

YOUR **FREE** MAGAZINE | WINTER 2018/19

WETHERSPOON**NEWS**

UK EDITION

READ BY
2 MILLION
CUSTOMERS

JUST GIVE US
ANY DEAL
..PLEASE

JUST GIVE US
ANY DEAL
..PLEASE

CIRCLE OF DECEIT

How the metropolitan elite tried to con the British public about the need for a 'deal' with the EU - and about food prices post Brexit.

see pages 78-89

EU
DEAL OR
NO DEAL

EU DEBATE

Six press articles, covering the debate, pages 78-85

'PUNK UP' YOUR BURGER

Punk IPA pogoes its way onto burger and club deal range

Left to right: Carolyn Fairbairn (director-general of the CBI), Gina Miller (business owner and campaigner), Dominic Grieve MP, Theresa May MP, Keir Starmer MP, Sarah Wollaston MP, Nick Clegg, Richard Baker (ex-chairman of Whitbread)

DEMOCRACY AND FREE TRADE EQUAL FREEDOM AND PROSPERITY

A deal with the EU is a trap – just ask the Greeks

The public, MPs, businesses and the media have been the subject of a cunning plan by the elite, metropolitan voices – which lost the referendum.

The cunning plan, swallowed whole by the hapless Theresa May, is that leaving the EU without a 'deal' is a 'cliff edge', a 'leap in the dark', a 'walk in a fiery inferno'... or whatever. This cliff-edge talk is nonsense. Everything you buy from the EU can be bought from the UK or the 93% of the world which is outside of the EU.

Wetherspoon has proven this point. We took our third-highest-selling spirit (and the top-selling non-UK-owned one), Jägermeister, as an experiment – and replaced it with the unknown Strika, from Chorley (Lancashire), which we buy at 10 pence less per measure.

The reduction has been passed on to customers, saving them about £1 million per year.

Sales of this category of drinks ('shooters' – not everyone's cup of tea) have increased by 10%.

It seems logical that, if you can substitute an almost unique, and incredibly successful, product like Jägermeister, you can substitute ANYTHING the UK currently buys from the continent.

The Europeans are acting cool, yet I can promise you that they are truly terrified that Wetherspoon's actions will catch on – which they will, because they work.

Brandy

Having successfully switched from Champagne and German wheat beer, some months back, to UK and non-EU alternatives, Wetherspoon has recently replaced top-selling French Courvoisier brandy with E&J (from the US) and Black Bottle (from Australia).

Both products outsell Courvoisier in their home markets. These products, also costing 10 pence less per measure, are already more successful than Courvoisier.

We're currently conducting blind tastings, among new-world sparkling wines, of possible substitutes for Prosecco.

I'm sorry to say, since our Italian friends are even bigger victims of undemocratic 'Europeanism' than is the UK, that Prosecco scores much lower than its possible alternatives.



The Europeans are acting cool, yet I can promise you that they are truly terrified that Wetherspoon's actions will catch on



Wetherspoon's experience is the tip of a mighty iceberg. The UK consumer has the power to drive down EU imports to the UK to zero... or almost zero.

And that is what is most likely to happen, unless voters see some political action to back up the referendum result.

MPs should listen to the people and respect the promise on the leaflet which the government posted to every household just before the referendum. It said: "The government will implement what you decide."

Parliament should make that a priority and get us out of the EU by 29 March, next year, at the latest.

In fact, many MPs and the occupants of No. 10 seem to have given little or no thought to leaving, but are instead obsessed by the clamour of the CBI, FT, The Treasury and The Times for a deal.

Freedom

Actually, people who have taken the time to study how the EU's protectionist tariff system works really, really, really don't want a deal. We want freedom and democracy.

The sensible public, which outthought the 'groupthink' of the CBI, the FT et al by vetoing the UK application to the euro 15 years ago and which rejected Osborne and Cameron's story of an immediate post-referendum recession, as well as a plague of locusts, doesn't believe a word of the cliff-edge scare story.

