of negotiation or lack of technology. Many of our near European neighbours, such as Switzerland, already operate in a similar way to the way we will operate in Northern Ireland. The technology exists. It is therefore a faux argument, and we will not be prevented from being able to operate in future.

There is much talk of proposed amendments to the agreement. I want the Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union to address that at the end of our immense debates. The Attorney General was extremely clear and helpful yesterday and I applaud him for the time he spent explaining things to Members. He referred to

“anything that is incompatible with our obligations under the withdrawal agreement.”

He went on:

“Any amendment to the meaningful vote that would introduce a qualification to our obligations under the agreement would be likely to be viewed by the European Union as a failure to ratify it”.— [Official Report, 3 December 2018; Vol. 650, c. 561.]

Does that mean that inserting an end date to the backstop could risk destabilising the only negotiated option on the table for us to view today, or indeed, throughout the five days of this debate? I will not support any amendment unless the Secretary of State can confirm that it would not destabilise the withdrawal agreement.

Leaving the EU is a huge risk for our nation. Everybody knew that when they voted in the referendum. To say that they did not belittles the thought that our constituents put into their vote. I speak as a Member of Parliament whose constituency reflected the national result: 52% voted to leave and 48% voted to remain. It is a democratic decision, but it is still a huge risk. That is why we have a duty to look at the facts. Our constituents expect us to weigh up the risks and act accordingly.

Above all, we have to deal with the situation as it is. Unlike other Members, Ministers are dealing with the hard reality of negotiating with Brussels and of the legal confines within which they have to operate.

Trade-offs are needed, but in going forward we must have a clear plan. That is far less risky than no plan, less risky than rerunning a referendum and far less risky than hoping against hope that the EU has a change of heart. In my four years as a Minister, I never encountered the EU having a change of heart, so I hope that the Secretary of State is not banking on that.

I will support the Government’s withdrawal agreement because I believe that it is in the best interests of not only my constituents in Basingstoke—a major trading part of the south-east of England—but the whole of our country. I hope that more Members, particularly those who were more on the Brexit side of the debate than me, realise that this is probably as good as it gets for them. I am surprised that they have not already woken up to that.

22:23:00

Clive Efford (Eltham) (Lab)

I voted remain in 2016 and I did not hide my disappointment at the outcome of the referendum. However, since then, I have honoured the result. I have watched as the negotiations progressed. Like my right hon. Friend the Member for Derby South (Margaret Beckett), I have learnt and I was willing to go along with the Government’s negotiations and plans to leave the European Union. I was always clear that the 52% of people in my constituency who voted to leave did not vote to make themselves or their families worse off, or to diminish our country’s status in the world.

The people who campaigned for Brexit never said at any stage that things would be worse. They accused opponents of being doom mongers and pedlars of “Project Fear”. On 14 June, during the campaign, the Ministers of the Vote Leave campaign wrote in a joint letter:

“There is more than enough money to ensure that those who now get funding from the EU—including universities, scientists, family farmers, regional funds, cultural organisations and others—will continue to do so.”

What else did they promise? Here is a list of things that was on their website and they put out in adverts on YouTube and so on: hundreds of new schools, more primary places in our current

schools, more spending on scientific research, more health spending, raised pay for junior doctors, the abolition of prescription charges, the building of new hospitals, maintaining all current EU spending, more public support for agriculture, new roads, improving railways, expanding regional airports, reversing changes to tax credits, paying state aid to the steel industry, new submarines, protecting research grants and the old chestnut pothole repairs. It goes on: lower taxes, lower business taxes, a cut in VAT on fuel, a reduction in council tax—all of this promised on the back of money that we would save from the European Union. Of course, there is the other one that everyone refers to: the £350 million per week for the NHS on the side of the bus.

In June, the Institute for Fiscal Studies said that estimates on EU contributions and the savings that could be made were over-exaggerated. The £350 million is a bogus figure. The institute estimates it to be nearer £170 million. Last month, the Government's own forecast said that, in 15 years, GDP would be 10.7% lower than if the UK stayed in the EU. The Bank of England said that GDP would be at least 1% higher in five years if the UK had voted to remain. Mark Carney went on to warn about the worst-case scenario, a disorderly no-deal Brexit, where the economy would contract by 8%, house prices would tumble by 30% and interest rates would have to rise to combat inflation.

After the referendum, it did not stop. The chatter continued. In July 2016, soon after he was appointed, the former Brexit Secretary, the right hon. Member for Haltemprice and Howden (Mr Davis), wrote:

“within two years, before the negotiation with the EU is likely to be complete, and therefore before anything material has changed, we can negotiate a free trade area massively larger than the EU. Trade deals with the US and China alone will give us a trade area almost twice the size of the EU”.

And then there is the Secretary of State for International Trade and President of the Board of Trade, who famously went on the “Today” programme in July last year and said:

“The free trade agreement that we will have to do with the European Union should be one of the easiest in human history.”

Later that year, in October, he said he would have dozens of international free trade deals within the next 18 months. He went on to say that Britain would simply copy and paste existing EU deals with third countries. That was quite an admission. My constituents who were part of the 52% will ask, “What did we vote for when we voted for Brexit if deals are simply going to be cut and pasted from the European Union to trade deals once we have left the EU?”

We will also need to have trading schedules. If once we leave the European Union we want to trade under World Trade Organisation rules, we will have to have schedules in place. Those schedules will have to be cut and pasted from the EU if we want to start dealing with countries outside the EU immediately after we leave.

The WTO has rules. It recognises us under EU trade deals. If we want to begin trading without any problems, we will have to stick with them. All those who make the argument that leaving is simple have failed to explain the complexities of WTO rules. They ignore, for instance, the most-favoured nation rule, which means that, if we cut our trade tariffs with another country without having a trade deal in place, we have to offer that opportunity to every other single member of the WTO. That would effectively make us a tariff-free nation. We would then be open to cheap imports, undermining jobs and local businesses. The notion that we will be completely free agents if we walk out of the European Union is, and always has been, a complete fabrication. If we do not leave

with an EU deal in place, we will not be able to start negotiations to do deals with economies as large as the US, China or India.

I have listened to the arguments, and I have learnt, and it is clear that the Prime Minister's proposal is the worst of all worlds. She is caught up in her own rhetoric—"Brexit means Brexit", "no deal is better than a bad deal"—but now we know that no deal is the bad deal. My constituents who voted to leave wanted sovereignty to come back to this Parliament. They wanted to take control of their borders and to stop payments to the European Union, but they did not vote to make themselves worse off. This proposal will be lost in the vote next week. No doubt there will be a vote of confidence, and I and my Opposition colleagues will vote against the Government, but assuming that the Tory allies re-rat, the Prime Minister will then be charged with bringing to the House her plan B within 21 days.

I have added my name to amendments that mean we will get meaningful votes here in this House and that Parliament is taking back control. There is no majority in this House for no deal. The amendment tabled by the right hon. and learned Member for Beaconsfield (Mr Grieve) means that we will get a vote to deliver on that and to stop no deal. So the Prime Minister should stop threatening Members of the House, saying that, if we vote down her deal, it means that we will have to vote for no deal. It is time that we started talking to people about how we take this issue forward. I believe that, eventually, we will have to suspend article 50 and continue negotiations with the European Union.

22:31:00

Daniel Kawczynski (Shrewsbury and Atcham) (Con)

Mercifully, there are no more UK Independence party Members of Parliament in this Chamber, but we have to remember that in the last European Union elections, they won the largest number of seats, and certainly, in our county of Shropshire, they won the most votes when those elections took place. In the debate today, we have not properly referenced the huge numbers of British people who voted for UKIP in the EU elections because of their frustration with the European Union. I consider UKIP to be a very malign, rabidly right-wing organisation and party. Some of their language on migration and immigrants was a real concern to me, particularly being the first ever Polish-born British Member of Parliament and very proud of the extraordinary contribution that 1 million Poles have made to this country.

I am pleased that UKIP is withering on the vine. Today, even Nigel Farage quit UKIP, but I am really concerned about the references that have been made during this debate, in many speeches, to the wish for a second referendum. I am absolutely convinced that if we have another referendum and try to overturn the decision that was taken, this will give wind to UKIP sails and it will be resurrected as a genuine political force.

Many Members of Parliament have spoken about how we will have to spend many years adapting ourselves to our new relationship with the European Union. They are clearly oblivious to the amount of constant work that we have had to do in this Chamber to adapt ourselves to its move towards a supra-national state. There are two issues that I want to address briefly: one is the single currency and the other is the EU army.

There are 19 eurozone countries, but the eight that do not have the euro are contractually obliged so to do. They have no alternative but to join the eurozone, yet the people in these countries do not wish to abandon their currencies. In the Czech Republic, 71% of the electorate do not want the euro. In Sweden, 72% do not, and in Poland, the country of my birth, 62% of the electorate do not want to

give up the zloty, yet they are moving towards a single currency for the whole European Union. We have an opt-out—one of only two countries to have one—but it is not inconceivable that at some stage in the future, if we remained in the EU, say in 10 or 30 years, the EU might come back and say, “You know you thought you had an opt-out. Well, think again. We cannot have a system with 27 countries using the same currency and you being an exception.”

Secondly, there is the European army. I take my daughter, Alexis, to the Polish-Russian border every year for our summer holidays, and I say to her, “Darling, this is the most highly militarised part of Europe, and if the tit-for-tat missile deployments continue at the pace they have been over the last few years, it will be the equivalent of the North and South Korean border.” Despite that, the EU wants to create a single European army that, at best, will duplicate the services of NATO, an organisation that has kept the peace on our continent for 70 years, and, at worst, will usurp NATO as the supreme defence posture for the continent of Europe.

Let us not forget that, once we pull out of the EU, there will be six countries committed to the common defence of our continent that are not members of the EU and never will be: America and Britain, two permanent members of the UN Security Council; Canada and Iceland, protecting the Atlantic; Norway, in the extreme north; and Turkey, protecting our southern flank from ISIS and its extremely dangerous moves.

Mr Paterson

Will my hon. Friend confirm, as he knows public opinion in Poland well, that, although we have this idea that it is the EU that has kept the peace, people in Poland know, having escaped from the Soviet empire, that actually it is NATO that has kept the peace in Europe and brought freedom to those eastern countries?

Daniel Kawczynski

Absolutely. I could not agree more with my Shropshire neighbour. Of course, we are relatively safe here on our island. It is those frontline states such as Poland that will really face instability if anything is done to usurp the supremacy of NATO. The Russians understand that NATO is united and strong and that any deviation from that could put countries such as Poland and others at risk.

I have two issues with the withdrawal deal. The first—I look at our DUP colleagues as I say this—is the Northern Ireland backstop. The Attorney General yesterday did not give me sufficient guarantees that Northern Ireland would be protected in the event that the backstop has to be utilised. We owe a debt of honour to the people of Northern Ireland. The hon. Member for North Down (Lady Hermon) said that DUP Members did not represent the whole of Northern Ireland. Well, they are here and they are our interlocutors, and if they are telling us, as the representatives of the people of Northern Ireland, that they have genuine concerns about the backstop, it would be highly irresponsible of us as Unionists to ignore those concerns. The determination of the people of Northern Ireland to remain British in such extraordinary adversity is remarkable. I am very proud of their determination to remain within the United Kingdom. The Attorney General looked at the DUP last night and said, “You have to vote in the interests of the whole United Kingdom.” I have a message for the Attorney General: there is no United Kingdom without Northern Ireland.

I come to my second concern. I asked the Attorney General in a one-hour telephone conversation last week, “What is your legal advice? How much of the £39 billion do we really owe?” and he told me a figure in private over the telephone, but when he was asked that same question yesterday by my hon. Friend the Member for Shipley (Philip Davies), he said the figure was too difficult to calculate. Again, I asked the Prime Minister this afternoon for assurances, but she did not give me a clear answer. What really concerns me is that, while we in Shropshire are facing shortages for our

local schools and hospital, we are, under this agreement, likely to hand over another £39 billion of British taxpayers' money to the EU in return for the possibility of a treaty further down the line. That is simply unacceptable.

This week Mr Macron has threatened to block a trade deal with Mercosur that has been discussed over the last eight years because the new Brazilian President, Mr Bolsonaro, has pledged to pull out of the Paris climate agreement. Members should think about what would happen to the Conservative party if we handed over £39 billion, and two, three or four years on, there was still no trade agreement. That would be devastating for our party, and devastating for our country. As things stand, I will find it extremely difficult, if not impossible, to support the withdrawal agreement.

22:40:00

Douglas Chapman (Dunfermline and West Fife) (SNP)

Many people throughout the United Kingdom are very excited about Brexit. They know about the blue passports that they will be able to hold and about the new Brexit 50p coin, and the prospect of Empire 2.0 is coming to the fore. However, the more people learn about the Brexit process, the more they are realising that we will lose more than we could possibly ever gain. In my constituency, 60% of people voted to remain in the EU, and recent polls have shown that the proportion of remain supporters has increased to 68% or 69%. I think that as people in Scotland become aware of the real impact on their lives and jobs, there will be a hardening of the pro-EU vote.

I want to focus, however, on the impact of the UK's leaving the EU on the important areas of defence and security. In my view, the Government have drastically underestimated the negative consequences of Brexit for our ability to maintain safety and security in the UK without the full co-operation of our European counterparts and the ability of our defence industries to trade and operate freely across the single market. We have a strong, competitive defence industry here in the UK. Firms such as Babcock, BAE Systems and Rolls-Royce have successfully fulfilled Ministry of Defence orders for years, and even more newer companies are coming into the work stream. Those firms, like many others, have built up a valuable breadth of expertise and capability, and we should be doing all that we can to preserve their skills.

While the withdrawal agreement offers short-term stability to the defence industry, it provides no assurances in the long term to ensure that just-in-time supply chains and trading arrangements across the EU will be maintained. We must also consider the support that is currently given to the industry, particularly to small and medium-sized enterprises, in the form of European structural and investment funds and the European Investment Bank. The Government must commit themselves to continuing or replacing that support. Without it, we face further job losses in dockyards like Rosyth in my constituency and the gradual depletion of those skills from our industrial landscape. That would be an economic travesty, which I am sure neither Members nor our constituents wish to see.

In a report published in March entitled "Ministry of Defence: Acquisition and support of defence equipment", the Public Accounts Committee said:

"The Department needs...to safeguard the interests of British industry after we have left the European Union."

The Government have been warned time and again that they must protect our defence sector from the economic calamity of leaving the EU, and I urge the Prime Minister and the Ministers who are on the Front Bench tonight to take heed before it is too late.

Yesterday, as a member of the Public Accounts Committee, I co-led an evidence session with witnesses from the Ministry of Defence on the defence equipment plan for the next 10 years. The National Audit Office reports that the plan remains unaffordable, and the MOD itself admits that there is a black hole of between £7 billion and £14.8 billion black in its budget. Why is that affected by Brexit? We have established that, even under the Prime Minister's deal, the UK will be worse off than it is with the current arrangements, and the Government themselves accept that. Almost every economic commentator who has produced anything of note also recognises that the public finances of UK Plc will be in a much worse state beyond Brexit than they are at present. So given that the MOD is already struggling to realise its ambitions with the current budget, how will it cope with another blow to the economy when we leave the EU, especially under a no-deal scenario, and that is even before we start going anywhere near possible negative currency implications? With question marks already hanging over where the axe will fall in the equipment plan to bring it into balance, the Brexit situation puts at risk our defence capability.

Much has been said about our fishing industry, but what has been missing most in those discussions is a focus on securing our waters post Brexit. In particular, the north Atlantic is of key strategic importance, not only to safeguard fisheries and our oil and gas reserves and renewables, but to protect us from external threats. The MOD currently has a total of 19 Royal Navy escort ships, which is an historical low, while there are three Type 26 frigates on order at BAE Systems in the Clyde. That gives us nowhere near enough vessels to adequately protect our waters.

Another area of huge importance in defence is research and development. As a member of the EU, we currently benefit from numerous opportunities for collaborative research with our European partners through bodies such as the European Defence Agency. I recognise that it is possible for non-EU countries to participate in EDA projects, and I urge the UK Government to ensure provision is made to retain as much access as possible to these and to other defence funds as they become available.

One such project is Operation Atalanta, the highly successful EU-led anti-piracy operation off the horn of Africa in which the UK has played a leading role. At the height of Somali piracy in 2011, 736 hostages and 32 ships were being held by pirates. By April 2017, that number had fallen to zero. This demonstrates the value of joint EU efforts to tackle global security threats, and we must continue to be a part of those efforts.

The Galileo satellite system is another collaborative project that the UK is at risk of being excluded from as a result of Brexit. While the Government have put forward proposals for continued participation in Galileo as part of the wider security relationship, there is no guarantee they will be accepted.

With the Prime Minister putting forward the prospect of either this deal or no deal, Brexit will leave the UK exposed to a multitude of threats to our defence and security industry. In a recent article, Malcolm Chalmers, deputy director-general of the Royal United Services Institute, suggested:

“In security terms, the full benefits of membership—combining both shared decision-making and operational effectiveness—cannot be replicated under the proposed deal.”

He goes on to say:

“If the UK were to leave the EU without a deal, it would have severe and immediate consequences for the UK's ability to combat crime and terrorism.”

On a recent visit to Culross, Torryburn and St Margaret's primary schools, I discussed Brexit at length with the 12 and 13-year-olds there. It is perhaps a cruel irony that the EU came about through the end of two world wars that took many lives, yet that is the kind of legacy we are about to leave our children, and probably the saddest part of Brexit is the fact that we are ignoring the peace dividend we have had for the last several decades.

22:48:00

Mr Edward Vaizey (Wantage) (Con)

I am grateful for the chance to take part in this important debate. It is a common theme at the moment to praise the Prime Minister's resilience, but may I take a moment to praise your resilience, Mr Speaker? When this debate concludes you will have been in the Chair for about 13 and a half hours listening to a combination of highfalutin rhetoric and complete drivel; I will leave the House to conclude what Members are going to hear for the next eight minutes. In the time that you have been in the Chair, Mr Speaker, you could have travelled to Paris and back on multiple occasions and probably could have flown to Gibraltar and back on multiple occasions, which emphasises how close Europe remains, despite the fact that we are leaving the EU.

I said in an earlier intervention that I have come to my own conclusion that it is right to back the withdrawal agreement. I came to that conclusion all by myself. No one gave me a knighthood; no one offered me a job. I looked at what the best solution was for the United Kingdom and Brexit, and I think supporting the withdrawal agreement is the right solution.

Let me just deal with one piece of homework. I praise the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, because I see our continued relationship with Euratom as a very important issue. We are leaving Euratom, and in Culham—just outside my constituency—we lead the world in nuclear fusion research. I am delighted to say that almost all the relationships we had under Euratom will be replicated through a series of bilateral agreements and legislation.

I also praise something else that perhaps does not get enough praise, the inanimate object of the civil service, made up of many animate objects. The civil service has worked tirelessly for the past two and half years to put in place the measures we will need for a successful Brexit, and too often the thanks it gets from certain parts of the Chamber is to be traduced, slagged off, insulted and dragged into some absurd conspiracy theory. In my time as a Minister I never met any civil servants except ones that worked hard, were strictly neutral and did the bidding of their Ministers.

Let me also speak briefly about the importance of the creative industries. Although I will back the withdrawal agreement, I remain concerned that too many issues that affect those industries—the most successful part of our economy—have not been covered. Notably, they are: the future of free movement, which is very important, as there are many freelance workers in the creative industries; the future of copyright; our ability to have international broadcasters based in the UK who can broadcast throughout Europe; and digital transfer.

Daniel Kawczynski

Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr Vaizey

I give way to the tallest Pole in the Chamber.

Daniel Kawczynski

Can my right hon. Friend tell me, in hindsight, what were the biggest mistakes made by his close friend and neighbour, David Cameron, in the run-up to the referendum, during it and after?

Mr Vaizey

I have only got six minutes, but his biggest mistake was not to win the referendum, which I wished we had done so on behalf of my constituents, who voted to remain. In the last few hours, I have had more than 200 emails calling for a second referendum from my constituents, and I shall disappoint them in not endorsing that call. Although I was trolled heavily by ultra-remainers a few weeks ago, all of whom seemed to be quoting Burke, I remain a representative and not a delegate. I know my own mind and what the way forward is for Brexit—the withdrawal agreement. Too many people do not seem to realise that this is a two-stage process. We have to leave the European Union before we negotiate our close trading relationship with it, of which the political declaration is a part.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge and South Ruislip (Boris Johnson) said that too many people think that Brexit is a disaster to be managed, but we are separating from a 45-year relationship. Of course it has to be managed: we cannot simply walk away. Sadly, it has fallen to the remainers to manage it. We had a Brexit Foreign Secretary who walked away, we had a Brexit Brexit Secretary who walked away, and we had another Brexit Brexit Secretary who walked away. The thing that annoys me most about those people who fled the scene is their continued claim that somehow they represent the purity of Brexit. Well, we have a Brexit Environment Secretary who is happy with the withdrawal agreement. We have a Brexit Leader of the House who is happy with the withdrawal agreement, and a Brexit International Trade Secretary, with whom I work as a trade envoy and who is doing a great job, who is happy with the withdrawal agreement.

The trouble for the pure Brexiteers—the wreckers, the people who ironically will bring down Brexit with their pathetic behaviour on the withdrawal agreement—is of course that no one had a specific view of Brexit and it has been left to the House to work it out and vote for what it thinks is right. I will support a withdrawal agreement that secures citizens' rights, that does not leave us as a vassal state, that has a backstop that keeps Northern Ireland part of the United Kingdom, and that—unfortunately for me—restricts freedom of movement. I am a huge fan of freedom of movement, but if people think that that is what people voted for with Brexit, so be it.

Mr Lord

Will my right hon. Friend reflect on the fact that had the Prime Minister put a Brexiteer—as he calls them—fully in charge of Brexit, whatever deal came back would perhaps have more support in the country among the 17.4 million who voted leave and the leavers and Brexiteers in the Chamber as well? Brexiteers should have been made to own Brexit, because we think that we might have done a slightly better job of it.

Mr Vaizey

I do not think the Brexiteers would have done that. Too many Brexiteers fantasised about what Brexit would look like without confronting the cold reality. I slightly wish that the Prime Minister had done that, however. As it is, she has given the Brexiteers a get-out clause. They will all complain about the withdrawal agreement not being good enough, and if we crash out with no deal, they will all say that nobody prepared for that. Nothing is ever the Brexiteers' fault and no solution is ever put forward by them. The Department for International Trade, the Foreign Office and the Brexit Department are three pretty big Departments, and I would have thought that they, along with the Prime Minister—whom the Brexiteers elected, by the way—would allow the Brexiteers to deliver the Brexit that they pretended they wanted.

Another thing that has annoyed me about this whole process is the sudden rising up of free trade deals that can be done overnight without any concern about how the public might react when we do deals with huge economies such as China, the US and India.

There is also the ridiculous confrontational language. I know I have been guilty of it in this speech, but I am worked up at the moment. The ex-Foreign Secretary was talking about the EU deciding to let us go, but the EU is now desperate for us to go. What people do not understand about the backstop is that we will now have to have our cake and eat it, to coin a phrase. We will have access to the European Union single market without paying in and we will have a restriction on freedom of movement. This is not part of a plot to turn us into a vassal state. The EU did not want us to leave, but now that we are doing so, it wants us to leave in as orderly a manner as possible. We should embrace that. It is appalling that we use such confrontational language.

Unfortunately, however, this does not mean that I support a people's vote, which I think is a complete red herring. If we were to agree to one, people would be entitled to say, "If you're asking us to vote again, can we have your salaries? We delivered our verdict in the referendum, and we asked Parliament to reach a conclusion and vote on it." That is what this withdrawal agreement is about, and it would be a humiliation for this Parliament if we were to go back to the people. I also believe that those who think that a people's vote will deliver a verdict that we should stay in the European Union would be sorely disappointed by the outcome of any such vote.

I said at the beginning of my remarks that I supported this withdrawal agreement because I had come to the conclusion that that was the right thing to do. I am not supporting it because I am a huge fan of the Prime Minister or of the way in which she has conducted herself over the past two years. I really have been angered and appalled by the "citizen of nowhere" and "jump the queue" language. Too often, the Prime Minister has spoken only for the 52%, although I was delighted when she said a bit about the 48% earlier today. There has been no attempt to heal the divisions after the referendum, which leaves me hugely disappointed, but I will still back her withdrawal agreement because I believe that that is the right way forward.

Do you know what disappoints me most, Mr Speaker? If we were to analyse my genetic make-up, I am sure that we would find a bit of Viking and a bit of Huguenot, but I am sure that we would also find a bit of Brexiteer. The hon. Member for Filton and Bradley Stoke (Jack Lopresti) knows this only too well from when he tried and failed to select me for Bristol North West. I absolutely accept what was said earlier by the hon. Member for Birmingham, Hall Green (Mr Godsiff). He said that there was a European project, a ratchet and a will to create a European superstate. Part of me thinks that we could potentially thrive after Brexit if we do it properly. We could actually remake the European Union and the European continent. We could have what moderate Eurosceptics always wanted, until this debate turned toxic, which was an inner core, with a single currency, pressing forward towards an ever closer union, and an outer core, outside the single currency, with a looser relationship with Europe. That outer core could still have all the benefits of that relationship without the fear of being subsumed into a superstate. This withdrawal agreement is potentially a step forward, but after months of hard technical work and with the prize within our sights, what happens? Of course the hard Brexiteers come out and try to tear the whole thing down. Well, try—and see if you get your Brexit.

22:59:00

Lilian Greenwood (Nottingham South) (Lab)

Twenty-two months ago, I sat in this Chamber listening to arguments from both sides of the House about the triggering of article 50. It was a difficult decision, but I voted against that motion at the

conclusion of the debate, because I was not convinced that the Government had a proper plan for Brexit. I take no satisfaction in being proved right. The Prime Minister's failure to unite the country, focusing instead on trying to satisfy the warring factions in her own party, is a terrible failure of leadership just when our disunited kingdom really needed that leadership.

At the 2017 general election, I reassured my constituents that, while I respected the referendum result, I would not give any Prime Minister a blank cheque. I promised to stand up for my constituents and fight for the best deal for Nottingham South—one that would not leave them worse off, less secure at work and with fewer opportunities in the future. This deal does not deliver on those promises. Conservative Members remain bitterly divided about what kind of Brexit they want. They have failed to build a consensus within their party, within Parliament and within the country. They have not listened, and the people whom I represent, particularly those on low incomes, are likely to suffer most if we leave the EU on the Prime Minister's terms.