And even if there were adverse economic consequences for a time, which we don't believe, we still want out – so, get a move on, please.

Trap

A 'deal' is just a trap laid by the CBI, the FT and others for keeping us in the EU. If the UK wants a deal above all, negotiating power is thereby transferred to the unelected EU presidents. In effect, by prioritising a deal, the UK has enfeebled itself.

A general word to parliament, Whitehall, the media and spin doctors galore – many of you seem to think that the public is a bit thick and many of you want to keep us in the wretched customs union and single market.

But the public isn't at all thick and perfectly understands that the customs union means staying in the EU by the back door.

Almost all MPs were elected on a manifesto of honouring the referendum result.

So, let's have some honour, we say, by leaving the EU and the customs union on 29 March.

Tariffs

The reality, which the public understands, but many of the elite don't, is that leaving the EU next year allows the UK, without the consent of, or negotiation with, the EU, to abolish all the taxes (tariffs) on non-EU imports, like oranges, rice, coffee, Aussie wine and a total of 12,651 products.

This will reduce prices in the shops, making for a better-off public.

Since the tariff income from non-EU imports is today sent to Brussels, there is no loss of income to the UK Treasury either.

At the same time, the UK can avoid the payment of £39 billion to the EU which government lawyers have said ("Brexit: UK could quit without paying ... say Lords" 4 March 2017, The Guardian) there is no obligation to pay.

Also, the UK can regain control of its fishing grounds, helping those coastal communities sacrificed on the altar of the metropolitan EU vision.

Free-trading

The UK can thereby join the club of free-trading nations which have slashed tariffs – Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Singapore, Hong Kong and so on.

Free trade never made anyone poorer, as Alexander Downer, former Aussie High Commissioner, says on page 84.

Finally, former Chancellor George Osborne, recently told the BBC's Newsnight that "a minority of people were interested in rather esoteric issues of constitutional sovereignty".

In fact, the desire for self-rule and democracy is not "esoteric" (ie the concern of a few). Ireland, India, the US, Japan and Singapore, among many examples, have been extremely successful after the end of what they saw as remote or arbitrary rule.

In summary, the public has surely had enough.

The idea that our future democracy and freedom – carelessly surrendered in recent decades by the political class – should depend on the outcome of negotiations with the unelected Brussels oligarchs we oppose is deeply offensive.

The cliff-edge nonsense is just another pro-EU shaggy-dog story.

It's time to say goodbye...

Please have the good grace to honour the referendum result and your election pledges, by leaving the EU and the customs union on 29 March.

Tim Martin
Chairman



Note from the Editor

Having worked with Tim for 28 years, I feel sure that he tells the truth and would never knowingly misrepresent the facts to win an argument.

However, not everyone shares his opinions. For different opinions, Wetherspoon News quotes in full articles by Carolyn Fairbairn of the CBI (page 81), Philip Stephens and Martin Wolf (pages 83 and 85) of the Financial Times – organisations of which Tim has been deeply critical.

Eddie Gershon, Editor, Wetherspoon News

STOP PRESS – I've just been interviewed about free trade/no deal for World At One (BBC Radio 4). I was surprised that some listeners did not believe the fact that there is no legal obligation to pay £39 billion to the EU on leaving. A good article, which sums up the situation, is in the Guardian (Brexit: UK could quit without paying ... say Lords' 4 March 2017), as indicated in my viewpoint.

Some people also did not believe that the UK could eliminate 'tariffs', without the consent of the EU, thereby reducing shop prices. However, tariffs are just taxes on non-EU imports which all EU countries are obliged to charge.

They then send the proceeds to Brussels, as part of the customs union agreement. If the UK leaves the EU, parliament is no longer obliged to charge these taxes/tariffs and can opt for free trade, as described in viewpoint, lowering shop prices...