As UN special rapporteur Philip Alston warned two weeks ago in his report on extreme poverty and human rights, the lowest paid will bear the brunt of the economic fallout from Brexit. My constituents were promised “the sunlit uplands”, hundreds of millions of pounds every week for our NHS, the easiest trade deal ever, taking back control of our borders and a return to sovereignty. We now know what the reality looks like. As the Chancellor admitted, our country will be worse off under all Brexit scenarios. Far from delivering more money for schools, to tackle poverty and for our NHS, we will all be poorer, with fewer opportunities, and our public services will suffer. They did not put that on the side of a bus.

The deal that the Prime Minister has reached satisfies no one and seems increasingly unlikely to command a majority in this House, and yet she is in complete denial. She has repeatedly refused to explain what she will do when her deal is defeated. That is utterly reckless, putting the future of my constituents and our country at risk.

I intend to vote against this deal because it fails to protect the interests of the people, the businesses and the city that I represent. Nottingham South is home to two world-class universities. They are vital to our city's success and matter deeply to the thousands of students and staff I represent. The University of Nottingham told me that the

“impact of the decision to leave the EU has already had negative implications for the University. We have noticed a decline in student numbers at postgraduate level. EU staff report feelings of demotivation and alienation in a country they have chosen to call home and have made a massive contribution towards. We have noticed a number of examples where industry collaborators have put investment into joint R&D programmes on hold or have cancelled them. If the UK's participation and status in the Horizon Europe scientific research programme isn't confirmed in time, then there is a significant risk that we and the major businesses and SMEs that work with us will be locked out of the major part of this programme going forwards.”

It is not only our universities that are threatened. The Nottingham University Hospitals NHS Trust recently published reports on the impact that Brexit will have both on their staff and on the supply of medicines. Thanks to this Government's cuts to nurse training bursaries and the failure to value NHS staff, we have a recruitment crisis. Non-British EU staff make up 4.4% of the hospitals workforce—690 staff, including 214 nurses and midwives. These are people we desperately want and need working in our NHS but, as reported in the Nottingham Post yesterday, despite immediate reassurances issued by the trust following the referendum, these EU citizens

“feel that they have been forgotten and are unsettled and anxious because of the uncertainty of their employment due to Brexit.”

It is no wonder when they are characterised as “queue jumpers”. The trust also reports that a no-deal Brexit may affect the timely supply of goods, services and medicines, which could disrupt health and social care services.

Businesses across Nottingham, in both manufacturing and services, are equally worried about recruiting skilled staff, about their supply chains and about access to markets. This is not what my leave-voting constituents were promised. Here is what one of my constituents from the Clifton estate says:

“We are headed for a Brexit that nobody voted for...a million miles away from what was promised in 2016. It threatens jobs, businesses and hospitals here in our constituency; it will mean no end to austerity for years to come...it will do nothing to deal with...the real challenges facing our local area. In fact, it will make dealing with those problems harder.”

The answer to those challenges is a Labour Government who are determined to tackle the poverty, insecurity and fear that drove so many of my constituents to vote leave. A general election would give people a real opportunity to have their say, not only on this bad deal but on this bad Government, but if we cannot have an election, maybe it is time to ask the people what they think. Parliament does not support this deal, and Parliament will not support a catastrophic no deal. If the Prime Minister will not listen to Parliament, maybe it is time to listen to the people.

23:06:00

Derek Thomas (St Ives) (Con)

I appreciate the opportunity to speak at the beginning of this important five-day debate.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Wantage (Mr Vaizey) said that Brexit is often what has been promised, if only we were doing it properly. I agree with that. Looking back, there are many regrets that we should all share. One is that we in this House have not worked together. We might have differences behind closed doors, but we have not worked together to show leadership to the nation and to do the best we can to deliver the result of the 2016 referendum for the British public and for those in Northern Ireland.

We have done untold damage to the sense of security of people whose natural home is not the UK and who no longer feel welcome. I have met several such people in my constituency, and I regret that they were ever allowed to feel unwelcome. I also regret that, even now, we have not truly clarified for our farmers, for our health and social workers, for those in hospitality and for the many in permanent, so-called unskilled jobs whether they can still come and work freely in the UK. It is important we correct that concern.

When it comes to doing Brexit properly, I believe that the Prime Minister’s Lancaster House speech of 17 January 2017 was doing Brexit properly. It reassured me that we were heading in the right direction and with the right priorities. It accepted that we could not get all we wanted but that we could get some common agreement across both sides of the argument and with Brussels.

The problem is that the proposed agreement we heard about in the statement two weeks ago is quite removed from the Lancaster House speech and other speeches. The Attorney General says that there is no unilateral right for either party to terminate the backstop arrangement, or the protocol as it is

described in the legal advice. That is a great concern because it says that it is not in the United Kingdom's hands to determine when it actually leaves the EU, which is exactly what people thought they were voting for in 2016.

I listened to the Prime Minister's statement two weeks ago, and I was left with four concerns, which I have raised with the Attorney General—I am also meeting him tomorrow—and they rest with me. I am pleased for fishermen in my constituency that we are leaving the common fisheries policy, but it is not clear that this will lead to UK control of access to UK waters. No fisherman believes that we will not allow foreign fishermen to come into UK waters, but our fishermen believe that we should be the ones who decide when they do, where they do, what they catch and where they land it. I can see nothing in the withdrawal agreement that confirms that that will be the case. If we can address that issue, my local fishermen will be satisfied.

There is also a real risk to the integrity of the Union. I am clear that no part of this agreement should treat any part of the UK differently, and I will be looking for assurance from the Attorney General tomorrow that that is the case. Unfortunately, as my right hon. Friend the Member for North Shropshire (Mr Paterson) made clear, the belief is that parts of the UK will be treated differently—obviously, I am referring to Northern Ireland—and this really matters. People in Cornwall, who are proudly nationalist and believe in the integrity of Cornwall, also believe in the integrity of the UK, and they are as concerned as we are to see that Northern Ireland should not be treated differently.

We were also promised control of our own laws. What we would like to know is: when? When will the UK become a sovereign independent state, where we will be making our own rules and not be a rule taker? Is that at the end of the transition period or at the end of the backstop protocol time? It is important that we know the answer, because we do not know when that protocol will come to an end. I have been attending monthly international trade briefings and listening to people talking about what work has been done to begin conversations on trade deals. I have listened to the Prime Minister and others saying that we can strike new trade deals, but the reality is that although we can strike them and agree them, they cannot be implemented until we leave the EU properly. Is that at the end of the implementation period or at the end of the backstop?

I have no desire whatsoever to see further uncertainty. There are businesses in my constituency and right across the UK that really need to know what the future holds for them, and they want to know soon. I have no desire to prolong the agony and anxiety that many, many face, but we have a narrow opportunity, a narrow window, in which to get this right. I believe that we can get it right first time and that the vast majority in this House would support the deal if we could address the backstop, even if it meant having to consider a longer implementation period.

23:12:00

Chi Onwurah (Newcastle upon Tyne Central) (Lab)

This is often described as the most important decision this House has taken since the second world war, so it is an even greater privilege than usual to speak in tonight's debate. In making my remarks, I will try to be less divisive than the times in which we find ourselves, because these are very divisive times. Newcastle reflects that: we voted 49.3% to leave and 50.7% to remain. We reflect the diversity, division and commonality of the UK. When taking the metro from Newcastle airport to Byker, people travel through a reduction of 11 years in the average lifespan of those living nearby. The north-east is the only region to export more than it imports, and 52% of that goes to the EU as part of highly integrated, just-in-time supply chains. So we have stark inequalities and a regional economy integrated into Europe, but still we have strong remainers and committed Brexiteers. How am I to represent that?

We have to start with the most important thing about Brexit: what it tells us about our nation. The fact is that the Brexit voters won more than the Brexit vote: they won the right to be heard. Before Brexit, few were paying much attention to the views of people in council estates such as the one where I grew up; they had not gone to the right schools, and did not have the right jobs or the right vowels. The Brexit vote caught people's attention, and let me give one example of that. As shadow Minister for industrial strategy, I meet industry groups and lobbyists all the time. Before Brexit, they told me how much they contributed to the country, but they meant London. Now they tell me how much they contribute to the regions. They have started measuring it. That is the Brexit effect.

The right to be heard is a key battleground in the history of our country, and it is at the heart of the age-old division between those who labour in silence and those who speak from a gilded platform. We must recognise that, despite its many well-intentioned people, the European Union did not appear as a champion of the voiceless. I am vice-president of the Party of European Socialists, and I acknowledge that although European socialists have been responsible for hugely important achievements, from the social chapter to protecting the environment to ending mobile data roaming charges, Brussels never felt like a stronghold of socialists standing up for the voiceless—and that was before the financial crisis and the gospel of austerity championed in Brussels, even if its most enthusiastic choir was in David Cameron's Government.

Immigration is often cited as the key issue of the Brexit vote, and it is certainly one that was talked about very much on the doorstep. Labour has recognised that leaving the European Union means that free movement as it stands will come to an end, but I do not believe that that will make anyone here more prosperous or their jobs more secure. As an engineer, I worked all over the world, not taking other people's jobs but meeting skills needs and contributing to other cultures. I believe that, like sustainable trade, the right kind of skills exchange makes everyone richer. As shadow Minister for industrial strategy, I know that it was not immigration that betrayed the working people of Britain, but the laissez-faire economics that privileged the rich and the well connected. I will not support the further betrayal of my constituents by a Brexit deal that sacrifices their future prosperity for outdated and outmoded ideology, which is what the Prime Minister's deal would do.

British industry is integrated with Europe: we are part of supply chains that go back and forth across the North sea and the channel multiple times. These European supply chains cannot be replaced by American or African or Australian ones—the logistics and the costs are just too high. As an engineer, I know the challenges involved in creating proper, effective supply chains, and they cannot go backwards and forward across the Atlantic in the same way they do across the channel. The promises of the posh and privileged, who promised the world while hedging their own not inconsiderable assets, have misled people.

This deal dumps our industry out of the customs union within 24 months. It introduces barriers to our trade in services and creates legal uncertainty and regulatory mismatches with Europe. It undermines our science and innovation base and cuts off access to key talent. It therefore endangers our core industrial competitiveness and threatens the future of British industry and, as a consequence, the economic, physical and mental wellbeing of communities throughout the country, and especially my constituents.

I do not accept that the nation should be voiceless when it comes to what the deal is, so I will not accept that it is a choice between this deal and no deal. Only a general election can address the issues that drove the Brexit vote, and this Government, which is in office but not in power, should go to the country to set out their stall. If they are too scared, we should go back to the country in a public vote—one that I hope would include the voices of 16-year-olds.

The next few weeks—indeed, the next few days—are going to be very difficult for this country. No matter what the result of the vote next Tuesday, we will enter a period of uncertainty about both our short-term and long-term future and relationship with the European Union. Whatever that uncertainty brings and whatever debates follow on from that, I will insist that the interests of the people who sent me to Parliament, our values, our solidarity, our commitment to social justice and a more prosperous future, define not only the United Kingdom's future, but the future of our relationship with Europe.

23:19:00

Ben Bradley (Mansfield) (Con)

It is unfortunate that I rise to speak against the approval of this withdrawal agreement, which does not represent the best deal for the United Kingdom or fulfil the spirit of the referendum result. It ties us to EU rules and regulations for the long term while removing our ability to influence those rules. It ties us to a backstop arrangement that would create different circumstances for Northern Ireland compared with the rest of the UK and that we cannot leave of our own volition. It ties our hands to prevent us taking advantage of the full extent of independence over our international trade policy. For that reason, I feel that it is worst of all worlds; it is a state of purgatory, which, as the Attorney General made clear yesterday, has no fixed end point.

In her Lancaster House speech, the Prime Minister was clear: she said simply that we would seek to negotiate a bold and ambitious free trade deal with Europe that would also give us the ability to strike out around the world. She was honest with us, and did not pretend that this would have all the same benefits of full membership. We were leaving so things would have to be different, but we could still have a positive relationship built around free trade. She aimed to take back control of our money, our borders and our laws. She was quite right that those were at the heart of why people voted to leave. She said that no deal was better than a bad deal, and that if the EU would not give us something that worked for the whole United Kingdom, we could walk away and succeed on our own merits.

Looking back, it is hard to understand how we have ended up here, particularly when our manifesto in 2017 committed us to so much more. My Labour predecessor in Mansfield held the seat for 30 years, longer than I have been alive, but, more recently, the constituency has shown its appetite for change. Local people voted Conservative for the first time in 2017, sick of decades of representatives moaning about the past, but having no plan for the future. They also voted overwhelmingly to leave the EU in 2016, fed up with being forgotten by the establishment and eager to take back control of their destiny.

I am under no illusion that each of my constituents—in fact, most people in the country—have dissected the details and come to a conclusion on their preferred customs arrangements; some have, but the vast majority have not. That does not mean that they did not know what they wanted when they were voting. I have had this conversation on literally thousands of occasions now with local people who felt—to coin a phrase—that leave meant leave. It meant not being part of the institutions, not being tied to their rules, and not paying into their budgets. We were leaving, in the English dictionary sense, which is “to depart from permanently, to cease to be a part of” the European Union. I think that it is a fundamental misunderstanding by many, not just in this place, but out there, that it might be possible to make it look like leaving while actually seeking continuity. At Lancaster House, the Prime Minister did not phrase things in that way. She accepted that our relationship would change, that it would be a different and a looser one, and that it would give us

the freedoms that we wanted. At that time, I am fairly certain—and the votes back it up—that she had the support of the majority in this House for that kind of deal.

I draw the comparison, an overly simplistic one perhaps, between the referendum and a game of cards—a choice between stick or twist. Voters knew, and they were told each and every day throughout that campaign, of the risks of voting to leave. They were told all the horror stories. Things were overblown and exaggerated, just as they are now, but they voted to leave anyway, because the status quo does not work for them. In the choice of stick or twist, they opted for twist, recognising the consequences and the uncertainty, but wanting to take that risk in order to seek new and different opportunities. Having ticked a few boxes that looked a bit like leaving, they did not want to try to replicate the status quo; they wanted change, because they felt that the status quo did not work for them. We cannot deliver an outcome that meets the “spirit” of the referendum result if we remain tied, possibly indefinitely, to the institution that we promised to leave and if we compromise on all the things that mattered in that decision. It cannot be boiled down to a spreadsheet with data on economic forecasts; the decision was so much bigger than that. It was about the heart as well as the head; the outcome was for change.

Lilian Greenwood

I am listening with interest to one of my Nottinghamshire neighbours. When the hon. Gentleman's constituents voted to leave, does he think that they voted to be poorer, because we have heard that every Brexit scenario will leave people in Nottinghamshire poorer?

Ben Bradley

I thank the hon. Lady for her intervention. People did not see it in those terms. Part of the fundamental misunderstanding of the Government and of this House is that people saw it solely as an economic transaction. As I have just said, it was about more than that. Despite the forecasts and the doom and gloom that is discussed in this place and in the media, the vast majority of people who come to me—75% in local polling—say “Reject this deal and seek a looser relationship.”

Mr Paterson

Thinking about the previous intervention, does my hon. Friend agree that his constituents and mine were very sensible and completely ignored these ludicrous forecasts, which are all part of “Project Fear”? Our constituents have been bombarded with further utter nonsense forecasts this week, but they do not believe them; they see real opportunities for this country when we get our freedom back.

Ben Bradley

I totally agree. The more obscene these forecasts become, the less they are believed. My favourite was that we are all going to get super-gonorrhoea if we leave the European Union. This week, the story is that babies will die through milk shortage because of leaving the European Union. These are the stories that exist in the media, and people out there give them no credence or credibility. It was interesting to hear my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Beaconsfield (Mr Grieve) making many similar arguments earlier today. However, I would argue that the right conclusion is not a second referendum; it is to deliver on what we promised.

It is right that people are sick of this debate and want to get it done, but this proposal does not allow us to do that. Instead, the debate rolls on for another year or 18 months as we try to agree a future relationship. It offers little certainty to business and almost guarantees that we will be back here again in 2020, having an equally divisive and difficult debate. As it stands, the withdrawal agreement does not end the problem—far from it. The only way to truly get it done, put it in the rear-view mirror and get on with talking about a positive domestic agenda, which Opposition

Members have mentioned, is to accept that we cannot agree on a specific deal. Then we can go back and talk to the European Union about how to agree on all the things that we can actually agree on, including issues such as citizens' rights, security, travel and all the rest, and carefully manage a transition to World Trade Organisation terms.

The only way to have certainty at this point is to have a clean break. I would prefer us to seek a more positive free trade arrangement first and to be strong in that approach, because that is what we promised in our manifesto and at Lancaster House, but we should not fear leaving on the same terms that govern 98% of global trade. It may be true that better relationships can be agreed further down the line, with or without this withdrawal agreement, but our hand is most certainly strengthened by being true to the mantra laid out in the Lancaster House speech—no deal is better than a bad deal—rather than being held over a barrel throughout the coming year and being threatened with this backstop arrangement, as President Macron has already told us he will do.

After months of saying that it could not be done and it was impossible, the withdrawal agreement accepts in black and white that the Irish border situation can be resolved through technological solutions. It is a political problem, not a practical one, and again, we are better prepared for that debate if we leave and come at it from a position of strength.

The World Trade Organisation has been clear that its rules would not require a hard border, and HMRC on both sides has said the same. If the barrier to achieving this is a political one and the Prime Minister is right that there is no deal without the backstop, we have to take charge of that debate in the interests of the whole UK, put ourselves in the driving seat and say, "This is not acceptable, so how do we handle that no deal scenario, because we are not going to agree to something that is detrimental to the United Kingdom?" That is the only way to force the issue that currently dictates this entire arrangement, which has always been built around the problem, rather than around the positive outcomes that we all want to see. As my right hon. Friend the Member for North Shropshire (Mr Paterson), who has great experience of this issue, said earlier, customs has moved on. We have to embrace that, as does the EU.

This is a divisive issue and reaction is of course mixed. I have had constituents ask me to support the deal and to support remaining, but as I said to the hon. Member for Nottingham South (Lilian Greenwood), the overwhelming majority of my constituents—collaring me in the street, answering me on social media or writing to me—want us to be stronger and to agree a looser arrangement with the European Union that gives us the freedom that they sought.

We have to start from the premise that we are a free and independent nation seeking a trade deal with Europe as we laid out at Lancaster House, not from the position of seeking continuity with our existing arrangements as this agreement does. If we do that, and if we truly take back control and deliver on the referendum result, we would restore the brittle faith in democracy that led to that outcome in the first place. It would prove to people in constituencies like mine that the Government do listen and act on their decisions, and that they do have a voice. Brexit presents a huge opportunity to give people who have felt forgotten for a long time a chance to believe in government and to believe in a country that is proud, independent and embracing new opportunities across the whole world, but I regret that this withdrawal agreement cannot deliver that outcome.

23:29:00

Caroline Lucas (Brighton, Pavilion) (Green)

This debate goes to the very essence of what we want to be as a country—confident, compassionate and outward-facing, or fearful, inward-looking and isolated. All the major challenges that we face

today—the climate crisis, terrorism, the refugee crisis, cyber-crime—are trans-boundary, and so all of them would be far harder to address if we leave the EU. I therefore stand by my decision to campaign to remain in 2016, and still believe that the future will be brighter, fairer and greener inside the European Union.

I also stand by my vote against the Prime Minister's foolish decision to trigger article 50 before she and her Cabinet had even worked out what "Brexit means Brexit" actually does mean. At a stroke, that recklessness surrendered all leverage to the EU27, and it has resulted in the miserable, blindfold package that we have before us today, with its 26-page, 8,000-word wish list guaranteeing absolutely nothing about our future relationship with the EU. The Prime Minister urges us to "get on with it", as if accepting her plan would be the end of it, but let us be very clear: in reality, it is the starting gun for years of more negotiations and more political infighting, with uncertainty hard-wired into it.

Over the past two years, I have not seen any evidence that the Government understand or appreciate the importance of many of the amendments that many of us tried to make to the EU (Withdrawal) Bill, whether to do with upholding basic legal rights, trying to safeguard jobs, protecting freedom of movement and the Good Friday agreement, or enhancing the protection of our precious environment. Indeed, all the evidence I have seen, including the Government's own impact assessments, has simply confirmed to me that Brexit would make my poorest constituents, and the nation's poorest communities, poorer still. It would lead to a smaller Britain with less influence: borders closed, horizons narrowed. It would betray the hopes and dreams of young people, who overwhelmingly voted to remain. It is an unforgivable act of inter-generational betrayal. It puts our contribution to vital cross-border work on climate change and nature in jeopardy. It sees us abandoning what is frankly little short of a miracle that few would have dreamed possible when the bombs were raining down on British towns and cities in the middle of the last century. It helped us to emerge from the rubble and the destruction of the second world war into a nation that has been at peace with its neighbours ever since. With a supreme irony, the Prime Minister's package would also result in people having considerably less control over the decisions that affect their lives, not more.

In recent days, the Prime Minister has been admonishing MPs to think of our constituents when we vote on this deal. Well, I can assure her that I have been doing—and we have been doing—exactly that. I think of my Brighton constituents when I consider that every single economic impact analysis shows them being worse off as a result of any kind of Brexit. I think of them when I learn of a study by the local UK Trade Policy Observatory that concludes that her deal would cost at least 960 of them their jobs. I think of them when the leisure sector in the city reports how seriously it would be affected by the end of free movement. I think of them when the universities tell me how worried they are about the future of European research, their research grants, and the Horizon Europe programme. How does the Prime Minister have the gall to suggest that MPs are not thinking of our constituents in this debate? How dare she call on our constituents to unite behind her deal when she knows how much damage that deal will do to them and to their families?

For more than two years now, I have consistently said that the 2016 referendum was, and could only be, the start, not the end, of the democratic process. In 2016, voters could not, and did not, express any opinion on the terms on which the UK should leave the EU, because at that time the terms were completely unknown. That is why I believe the outcome of the negotiations must now be put before the public in a people's vote. That people's vote must give the option of remaining inside the EU, which every recent poll shows to be what a clear majority of voters now want. This is not about subverting democracy or seeking to overturn the referendum result; it is simply giving voters a proper say on important issues that were not put before them in 2016.

If it is still the will of the people to leave the EU in the light of what they know now, then that is what they will vote for in the people's vote. But if they decide that it would be better to stay in the EU, and reject the Prime Minister's deal, then the UK could continue as a member of the EU on the same terms as now, as the opinion from the Scottish courts has underlined today. I would put it to the Prime Minister that the will of the people is not fixed in stone. As she learnt to her cost last June, it can change and it does change. There were 25 months between the general elections of 2015 and 2017. Those 25 months were enough time for the Prime Minister to lose her majority, her mandate and her credibility. A longer time has elapsed—29 months—between the referendum of June 2016 and today. Every recent opinion poll shows that the will of the people has changed since then as well.

Brexit and the lies, false promises and cheating of the leave campaign in 2016 have unleashed forces that should worry us all, so I take seriously the charge that a people's vote could risk yet more division. But I have thought about this clearly, and I believe that nothing would be more divisive than the people of this country discovering the hard way that the Prime Minister's blindfold Brexit does not deliver the sunlit uplands that they were promised.

I want to say clearly that a people's vote is not about putting the clock back to 22 June 2016 or pretending that the last two years somehow never happened. Those Brexit voters who voted to leave because they believed the status quo is intolerable were right—it is. We are a country of grotesque inequalities. Far too many people are living in communities with proud histories that have been hollowed out by years of deindustrialisation and decades of neglect, compounded since 2010 by an ideologically driven assault on national and local public services under the name of austerity. Economic vitality has been drained from their neighbourhoods, and many feel hopeless and trapped

Last year's Social Mobility Commission report identified the 30 worst cold spots for social mobility, and it is no coincidence that every single one of those 30 places voted to leave. The lie at the heart of the leave campaign was that this downward spiral can be reversed by leaving the EU. The truth is that Brexit would make things much harder to fix, and we know that the real answer lies in far-reaching reform at home. We need a new social contract—better jobs, high-quality public services and investment in the green economy, with people of all backgrounds and communities treated with respect and given the opportunity and power to thrive. We need to ensure that the net economic benefit that people from the EU bring to this country is spent in those areas that experience the largest changes, on projects collectively decided by local people.

Those of us campaigning for a people's vote need to make clear our commitment to addressing the grievances aired during and since the 2016 referendum, to campaigning for far greater public investment in those regions that need it most and to working towards a Britain where people have a real say in the decisions that affect them.

In my last few words, I simply want to say that I reject the false choice presented by the Prime Minister between a catastrophic no deal and her miserable blindfold deal. That is no choice at all, and that is why we need a people's vote.

23:37:00

Rachel Maclean (Redditch) (Con)

It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Brighton, Pavilion (Caroline Lucas). I do not agree with her views, and I hope I will be able to explain why.

We have to start with the political reality of the House of Commons today. It is abundantly clear that there is no majority in this House for a no-deal Brexit. As someone who supports Brexit and wants to see it happen, I believe the Prime Minister was right to start by negotiating a deal. Those calling for her to walk away without negotiating a deal forget that it was always going to be extremely difficult, because of the diametrically opposing views on this issue that represent different value systems. These arguments cut across political parties, as we have seen in all the debates in this place.

It is clear from what I have seen in the House, as a Member of 18 months' standing, that the Opposition want to frustrate Brexit. They have made it clear that they would vote down any deal that the Prime Minister brings back, thereby ignoring the democratically expressed view of their constituents and mine. It is also clear that the majority of MPs do not support Brexit. I support Brexit, and I therefore believe that the calls for a second referendum are completely misguided. The divisions that exist on the Government and Opposition Benches are being exploited to stop Brexit, and I fear that that is where we are heading if we do not support this deal.

This deal has been criticised by Members on both sides of the House. It has been criticised by those who want us to remain and those who want us to leave without a deal. As I said, I support Brexit, but I am pragmatic, in the best traditions of my party. I deal with the world as it is, not as I would like it to be. I have that view because I spent nearly 30 years in business before coming to this place, and I recognise that we sometimes have to make compromises to get most of what we want. If we pursue perfection, we end up without anything.

I believe that there are of course risks of voting for this deal. We all heard the Attorney General yesterday, and he was perfectly honest and transparent about those risks. I am not naive about those risks, but I have to make a political judgment about how, if I vote down this deal, that carries more risks. I never said it would be easy to leave the EU—having spent 30 years in business, as I have said—but this is certainly not a reason to ignore the referendum result.

Those on all sides of this argument who sit outside the negotiation room find it incredibly easy to criticise the Prime Minister. I wonder how many of them would, in reality, do a better job. When I go out on the streets of Redditch, I find that there is a silent majority out in the country who admire the Prime Minister for what she has done, and they implore me to back her to provide certainty for the businesses in my town that employ my constituents and on which they depend for their livelihoods. The BBC World Service was in Redditch today, on the first stop of a nationwide tour, to interview people, and there was widespread support for the Prime Minister's deal on that programme.