AND ANOTHER THING...

1 History matters: what Wetherspoon said about the Euro in 2000 – the CBI, Tony Blair, Ken Clarke and the usual suspects said the opposite. They were wrong again

Tim Martin, 8 September 2000, chairman's statement:

"A number of politicians and businessmen advocate Britain joining the euro.

"I personally believe that this is an extremely unwise idea, since each of the existing major currencies in the world is the product of a single government which does not exist in Europe.

"An attempt to link currencies and interest rates together caused economic chaos in the early 1990s, when the exchange rate mechanism failed.

"It is important for our economic future to learn lessons from that débâcle."

Wetherspoon annual accounts, September 2000

3 Four simple tests to check whether parliament really intends to leave the EU

Boiling down all of these issues, there are four simple tests which the public can use on 29 March next year to work out ... whether government and parliament have implemented the referendum result and left the EU, as promised, or whether we have been hoodwinked:

1) Does the UK still charge protectionist import taxes (tariffs) on non-EU imports and send the proceeds to Brussels?

If the answer is 'yes', the UK hasn't REALLY left the EU.

2) Has the UK paid, or is it continuing to pay, money to the EU in return for trade?

If 'yes', we are unlikely to have left.

3) Has the UK regained control of its fishing waters?

If 'no', we haven't REALLY left.

4) Is the UK still subject to European laws?

If 'yes', we haven't REALLY left.

In the end, all negotiations boil down to a simple choice. It's as plain as a pikestaff that the UK will be better off taking the free-trade, rather than the deal-at-any-price, route.

The public can see that. We now need to make sure that politicians get the picture.

2 Remember: many MPs don't want to honour the referendum result or their election manifestoes

The government spent **£9 million** to send a leaflet to all households on 6 April 2016.

Under the headline 'A once-in-a-generation decision', it stated: **'This is your decision. The government will implement what you decide.'**

In his resignation speech, just after he lost the referendum, Prime Minister David Cameron said:

"The British people have voted to leave the European Union – and their will must be respected." He also said that the result was "an instruction that must be respected".

4 How you can put pressure on the UK government and the EU

If the PM signs the country up to pay £39 billion to the EU, fishermen are betrayed and we stay in some sort of customs union and the direct or indirect jurisdiction of the European Court of Justice, it will be time for the public to take action.

The main action every voter can take is to promote, favour and prefer goods from the UK and outside of the EU – certainly to avoid goods, where possible, from France and Germany.

The French and German people are mostly innocent victims of the EU régime, but commercial reality must now be faced.

For the UK public to be taken seriously, steps must be taken, over the next few weeks and months, to drop French and German imports to zero.

We can buy New World wine, the sparkling variety from the UK; brandy from Australia and America; food galore from the UK and the New World; cars from the UK and the 93% of the world outside of the EU... and so on.

Power truly lies with the people...

Further articles for and against Brexit on pages 78 – 85

ADMIRABLE ADMIRAL STEAK IS SO SPICY

Hi Tim

We recently had a trip to Hull, for a two-day break, and stayed at your hotel – The Admiral of the Humber.

We were really impressed with the standard of the hotel, in terms of both the room and the very efficient staff.

Well done to Wetherspoon for hitting a high standard in hotels, leaving a lot of the competition in the starting blocks.

We will make sure, next time we visit a city, to look for a Wetherspoon hotel first.

Kind regards

Andy Thompson, Killamarsh, Sheffield

Tim replies: Many thanks for the compliment. The Admiral has, indeed, done very well since we added the hotel rooms and also a groovy roof garden. Our designers will be so pleased to read your comments.

Dear Tim Martin

I am a huge fan of the Wetherspoon chain. I frequent several regularly and always seek one when visiting a new town or city.

I am also a huge fan of Steak Club Tuesday and, when I was recently no longer able to digest the delicious coating on the steak, thought it would be a simple thing to request an uncoated piece of meat.