Surely if the Prime Minister was motivated by narrow party political interests, she would have come to this House and said, "Let's support a no-deal Brexit". She knows that that would have had overwhelming support from our side of the House, as we have heard from colleagues. She has sought to strike a pragmatic balance and to take on board the views of Members on both sides of the House and the 48%, and I think she is absolutely right to do so.

We have heard a lot of criticism from people, but the people who criticise have not presented any sensible options to solve the intractable constitutional problems that face us due to the Northern Ireland situation, nor have they really paid due regard to the businesses that employ people and who welcome the certainty coming from this plan. A very good point about the WTO rules is that, if we were to leave on those rules and then seek to negotiate something else in the future, there would be two sets of rules that businesses in my constituency had to plan for. Here we have a plan that they can take on board and make plans for. It is a deal that presents us with certainty.

This is a divorce and it is messy. In such a situation, neither side gets what it wants, but given the uncertainty of events in this House of Commons, it strikes me that we are now faced with an incredibly clear choice. If we do not vote for this deal, the parliamentary arithmetic dictates that we cannot now leave without a deal. All scenarios mean chaos, political chaos, turmoil and further division, which would not be good for my constituents in Redditch at all.

This decision is far from simple, and I am aware that by making my decision I am going to disappoint many people. That is life in politics. But I have read all the documents, and I want to reassure my constituents that I have studied them carefully. I have listened to the debates. I have engaged with Ministers, and I have engaged with my constituents, local businesses and people on the street. I am not part of any faction or any group. I have made this decision and, hand on heart, I believe it is in the best interests of my constituents in Redditch and of the country. I offer the Prime Minister my support in voting for this deal, which I believe will deliver the Brexit that people campaigned for and voted for when they cast their vote.

23:43:00

Mr David Lammy (Tottenham) (Lab)

The European Union was once just a remarkable dream—a hope that our countries which fought and murdered each other on an industrial scale twice in one century could come together, a refusal to return to extreme nationalism and a determination to prevent more bloody conflicts in which tens of millions are killed. The audacious idea of European integration was motivated by fear, but it was made possible by shared ideals—democracy, human rights, equality and freedom—and a refusal to submit to the tyranny of fascism ever again.

After the second world war, Winston Churchill said in 1946:

“If Europe were once united in the sharing of its common inheritance there would be no limit to the happiness, prosperity and glory”.

Today, however, some Conservative colleagues talk about total independence from Europe as though it were a virtue. Let me remind them that Churchill understood the European dream is to build a whole that is bigger than the sum of its parts. He understood that it is about pooling sovereignty, working together and sharing control.

Let us now be honest with the country. Total independence is a fantasy. It is the same idea that motivates an angry teenager to run away from their family. Total independence means throwing a tantrum and ending up in the cold. Total independence is selfishness, individualism, arrogance, superiority, a refusal to work together and the breakdown of the common good. Total independence will lead to total isolation. Let us be honest: Britain did not become great in total isolation. Britain thrived by becoming the biggest treaty-signing power in the world, signing more than 14,000 treaties in the modern age. Britain thrived by sharing, not stockpiling our sovereignty. NATO membership compels us to deploy soldiers when our fellow members are attacked. The Paris climate accords demonstrate how we tackle global threats together, not alone. There is also our membership of the WTO, which commits the UK to supra-national regulation and arbitration. Sovereignty is not an asset to be hoarded, but a resource, which has value only when it is spent.

The hard Brexiteers in the House say that they want to take back the control that we lost because of the European Union. In reality, they are still mourning Suez, Britain’s last fling of the colonial dice.

Back then, Anthony Eden failed to recognise that Britain was no longer capable of launching a solo imperial adventure. Let us not fall for the same hubris today.

When those on the other side of the debate say that they want empire 2.0, let us ask what it means. What was imperialism? What was colonialism? At its worst, the British empire was exploitation and subjugation—moral superiority that led to putting humans in shackles and the oppression of black and brown people because this country thought it knew best. Those countries once coloured pink on the globe were not won in negotiations, but taken by force. Today, we need to build a new image of Britain, which brings this country together after years of division. We have to use our imagination. Empire 2.0 is not it.

After the global embarrassment of Suez, Britain became the sick man of Europe. The European Economic Community was set up in 1958, but Britain did not join until 1973. In those years, GDP per head rose by 95% in France, Italy and West Germany, while Britain grew by only half that rate. Our industry and economy had fallen behind. Europe gave post-imperial Britain a chance to regain some wealth and dignity. In the 40 years since, our economy grew faster than those of France, Germany and Italy.

We restored our position on the global stage, but it was not only our prosperity that increased. Our allies in the US respected us for our seat at the top table in Europe, and the rest of the world saw us become a confident nation again: a grown-up country, prepared to give and take for the greater good.

The Brexiteer promise to take back control in 2016 was nothing more than a deluded fantasy. It was a lie that divided friends and families, pandered to racism and xenophobia and caused an extra 638 hate crimes per month. What does it say about the United Kingdom when the UN sends rapporteurs to warn us of increased racism in our country? What does it say about Britain when our politicians play on the fear of migrants, races and religions to win votes? What did it say when Nigel Farage stood in front of a Nazi-inspired poster of refugees with the caption, “Breaking point”?

The founder of the Labour party, Keir Hardie, spoke of socialism’s “promise of freedom”, its “larger hope for humanity” and of

“binding the races of the earth into one all-embracing brotherhood”.

I honestly ask my good friends in the party who are still wavering: can you really vote for this politics of division and hate? Can you really vote to slash workers’ rights and protections? Can you vote to give tax avoiders a sanctuary? Can you vote to hand over more power to the clumsy hand of the market?

What I am about to say is not fashionable, but our country’s story of renewal through Europe is one of immigration. We grew as a nation because of free movement. European migrants are not “citizens of nowhere” or “queue jumpers” as the Prime Minister would have us believe. Young, energetic, diverse and willing to pay taxes, EU citizens have given so much. They have done the jobs that our own would not do. Around 3.8 million now live in Britain. Over their lifetimes, they will pay in £78,000 more than they take out.

The contribution of European migrants has not been just financial. Our culture, our art, our music and our food has been permanently improved. The Prime Minister’s deal has emerged as a Frankenstein’s monster—an ugly beast that no one voted for or wanted. To appease hardliners, the transition period can be extended to 2022 at most. That has eradicated our leverage—it is simply

not enough time to negotiate a free trade deal. We are now on course for another cliff edge. The deal does not take back control; it gives it away. It surrenders our voting rights on the European Council, the European Commission and the European Parliament for nothing in return. I cannot vote for any form of Brexit because every form of Brexit is worse for my constituents.

Brexit is a historic mistake. It forgets the lessons of Britain's past. It forgets the value of immigrants. It forgets that we cannot build a new empire by force. It forgets that in the modern world our nation will flourish not through isolation, but through connection, co-operation and a new vision for the common good. Brexit forgets why this continent came together after two bloody wars.

This country is crying out for a second chance. Seven hundred thousand people marched on the streets of London. Millions more campaigned online and wrote to their MPs. They are asking for one thing: an opportunity to right the wrong of 2016 and another shot at the imperfect but audacious European dream. As John of Gaunt says in Shakespeare's "Richard II":

"That England, that was wont to conquer others,

Hath made a shameful conquest of itself."

23:50:00

Martin Docherty-Hughes (West Dunbartonshire) (SNP)

I congratulate the right hon. Member for Tottenham (Mr Lammy) on his speech.

When it comes to Brexit, since 2016, everyone in this place has probably had their tuppence-worth to say on the Floor of this House. In that time, the most extraordinary statements have been made. Some, at the beginning of the debate, were on the side of a bus—or, as some of us where I come from would notice it, a coach. It seems that some folk in this debate do not know the difference between a bus and a coach. They have never been on a public bus in their life.

We had a former Brexit Secretary say on the Floor of the House that the industrial working class voted for Brexit. Well, Mr Speaker, my constituents rejected the proposition on the side of the bus/coach. As I said to the then Brexit Secretary on that very day, as I remember it, the industrial working class of West Dunbartonshire voted overwhelmingly to remain within the European Union. Not only did they reject Brexit, but they voted, surprisingly, to his knowledge, for Scotland to again become an independent sovereign nation. I mention that because there was a referendum process in 2014 where we discussed, for over two years, our place in the world. We were told that the only way to remain in the European Union was to remain within the United Kingdom. Well, there you go—that is another lie for everyone to see.

It would also seem that on Brexit this is a Government who have, as we would say in some parts of these islands, dingied Scotland. It is a Government full of dunderheads and indeed clypes. I would advise Hansard to get themselves a Geddes Scots dictionary. They have had since 2015 to get used to the idea.

Ministers of this Government who bring the issue to the Dispatch Box seem merely to haver about Brexit, unable to articulate a principled position on the greatest constitutional crisis faced in these islands since 1921. Again, I go back to that. If you do not know what I am talking about, pick up the modern history of Ireland found in the House of Commons Library. I seem to be the only person who has ever read it since it was brought into the Library in the 1960s.

I could not blame my constituents for coming to the necessary conclusion that the British Government were incapable of running a ménage, never mind the complexity of Brexit. It is a time in which the British Conservative and Unionist party has paraded its finest like some alternate Easter parade. There are not a lot of them here today, especially Scottish Conservative Members. We have seen Conservative Members who found the Brexit referendum so difficult they did not even participate in it. A former Minister found it unbelievable that there had at one point been a hard border—a British border—on the isle of Ireland. The lack of historical perspective is staggering. The lack of political acumen is profound.

The Prime Minister and I will not agree—we can both be assured of that—on next week's vote, but at least the Prime Minister, like those of us on the SNP Benches, has been consistent in her opposing positions. That cannot be said of those who brought us to this point. I would describe them, in that guid old Scots term, as sleekit, for off they went, and at the top of that list would be the former right hon. Members for Witney and for Tatton. This is a Parliament that they thought would take back control and they have handed it—as they scurried off to build their huts in the backs of their gardens—lock, stock and barrel to a bunch of free marketeer Brexiteers on the Government Benches and, would you believe it, to the other end of the corridor, to the unelected, unaccountable, as I have often said, bunch of warmers in the House of Lords? We could say that there is a flippancy to that comment, but how does it come about that the archbishops and bishops of the established Church of England should have more of a say on Brexit than the elected Parliaments of Scotland and of Wales and, if it should sit, the Assembly of Northern Ireland? It is a profound reversal of the devolution story in this Parliament, which many Members of this House participated in.

To be brutally honest, we on the SNP Benches are in no way surprised by this turn of events. The constitutional points include, for example, the backstop, which many Members from Northern Ireland have talked about. That is a privileged position, which the SNP would be delighted with—I know that some Members from Northern Ireland are not, but I congratulate them on it. However, it highlights the inability of the elected and sitting Parliament of Scotland—not just its Government, but its Parliament—to have a voice in these deliberations, for they continue to be ignored. This constitutional conundrum is further muddled by the private expression of the Electoral Commission on the dubious donation of over £435,000 to the Democratic Unionist party, which may have come about from a shadowy group known as the Constitutional Research Council, headed by the former chair of the Scottish Conservative and Unionist party—the very foundation of Brexit.

When I entered this House, Mr Speaker, I made it clear to you, for you were in the Chair when I gave my maiden speech—my first speech, should I say—that I was neither a Unionist nor a Home Ruler, and I am not. I believe in the independence of the nation of Scotland yet, even as a democrat in this House, I believe that the decision that we take next week will be based on a false premise, funded by dark money, challenging the very idea of fair elections and any future referendums. I am no conspiracy theorist. I was there when my constituents voted for independence, and I was there when they voted to remain within the European Union. I saw the ballots being counted, yet because of the issue of dark money, there are many Members, including me, who believe that the inability to investigate the involvement of dark money is not only an existential threat to democracy, but a real threat that weakens the democratic consensus that has been built since 1945.

Let me conclude by saying this to my constituents—they voted remain and many of them have asked me to be committed to a people's referendum. I will vote against the Government's motion next week, if a referendum motion is brought to this House, I will fully support it and I will campaign in my constituency for my country, Scotland, to remain within the European Union.

23:58:00

Paul Girvan (South Antrim) (DUP)

It is a privilege to take part in this debate. I must say that it might not have happened had the previous Prime Minister been able to come back with a deal from Europe. Unfortunately, Europe, being its usual intransigent self, would not give a deal on that occasion, so a referendum was called.

My constituency voted to leave. It did not vote for this withdrawal agreement. It voted to leave the customs union, the single market and the ECJ, but this withdrawal agreement does not address those matters, and it leaves Northern Ireland in a place it does not wish to be. Many people say they have heard business welcome the agreement. In Northern Ireland, many families gave sons to fight to remain part of this United Kingdom. What was not achieved by the IRA and republicanism and its adherents has been achieved by bureaucrats in Europe with a pen, and it will potentially leave Northern Ireland en route to a united Ireland. We will have no control over other Governments, and we will be rule takers, not rule makers.

Great emphasis was placed on protecting the Good Friday agreement. I never voted for the Good Friday agreement, but those who did did so on the basis of certain protections that were promised. The border between Northern Ireland and the Republic exists—it is there and present today—and those who say they did not see it obviously did not look. People there measure in kilometres; they use the euro; they tax at different rates; and they use state aid in a very imaginative way in the Republic of Ireland—and they tend to challenge us whenever we attempt to do likewise. That so-called border, which we put forward in our argument, could be dealt with using technology. That technology could be put in between Larne and Stranraer, between Belfast and Ardrossan, and at any other port—Liverpool, for instance; they could have all the associated issues and access all our ports using technology. I can only say that that technology could work between Newry and Dundalk without any difficulty.

But we are where we are, and the backstop proposed in this withdrawal agreement will do nothing but leave Northern Ireland out on the periphery. We will not be able to enjoy any of the advantages. We have heard the message that the Ulster Farmers Union has accepted this deal, but there are many areas in this. Should intervention be given to farmers from the United Kingdom and it is not in line with what Europe has agreed, or it is more than they would have received under the CAP—or the single farm payment, as it currently is—those farmers in Northern Ireland would not be able to access it, because it would be breach EU rules.

I agree that we have had many advantages from being members of the EU in relation to trade. The EEC, as it was when we joined in the 1970s, was never envisaged as the federal states of Europe that we see today trying to dictate to sovereign Governments around Europe. It has overstepped the mark in many areas, and that is one reason this nation voted to leave. When we voted in June 2016, a clear message came from Europe that it would not make leaving easy, and the same is evident today. It will not make this easy, and we are not at the end of the road yet; there is a long way to go.

I have listened to hon. Members around the Chamber say this evening that there is no stomach for a no-deal Brexit. That is correct—nobody appears to be happy with a no-deal Brexit—but something else is very clear: there are very few voices speaking in favour of this agreement. It has united those who want to leave, those who never wanted to leave and those who actually believe in a no-deal Brexit. It has united them all in opposition.

I can tell the House that that is how we will vote next Tuesday. My party and I will oppose this agreement because we believe that it has left Northern Ireland in a constitutionally vulnerable

position, irrespective of the assurances that we have been given. It has been said that the backstop will only be an insurance policy, but we will not accept an insurance policy that has no route out once we are in. Once we are there, we shall never be able to get out again, so we will oppose the withdrawal agreement on Tuesday.

Mr Speaker

Order. It would be desirable now for contributions to be reduced to seven minutes.

00:05:00

Mary Creagh (Wakefield) (Lab)

As we pass the witching hour, we are all still present and correct. I have never spoken in the Chamber after midnight. I feel that a pumpkin may appear, and some small mice may come out. Perhaps they come out later; I do not know how the pest control is doing. [Laughter.] That woke everyone up.

Let me begin with a French phrase. *Qui sème le vent récolte la tempête*: who sows the wind reaps the whirlwind. We are in this debate, in this position, in this Parliament, with no good options before us. We have only bad options and less bad options, after two years of negotiating what I believe has always been a fantasy Brexit. I think that David Cameron has a huge amount to answer for. He opened the Pandora's box of English nationalism with his promise of a referendum, and the genie cannot easily be put back in the bottle. The Europe issue has defeated every Tory Prime Minister since Edward Heath. Thatcher, Major and Cameron all left because of Europe, and I fear that this Prime Minister may well be undone by it as well.

Let me be clear: I will not be voting for the Government's draft agreement. I did not vote for a referendum; I voted to remain; and I was one of only three Labour MPs with leave seats who voted against triggering article 50. I feared that the Government had no idea what they were doing. I feared that they would call a general election and waste valuable negotiating time, and so it came to pass.

Let us not forget that that election was intended to crush the saboteurs. Members were called Luddites and people who wanted to disrupt democracy. However, the election did not crush the saboteurs. The election was tough, but it was not tough on those who, like me, opposed the Government's approach to Brexit. It was tough on the causes of Brexit: the years of austerity, the grinding poverty, the creaking public services, the endless belt-tightening for families, the explosion of food banks, the public squalor that we see with homeless people sleeping on our streets and the shrinking of the state. The electorate were tough on the Conservative party. The Prime Minister, as I had feared, wasted six months and lost her majority. Then she came back to this place and, in the Lancaster House speech, showed that she had learnt nothing, setting out red lines on leaving the customs union and the single market.

And so, one by one, like layers of onion peel, the promises of the Leave campaign have fallen away, leaving the people with tears, broken promises, and less trust in politicians than ever before. We have a political declaration with 585 pages, which is full of hope, exploration and best endeavours—full of warm words—but which signifies very little and which places the UK firmly as the weaker negotiating partner after we leave. We will be removed from all EU databases, and we face the prospect of a backstop border in the Irish sea.

Minutes were issued after the European Council's approval of the withdrawal agreement—the so-called interpretative declaration. Rather like the Prime Minister, who has to come and translate

everything for the House of Commons, the European Council has had to translate what that really means for Spain and Cyprus. According to the declaration, article 184 of the withdrawal agreement states only that we should use our best endeavours to cover the territories named in article 3. What are those territories? They are Gibraltar, the Cyprus sovereign bases and Britain's overseas territories. We will use our best endeavours, but there are absolutely no guarantees in law that those territories will be covered in the withdrawal agreement, and, effectively, Spain has a veto over Gibraltar.

I am concerned that our environmental obligations are at risk of being breached, and the Government now have an unprecedented constitutional and administrative task before them. They have passed just five of the 13 Acts of Parliament they need to enact before Brexit. They have 700 statutory instruments, just 45 of which have gone through Parliament, and goodness knows what faces us when we come back in the new year.

This morning at 10 o'clock, I chaired the Environmental Audit Committee and we heard from the chemicals industry about the fact that it has spent half a billion pounds registering some 6,000 chemicals with the EU's chemical database, and the Government are now expecting it to spend a similar amount re-registering the same registrations all over again with the Health and Safety Executive, which has no experience with public health or the environment. I am delighted to see the environment Minister in her place.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Dr Thérèse Coffey)

The HSE is already very experienced. It is the competent authority on behalf of the European Chemicals Agency, or ECHA, in this country, but would the hon. Lady prefer that the future UK chemical regulation system did not have the information on which the ECHA is currently reliant?

Mary Creagh

Perhaps the Minister should take the time to meet the chemicals industry and listen to its concerns. It described Ministers' approach to this problem not so much as strategic, but as being a view from the moon as it is so far away from the reality it is facing. I exhort the Minister to read the Hansard transcript. The intellectual property of the ECHA database is the subject of a great deal of argument and legal concern. I exhort her to read the details of what we heard this morning.

We have been calling for a new environmental Bill. We do not want to go back to being the dirty man of Europe, and we know that 80% of the UK's environmental laws originate from the EU. They mean we bathe on cleaner beaches, drive more fuel-efficient cars and can hold the Government to account on things like air pollution. We are still waiting for the draft environment Bill; it is a bit like waiting for Godot—we never know quite when it is going to turn up, a bit like with the waste and resources strategy, which we are also waiting for.

These EU environmental laws such as the chemicals database cannot simply be cut and pasted into UK law. The Minister's Department is setting up this new chemicals database. This is the foundation industry on which British manufacturing, aerospace motoring and electronics are based and it is at risk because of what is happening.

Dr Coffey
indicated dissent.

Mary Creagh

The Minister shakes her head: she is wrong; read the Hansard. These regulations are brought to life when they are held by regulators, the Commission and the ECJ and backed up by sanctions, and the Minister's proposals do not allow stakeholders and the public to have a say in which chemicals are approved and which are not.

The cakeism, the cherry-picking and fudge before the summer will not work as we head into winter. We are promised this brave new world of free trade areas, but what the Prime Minister does not tell people is that it means less free trade with our nearest neighbour, it means shrinking our economy, and it means a backstop down the Irish sea.

For the past 40 years, we have worked together with our partners and allies to develop great social and environmental standards, and the EU has been the longest and most successful peace process the world has ever seen. There is no deal the Prime Minister can do that is as good as what we have now, and we are living in strange days when we have three votes—[Interruption.] I have listened to the Under-Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union, the hon. Member for Daventry (Chris Heaton-Harris) and others on the Government Front Bench—[Interruption.] Calm down. We have had three defeats for the Government today, and we are going through the motions. We know this deal is going down. My constituents in Wakefield were promised something totally different. The Government are unable to deliver on their promise. That is why we need to put this decision back to the people before they pay the price.

00:13:00

Catherine McKinnell (Newcastle upon Tyne North) (Lab)

The importance of this debate and the votes that might follow cannot be overestimated. They are significant not just to those avidly following every twist and turn of this debate—and good morning to those who might be still watching—but to those who are fed up of discussing Brexit, and even more so to our children, young people and future generations. So it is no wonder that I have been inundated with emails and correspondence from constituents, some asking me to vote against the agreement because it does not deliver the Brexit they feel they were promised and who believe a no-deal outcome would be preferable. I do not share that analysis. Due to the projected dire impact of a no-deal Brexit on almost every aspect of our everyday lives, I am not clear how any Member of Parliament could even consider that to be an option. I also refuse to hold such low ambitions for our country and future generations of being able just to survive the next few years, if not decades—or however long it is that the hard Brexiteers now state it will take us to start feeling the benefits of leaving the EU.

I know the economy was not the only driving factor behind the vote in June 2016, but all the parliamentary sovereignty in the world will not make up for rising unemployment, reduced living standards, falling productivity and lost opportunities, not least in regions such as the north-east, which has been thrown on the economic scrapheap too many times before.

A small number of constituents have asked me to vote in favour of the withdrawal agreement, as they believe it is the best offer available to us after the Prime Minister's efforts, and they are understandably concerned about the prospect of crashing out of the EU given the Government's insistence that those are the only two options before us. I recognise that the Prime Minister has had an impossible task in trying to deliver on the totally unachievable set of pledges made by others, but that is no reason for her to continue ploughing on regardless, given what is at stake for our country.

I simply do not accept that we face a binary choice between this deal and no deal at all, because it is increasingly clear that driving off the cliff is not an inevitability. Parliament can stop the bus before

we drive over the edge. Parliament is sovereign. That view is shared by the overwhelming majority of the large number of constituents who have asked me to vote against the withdrawal agreement next week, and to continue to work to ensure that the final decision on how we proceed as a country is put back to the British public via a people's vote. That is the approach I intend to take.

I cannot support this agreement because it is a fudge, and serves only to emphasise that negotiating an arrangement better than or equivalent to the one we already have, as members of the EU, just cannot be done —despite the bombastic pledges of the former Brexit Secretary that he would deliver “the exact same benefits” of our current membership.

We are giving up those benefits for an agreement that the Government admit will leave every nation and region of the UK poorer. We must have the only Prime Minister and Chancellor in living memory who actively pursue a policy they know will damage the economy of their own country. There will of course be no Brexit dividend, and therefore no additional funding for our public services. Meanwhile, we will be subject to EU rules with no say over how they are made in future—so much for “taking back control”.

The withdrawal agreement also fails to deal with several pivotal issues, such as the Northern Ireland border. Crucially for thousands of businesses in the north east, and the hundreds of thousands of good, skilled jobs they provide, it offers absolutely no certainty about our future relationship with the EU, nor the frictionless trade and easy access to European markets that our manufacturing and services firms require.

Members are being asked by the Prime Minister to vote for a blindfold Brexit, with no idea of what happens beyond the transition, while also being subjected to the most ridiculous peddling of misinformation by the Government, desperately trying to persuade us all that this fudge is what the country really wants. As I said to the Prime Minister earlier in the debate, if the Government are so convinced that the withdrawal agreement is what the country wants, why not go back to the British public and ask them if they support it, instead of resorting to propaganda campaigns? This is not about trying to rerun the 2016 referendum; it is about asking people to confirm, now that a Brexit deal is on the table, whether it is what they want for their country, their economy and their families. Or would they prefer to remain in the EU on the terms that we already have?

It is evident that there is no majority in the House for the Prime Minister's deal, or for a no-deal outcome. After much deliberation, I have come to the conclusion that the most constructive, democratic and realistic way out of this deadlock is to put the issue back to those who started the process in 2016 to make the decision on how we proceed. We should give the decision back to the people in a people's vote.

00:19:00

Tommy Sheppard (Edinburgh East) (SNP)

The people of Scotland did not vote for Brexit. In 2016, 62% of them rejected the proposal, and that figure would be higher today. Their judgment then was that Brexit was bad for them, and that is their judgment now. If anyone doubts the veracity of that conclusion, they need only to look for evidence in the pages of the withdrawal agreement we are discussing today. This is a bad deal, and I will vote against it for four reasons.

First, this deal will make the people that I represent poorer. Not overnight, not all at once, and not dramatically, but slowly, steadily and surely, it will make them less well off as it drives down living

standards and drives down the money available for public services; and as is so often the case, the people at the bottom of the economic ladder will be disproportionately hit as that happens.

Secondly, I will not vote for the withdrawal agreement because it will prevent people from elsewhere in Europe from coming to live and work in my country and it will threaten its economic prosperity. Thirdly, I will not vote for it because of the backstop for Northern Ireland, which places Scotland at a clear material disadvantage, both for our existing businesses seeking access to the European market and for future investment. Fourthly, I will not vote for it because it represents our political and cultural diminishment, as a result not only of withdrawing our European identity but of making a country that aspires to be outward looking and that celebrates its diversity and inclusivity subject to the new model empire mark 2.

Those are things that I reject, but the good news is that even the dogs in the street know that this deal will not pass, next Tuesday. So the real question is this: how can it be that, after 30 months, this Government have come to this Parliament with a package of proposals that only the people on their own payroll, and those who aspire to be on it, will support? The answer to that question lies in the process that has been adopted. As others have remarked, it lies at the heart of a Government who have decided to look internally to the divisions in their own party rather than looking outwards across the party to try to build consensus in the country. That is why we are in this situation.

This is a masterclass in how not to do politics, and at its heart is a fundamental disrespect for those who hold an alternative opinion. Almost as soon as the results came in, the narrowest of results—52 to 48—was seized upon by the victors as though it had been a landslide. Their triumphalism was embarrassing. There was no magnanimity in victory, no olive branch, no bridge building. Instead, the views of almost half the population were excised from the story, but when it comes to how this Government have dealt with the Government of Scotland, disrespect has plumbed new depths.

In December 2016, the Scottish Government put forward a clear and workable compromise proposal that many across this House now regard as the thing that they should be going for. It said that we should stay in the customs union and the single market while leaving the European Union, but it was not even taken seriously. It was treated with contempt. Then, when we said, “Okay, if we cannot persuade the UK Government of the benefits of this economic integration, at least give Scotland the powers to have a differentiated relationship with the European Union that recognises a different economic imperative and a different will of the people who live there.” That also was rejected. Worse, in fact: it was treated with contempt.

Those of us who put forward that view were derided and castigated. Our motives were questioned. We were accused of malintent. In fact, we were told that this was a Trojan horse for independence, and that that was the only reason we were suggesting such a thing. The opposite is actually true. It is the rulers of this United Kingdom who refuse to recognise its diversity, who will do more to hasten its demise than I ever could. We now have a situation in which, for the first time since the post was recreated in 1885, the Secretary of State for Scotland is arguing for the material disadvantage of the territory that he represents in Cabinet.

What is to be done about this sorry state of affairs? Well, the old adage is that when you find yourself in a hole, stop digging. The most important thing that we can do is to reject the proposals in front of us and then clear the decks, as the change to the Standing Orders now allows, to consider better alternatives. It is crystal clear that the alternative is not to leave without a deal, but not to leave at all, because that is the best way of aiding the prosperity of the people we represent, both now and in the future. If that takes a people’s vote, a new referendum or a general election to get the mandate to organise a new referendum, so be it. Those who suggest that to say that is somehow to

betray the people and to try to put this Parliament above the electorate do a great disservice to democracy, because no one is talking about this Parliament overriding the result of the referendum. We are talking about the people overriding the result of a referendum from three years previous, and people in a democracy have the right to change to change their mind.

Finally, many people in Scotland have learned from this experience. A great many more than before have come to the view that Scotland's views will never get the respect that they deserve while we remain in this Union of the United Kingdom. Many more people are now open to the prospect of Scotland becoming an independent country. I do not say that they would vote yes tomorrow, but I know from campaigning last weekend that there are many for whom it is now an open prospect. Many people believe that if they want to live in a progressive society at home, one which looks outwards and plays its role in the world, they should take back control themselves.

00:26:00

Fiona Onasanya (Peterborough) (Lab)

At this time of year, we all recall the age-old saying that it is better to give than to receive. However, that should not have been the Prime Minister's approach when negotiating the deal. In my humble opinion, we have given so much, yet received so little. The shambolic Brexit negotiations have gone on for too long. From an indefinite backstop and extended transition period to the lack of mention of state aid, workers' rights or environmental protections, I am worried that the lack of attention given to such matters means that the Government's idea of post-Brexit Britain is quite simply a race to the bottom.

While figuring out how to leave the EU is unquestionably complex, the Prime Minister appears to have failed on her own terms. When in these negotiations was the Prime Minister being "a bloody difficult woman"? It is evident that the priority has always been surviving instead of striving, which ignores many of the reasons why people voted to leave. The Prime Minister and the Government have had more than enough time to negotiate, but they have brought my constituents chaos, a raft of Cabinet resignations and a botched deal that many people who voted to leave do not feel takes back control. In fact, according to YouGov only 20% of the British public actually support this half-baked deal, and it would not surprise me if only 20% of the Prime Minister's Cabinet do as well.

We need the best possible deal, but the Prime Minister is insisting that it is her deal or no deal, neither of which we accept. We cannot have a choice between a hurriedly cobbled together calamity or nothing. That is not how this should work. This Government needed to put forward a decent, appropriate plan so that Members could unify. Instead, they made the empty threat of no deal. Supporting a bad deal would involve conceding to a political hoax designed to pressurise rather than persuade. This Government have not even prepared for the possibility of no deal. As just one example, 11 of the 12 critical IT projects needed at the border in the event of no deal will not be completed in time for March 2019.

A no-deal Brexit would be catastrophic, and the Government do not have the right to plunge our country into chaos because of their own failures. It would be politically unsustainable for this Government to deliver a no-deal Brexit without the consent of Parliament. Our constituents were essentially asked a simple question: "Would you like a divorce, yes or no?" They answered the question, but they did not have the details. They did not know in the terms of the divorce who would have the children, who would get the house and how the assets would be split. That is the detail we have been discussing in this place.

It is becoming increasingly clear that this deal is a damning indictment of the Government's failure to negotiate a deal that will help us prosper post-Brexit. My constituents voted to leave the EU so, if we are going to launch into this vast, open space, we must have a parachute. We must ensure we are prepared for a safe landing.

As we leave the EU, we must tackle the burning injustice of poverty and make Britain a country that works for everyone. I am struggling to see how what appears to be a chaotic attempt at scrambling support for agreement to a deal can be a catalyst for genuine progressive change for this country and for my constituents.

00:31:00

Dr Philippa Whitford (Central Ayrshire) (SNP)

What we are really discussing here is a blind Brexit, because what we have is a withdrawal agreement and six and a half pages on a future deal that have now been padded out to 26 pages. I find it strange that the economic analysis did not include this deal. It included the Chequers have-your-cake-and-eat-it deal, which is not what we are voting on.

My constituency has an airport and an aerospace campus at one end that will be hit by the loss of the single aviation market, by the loss of just-in-time supply chains and by coming out of the European Aviation Safety Agency, which allows local maintenance, repair and operations firms to sign off planes to fly in Europe and licenses aviation engineers.

At the other end we have pharmaceuticals, which again will suffer from losing just-in-time supply chains, but they will also suffer from leaving the European Medicines Agency and the European Chemicals Agency, and from losing jobs that come from lot release quality control that must be carried out inside the European Union.

Hilary Benn
rose—

Dr Whitford

Sorry, I thought the right hon. Gentleman was trying to intervene. He is confusing me. It is a bit late at night.

One of the other industries in my constituency is fishing, which is always held up as the great beneficiary of Brexit, but in my constituency the catch is dominated by langoustine and lobster, 85% of which goes to the EU, and every few hours of delay decreases its value. The problem for the industry is that fishermen from Northern Ireland, much as they do not want the benefit, will be able to fish in the same waters and have direct and swift access to the single market through the south of Ireland. They also will not face tariffs on processed fish. That will hit smoked salmon, which is not just Scotland's biggest food export but the UK's biggest food export. We are talking about tariffs ranging from 5% to 16%. We will lose our advantage over Norwegian salmon.

Yet the real problem of the fishing industry, which is that the vast majority of quota is held tightly by very few companies, will not be fixed by this. In Scotland 80% of boats share 1% of quota, and in England 77% of boats share 3% of quota, while a handful of firms own the majority. An additional issue in England is that huge amounts of quota have been sold to Dutch and Spanish companies. It is not Europe doing that, and it is not the common fisheries policy; it is because this place has never cared about fishing. Up until now, fishing has always been expendable, but it has always been a very useful ploy around Brexit.

One other thing that has been missing for us, coming up to making this decision, is that the Government analysis claims that the economic impact will be minimal if there is no change to immigration. That is funny, because the Prime Minister has put all her effort into creating a hostile environment, just to drive European immigration down. The Government's own economic assessment shows that European immigration contributes at least 2% to GDP and the migration report showed that these people contribute more than £2,300 a head more to public finances. They help our economy, as well as our public services and our communities. In Scotland, we need people, for our demographics and our economic growth, and we welcome them. That is why we need control of immigration, because if the Government's plans to set a threshold of £30,000 go ahead, three quarters of the European citizens here now would not qualify, and the impact across public services would be immense. The failure in 2016 was to fail to talk about the benefits of Europe and what these people contribute to our workforce in public services, particularly health. Health is not delivered by machines in hospitals; it is delivered by people—healthcare workers and social care workers. They do not earn more than £30,000. Junior nurses, careworkers and even junior doctors do not earn more than £30,000. Some 150,000 of them look after us when we are sick.

We have also had the opportunity to carry a European health insurance card that has allowed even people on dialysis to travel to Europe. You tell me: what is the price of health insurance that will cover that? The card has allowed our pensioners to retire to the sun, where they have paid no tax but they have been able to transfer their rights. The European Medicines Agency has not increased bureaucracy; it decreased it, by creating a single licensing system. The Government talk about replacing research money, but research is not just about funding; it is about collaboration. You cannot sit in a muddy field on your own and call it collaboration. We are only going to lose. We lose the public health drive and pressure that we have had from Europe. We lose that collaboration, and we lose both the academic and medical research. Earlier, one MP, perhaps it was the right hon. Member for Uxbridge and South Ruislip (Boris Johnson), was dismissing concerns about radioisotopes. It is funny that the president of the Royal College of Radiologists is concerned about access to radioisotopes. The UK does not manufacture them. Molybdenum has a half-life of 66 hours and we have to import it from elsewhere. Until now, since the loss and crisis in 2009, the Euratom Supply Agency has managed that supply. It will be diminishing as these old reactors go offline and we will be outside begging to have the chance, "Can we please have enough technetium for our patients?" These are the things that we are going to lose.

Patrick Grady (Glasgow North) (SNP)

Of course we are already starting to lose these things. Are the academic institutions and the health institutions my hon. Friend talks about not already having to make plans? People are not coming to this country, goods are not coming to this country and academic research is not coming to this country, and that is before Brexit even hits.

Dr Whitford

We already know that there has been a 90% drop in the number of European nurses coming here, and 14% of European doctors in Scotland and 19% of them in England are already in the process of leaving, with many more considering it. So people right across the spectrum are already considering leaving or are already leaving. The problem is that we are the losers, given what they have contributed.

My constituents and I voted clearly to remain, as did voters across Scotland, and we still wish to remain and we will still fight to remain. The Prime Minister kept saying, "It is my deal or no deal", but now she has changed her tune. She now says, "It is my deal, no deal or no Brexit." We will take no Brexit thank you very much. But as my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh East (Tommy

Sheppard) pointed out, what we have seen in the past two and a half years, when the Prime Minister refers to the precious Union, is actually the utter contempt she holds for Scotland. I can tell the House that that has been seen from Scotland. What has been shown is the democratic deficit and the fact that the only way to control your own future is to be in control of your own future. Scotland will be making that decision, as well as supporting staying in the EU.

00:39:00

Paul Blomfield (Sheffield Central) (Lab)

May I begin, Mr Speaker, by congratulating you on your stamina staying in the Chair for more than 12 hours now? I welcome the right hon. Member for North East Cambridgeshire (Stephen Barclay) in what I think is his first outing in his new role as Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union. I notice that there is a rapidly diminishing tenure for those in the post—the first Brexit Secretary lasted 24 months and the second five months—so I hope that the new occupant of the post can at least make it through to oral questions on Thursday.

It is a privilege to give the winding-up speech for the first of five days of debate on the Government's withdrawal agreement, and to do so on a day on which Parliament has asserted its sovereignty so dramatically. Today's debate has confirmed that the Government have forged a remarkable consensus on one thing at least: opposition to their deal, which fails not only Parliament but the British people.

Labour campaigned to remain in the European Union because we believed it to be in the economic and political interests of our country and of the continent that we share and will continue to share, and for all the reasons that were set out so powerfully by my right hon. Friend the Member for Leeds Central (Hilary Benn). But we accepted that we lost the referendum, which is why we voted to trigger article 50, setting the clock ticking. The past two years, though, have been squandered, as negotiations with the EU27 have taken second place to those between the warring factions in the Conservative party—and the country is paying the price.

It did not have to be like this. The hon. Member for Altrincham and Sale West (Sir Graham Brady) made the point that the Prime Minister has worked hard over the past two years and won respect from many in the country. That is a fair point, but working hard is not enough. The problems that she faces now are the result of the decisions that she has taken. At the outset of this process, we urged the Prime Minister to reach out to the majority in Parliament who would have supported a sensible Brexit, by acknowledging and saying that the people had voted to leave the European Union, but by the closest of margins. I was bewildered to hear her question the legitimacy of the 1975 referendum because one third of people voted against remaining in the EEC, while she is seeking to deliver this damaging Brexit on a result that split the country down the middle.

The 2016 referendum gave a mandate to end our membership of the European Union, but not to rupture the relationship with our closest neighbours, our main trading partner and our key allies. If she had said two years ago that she would seek a deal that reflected that position, and that was right for people's jobs and their livelihoods—in a customs union, close to the single market, and in the agencies and partnerships that we have built together over 45 years—she could have secured a majority in Parliament, and she could have united the country that was so deeply divided by the referendum. And the Northern Ireland border would not have been an issue.

Our amendment sets out the position that the Prime Minister should have taken. Instead, she let the demands of the management of Conservative party shape her agenda. She set her red lines and she boxed herself in, and the result is this doomed deal that pleases nobody, as the right hon. Member

for North Shropshire (Mr Paterson) demonstrated so powerfully. The deal fails the six tests that Labour set for it at the outset. I remind Government Members that those tests were based on the Government's own goals. They were tests that the Prime Minister looked at and said were reasonable, and that she was "determined to meet."

One thing has changed since the deal was struck, and that is the Government's narrative. A little honesty is finally breaking out. Those who spent the past two years endlessly repeating the mantra that no deal is better than a bad deal are now arguing that this bad deal should be accepted, because the alternative is no deal, which they rightly say would be a catastrophe. We, as an Opposition, will work with the overwhelming sensible majority in this House to prevent that happening. We welcome the amendment passed by this House and moved by the right hon. and learned Member for Beaconsfield (Mr Grieve), which provides a framework for ensuring that.

Even more significantly, the Government's narrative has changed because claims that the country will be more prosperous as a result of Brexit have been abandoned, and rightly so, not least because this deal fails to provide the frictionless trade that we were promised. The Government have confirmed that we will be economically worse off to varying degrees under every Brexit option, and it was a point made by my right hon. Friend the Member for Derby South (Margaret Beckett) in another very powerful contribution. Instead, the Government argue that this deal should be accepted on the basis that failing to deliver on the 2016 referendum would have serious social and political consequences, and it is a serious point that should not be lightly dismissed, but they should recognise that there will be more serious consequences if Parliament votes for a damaging Brexit on a false prospectus. The public will not forgive politicians who do that. This deal fails not just the 48%, but the 52%, too.

As they have discarded the idea of a brighter economic future, the Government say that the deal deserves support because it delivers on the other pledges, particularly to take back control of our borders. Indeed, that is top of the Government's "40 reasons to back the Brexit deal" on their website. But the expectations unleashed by the rhetoric of "taking back control" are a long way from the reality. The Government have had complete control of non-EU migration for the past eight years and, in every one of those years, net migration from outside the EU was higher than from within it. As last week's figures from the Office for National Statistics show, falling immigration from the EU, because people no longer wish to come, has simply been replaced by non-EU immigration hitting a 14-year high. On the central issue, the Home Secretary said this week that we are unlikely to see the Government's plans before next Tuesday's vote. The long-promised White Paper has been delayed beyond then and it is a disgrace.

On other issues, the Brexit blindfold is tightening, too. Let us take fishing where the rhetoric of being an independent coastal state is not matched by the reality of the new deals that will need to be struck to ensure that we continue to have access to the European markets that buy 80% of the UK's catch—another issue kicked down the road. However, the political declaration kicks so much down the road. It offers no certainty and it opens the door to a hard and damaging Brexit. A document that we were promised would be "detailed, precise and substantive" setting out clearly our future relationship with the EU is nothing of the sort. After two wasted years, we have no clear picture of our future relationship, as the right hon. Member for Broxtowe (Anna Soubry) pointed out. This is a blindfold Brexit. The Government are asking Parliament to take the country over a cliff with no clarity on the safety net, and we will not do it.

00:49:00

The Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union (Stephen Barclay)

I thank the hon. Member for Sheffield Central (Paul Blomfield) for his kind welcome and join him in congratulating you, Mr Speaker.

In my first speech as Secretary of State, I am grateful to be able to close the first day of this historic debate, although at this time of the morning it feels like I may be close to opening the second. Let me begin by paying tribute to the work of my predecessors, my right hon. Friends the Members for Haltemprice and Howden (Mr Davis) and for Esher and Walton (Dominic Raab). Both are hugely respected figures in this House who worked tirelessly in the role of Secretary of State, and I thank them for the significant contributions they made over the past two years. In perhaps a rare moment of agreement with the Leader of the Opposition, may I also recognise the longevity and endurance of the right hon. and learned Member for Holborn and St Pancras (Keir Starmer) over the past two years? In closing today's debate, I will of course address as many points made by colleagues across the House as possible but, before doing so, I want to take a moment to underline just how far we have come.

At the start of this negotiation, the Prime Minister was told that we faced a binary choice between Norway and Canada, that the whole withdrawal agreement would be overseen by the ECJ, that we could not share security capabilities as a third country, that we would be required to give the EU unfair access to our waters and, moreover, that she would not get a deal at all because of the needs of the 27 different member states. And yet we have a deal. The Prime Minister has achieved concessions on all these things, and as my right hon. Friend said earlier, these are not just negotiating wins; these are real changes that will improve the livelihoods of people up and down the country. They reflect the bespoke deal secured, not the off-the-shelf options that were initially offered.

It is not the British way to put ideological purity above the practicalities of good government. During the negotiations, Her Majesty's Government did make compromises in order to secure the bigger prize of a deal that delivers on the referendum result while protecting our economic ties with our main market of Europe. I want to confront head-on the notion that there are other options available. What is agreed, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Basingstoke (Mrs Miller) acknowledged, is the only deal on the table. It is not perfect, but it is a good deal.

The deal recognises our shared history and values, and provides the framework for our future economic and security relationship. It will ensure that the 3.5 million EU citizens living in the UK and the nearly 1 million Britons living in the EU have their rights assured and can carry on living as they do now, and it will also benefit businesses and public services such as our NHS. It stays true to the wishes of all Members to co-operate closely with the EU on security, and the desire to restore our status as an independent trading nation, as recognised on the first page of the political declaration.

I recognise that there are parts of the deal that displease colleagues across the House, but this deal is a choice between the certainty of continued co-operation, the potentially damaging fracture of no deal and, indeed, the instability of a second referendum vote. To those colleagues who say, "Go back again. Another deal will be offered", I say that this ignores the objections already voiced within the EU at the concession secured by the Prime Minister, and the likely demand for more from the UK that would be heard in European capitals. Rejecting this deal would create even more uncertainty at a time when we owe it to our constituents to show clarity and conviction.

Let me come to some of the so-called alternatives that some colleagues have raised in the debate. Membership of the European economic area would require the free movement of people, the application of EU rules across the vast majority of the UK economy, and potentially significant

financial contributions—conditions that simply would not deliver on the result of the referendum. The Canada option would mean a significant reduction in our access to each other's markets compared with that which we currently enjoy, and reduced co-operation on security. And the WTO option, under a no-deal scenario, would mean that we lose the crucial implementation period, which allows businesses and citizens time to adapt, we lose the guarantees for UK citizens in the EU, we lose our reputation as a nation that honours its commitments and we lose our guarantee of negotiations on an ambitious future relationship with the EU.

The only way to guarantee our commitments to prevent a hard border in Ireland at the end of the implementation period is to have a backstop in the withdrawal agreement as an insurance policy. The same will be true for a Norway deal or—as the Chair of the Exiting the EU Committee, who is in his place, pointed out—for a Canada deal. There is no possible deal without a legally operative backstop. We must never forget the importance of ensuring that the people of Northern Ireland are able to continue to live their lives as they do now, without a border.

Let me turn to a number of the contributions made by colleagues across the House. My right hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge and South Ruislip (Boris Johnson) started his remarks by pointing out—[Hon. Members: “Where is he?”] I appreciate that he is not in his place, but he started his remarks by stating that he was “standing with Tony Blair”. I gently suggest to my colleague that, if he is standing with Mr Blair, he is standing in the wrong place.

My hon. Friend the Member for Altrincham and Sale West (Sir Graham Brady) spoke of the importance of the certainty and time to prepare that the implementation period offers to businesses, and the importance of the country now moving forward. I very much agree with him.

The right hon. Member for Derby South (Margaret Beckett), who voted to trigger article 50, noted the importance of respecting the referendum result. When she commented on the fact that the business community wants us to support the deal, I think that she spoke for many businesses up and down the country. The right hon. Member for Leeds Central (Hilary Benn) pointed out the limitations of a Canada arrangement and his concerns at the approach put forward by some colleagues in terms of the WTO rules.

My hon. Friend the Member for North Thanet (Sir Roger Gale), in a powerful speech, brought to bear his experience as the leader of the UK delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe in saying that the idea that a radical reassessment of this deal could be achieved by reopening it was not realistic. He also spoke of his experience as a Kent MP in terms of the potential disruption that a no-deal scenario would bring.

The right hon. Member for Twickenham (Sir Vince Cable), who is not in his place, spoke of his experience on Europe, so he will no doubt recall the Lib Dem leaflets that were the first to propose the in/out referendum before the idea caught on. He is now saying that we should ignore the result of the referendum while also calling for another referendum. It is a bit like saying that large multinational tech companies are inflaming public opinion before taking a job with one of them.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Beaconsfield (Mr Grieve) said that in all negotiations you move to the mean centre. I agree with him. But I would suggest that calling for another referendum in his desire to remain in the European Union is not the mean centre either of our party or of the country.

The right hon. Member for Belfast North (Nigel Dodds) spoke of his concerns on the issue of trust. I hope that in my new role there will be an opportunity to build that trust in our relationship moving

forward. I very much recognise the experience that he brings to these issues and, in particular, his point referring back to the December discussion on paragraph 50. Let me pick up one specific issue that he raised about the Attorney General's remarks yesterday. He suggested that the Attorney General had said that the backstop was indefinite. I draw his attention to the fact that when my right hon. Friend the Member for New Forest East (Dr Lewis) asked the Attorney General,

"Is it possible that the UK could find itself locked in backstop forever, against our will?",

his answer was the single word,

"No."—[Official Report, 3 December 2018; Vol. 650, c. 561.]

However, I am very happy to discuss these issues with the right hon. Gentleman in the days ahead.

My right hon. Friend the Member for North Shropshire (Mr Paterson) spoke of the forces that hate Brexit and are intent on stopping it. I hope he will recognise that, as someone who has always supported Brexit and shares his desire to see it concluded, perhaps, unlike him, I fear that the uncertainty involved in not supporting this deal risks others in the House frustrating the Brexit that he and I both support.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Basingstoke asked whether amendments to the approval motion that seek to insert an end date to the backstop could risk destabilising the only negotiated option on the table. The simple answer to that is yes. An amendment that is incompatible with any of the terms of the deal as drafted would amount to a rejection of the deal as a whole and prevent the Government from ratifying the withdrawal agreement.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Wantage (Mr Vaizey) correctly identified the importance of Euratom. I pay tribute to him. He speaks with great authority on that issue. I know he has done a huge amount of work on that, and I hope that where we have landed in the deal reflects many of the contributions he has made.

The hon. Member for Nottingham South (Lilian Greenwood) raised the importance of EU citizens to our NHS. As a former Health Minister, I very much agree with that point. I gently point out that there are more non-UK EU nationals working in the NHS today than there were at the time of the referendum. [Interruption.] She says from a sedentary position that that is not the case. That is the record. As the Minister who covered the workforce, I can say that there are more non-UK EU staff working in our NHS than at the time of the referendum.

My hon. Friend the Member for St Ives (Derek Thomas) spoke of the importance of regaining powers for his local fishing fleet. He is absolutely right to highlight that. That is a key aspect of the deal, and I look forward to discussing it with him in the days ahead, so that we ensure that it reflects his concerns.

The hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne North (Catherine McKinnell) spoke of the divisions on Brexit in her constituency and more widely. I very much recognise that. This deal is seeking, as the Prime Minister acts in the national interest, to bring the country back together.

In conclusion, it is important that we do not lose sight of what this deal will enable us to deliver—a fair skills-based immigration system; control over our fisheries and our agricultural policies; our own trade policy for the first time for more than four decades; and an end to sending vast sums of money to the EU. In 2016 we had the biggest vote in our democratic history. This deal allows us to

deliver on it, rather than the alternatives of division and uncertainty. I urge the House to back this deal.

Martin Docherty-Hughes

On a point of order, Mr Speaker. You often remind me that this is a place of convention and that the convention is that at the end of a debate, most Members should be in the Chamber. I notice that some who went on for quite a while on the Back Benches are not in their place as convention would dictate. Could you advise me what action you will take in relation to that matter and advise the House if you do take any at all?

Mr Speaker

I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his point of order. I am inclined to err on the side of thinking that there may have been some unawareness on the part of some Members of the requirement to be present for wind-ups tonight. I say that because a number of Members came to the Chair expressing the expectation that there would be no wind-ups, and I corrected those Members, so they came to be aware that they should indeed be present. I am merely being perhaps slightly charitable. There may have been Members who were not aware that, although it is one theme over the five days, there are wind-up speakers each night and, unless there is good cause, preferably notified to the Chair and those on the Front Benches, there is an expectation that Members who speak in the debate, on whichever of the five days, will be present for the wind-up speeches. I hope from now on that that will be clear.

01:02:00

Eight hours having elapsed since the commencement of proceedings on the Business of the House motion, the proceedings were interrupted (Order, this day).

Debate to be resumed tomorrow.

Dr Whitford

On a point of order, Mr Speaker. I am sorry; I do not often raise points of order, but the Secretary of State has claimed, as was claimed in Health questions last week, that there are more EU staff working in the NHS now than in 2016. If he bothers to check with the Library and others who collect the statistics, they will point out that 90,000 members of staff in NHS England had no nationality. That has been reduced by collecting the data, and the Library clearly points out that it is wrong to assume that there are more people here. It is actually just more people whose origin in the EU is registered. The British Medical Association and General Medical Council surveys suggest that 19% have left England's NHS, so the statistic he gives is incorrect.

Mr Speaker

The hon. Lady has put the point very forcefully on the record. If the Secretary of State feels, at any stage, that there is a requirement on him to correct the record, it is open to him to do so. At this point, however, I have to regard it as the end of the exchange.

I thank all colleagues who have taken part in this debate for their stoicism and forbearance in waiting—in some cases, for very long periods—before having the chance to do so. From my point of view, it was a great privilege to hear colleagues.