NO! I was even told at The Devonshire (Skipton, North Yorkshire) that staff were not allowed to serve an uncoated steak! I was, quite frankly, astonished. Surely, I can't be the only customer who now finds it too spicy?

I would greatly appreciate learning exactly what your policy is. Thank you.

Sincerely

Jean I Botley, Keighley, West Yorkshire

Tim replies: This is the first complaint I can recall on this point. I've checked it out with Jameson Robinson, our catering chief. He says that we lightly season steaks after delivery, as this helps with tenderness. It sounds to him as if there may be excessive seasoning in this case – which we'll look into. Frankly, it's difficult not to season one for the request you make.

Your Say

There's £20 of Wetherspoon gift cards for every letter we print

Write: The Editor, Wetherspoon News, J D Wetherspoon plc, Central Park, Reeds Crescent, Watford, WD24 4QL

E-mail: editor@jdwwetherspoon.co.uk

All letters and e-mails to the editor are read, considered and also passed onwards (if appropriate), yet, owing to correspondence volume, not all may be answered.

Write to us

Your letter or e-mail really can make a difference. So, please do keep writing. Should you have any suggestions on how we can improve our service, please let us know.

Thank you

Should you have any specific feedback, to which you wish to receive a reply, please write to the customer services team at the postal address above or use the customer feedback form on our website.

ABERDEEN TO ANTIPODES

Dear Tim

I am a regular at The Justice Mill, in Aberdeen.

For the last five years, your Wetherspoon News and craft beer articles end up in the Gold Coast, Australia...

My brother-in-law loves his craft beer. He takes the magazine and its craft beer articles down to his local beer wholesaler, to see whether he stocks any of them – and he has had great success.

Yours sincerely

Bill Thomson, Aberdeen, Scotland

Tim replies: Too many people think that Aussies are all about sledging, iron ore and creepy crawlies. In fact, as your brother-in-law shows, there is lot of sophistication – Kylie, Neighbours and now craft beer. I told an Aussie chap I'd just met the once that I went to school in New Zealand for five years. His immediate reply: "You poor bas****." In any event, let's not take the Mickey too much. We buy most of our excellent bottled wine from Australia and have now replaced Courvoisier brandy from France with the great Aussie alternative – Black Bottle. And please see the article from former Aussie PM Tony Abbott on page 80. The man talks sense...

RIGHTLY REMEMBERED

Dear Sir

This November marks the centenary of the ending of World War I (1914–18).

Bravo for your poignant article remembering those Victoria Cross heroes – Rupert Brooke, Alfred Herring, Wilfred Owen and Wilfred Wood – now immortalised in the names of Wetherspoon pubs.

Yours faithfully

John Woodward, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire

Tim replies: Thanks, indeed, for your comments. Coincidentally, Alfred Herring VC's grandson, John Herring, worked with Wetherspoon's advisers, Kleinwort Benson, when we floated on the stock market in 1992 and became a non-executive director for 10 years until November 2011. We have other examples, including The John Wallace Linton (in Newport, Wales), named after a famous submariner. We changed the name of that pub, following requests a few years back from local customers.

WAITY QUESTIONS

Dear Tim

Being a happy, regular visitor to Wetherspoon, here are two ideas for you which would transform unhappy customers to happy customers.

First, a separate, small area at the bar for drink-only customers (a winner). Second, a waiter/waitress service for more drinks – the time is now, hopefully.

Yours sincerely

JW Sumner

Maltby, Rotherham, South Yorkshire

Tim replies: We previously tried drinks only, but it didn't quite work. If no one is ordering a drink at a given moment, it's difficult, in practice, not to serve someone who has a combined food-and-drinks order. Our groovy Wetherspoon app has solved this issue for IT users, at least.

The Silk Mercer, Devizes



NICE DOORS TO DARKEN

Dear Tim

As an architecture-lover, I thought it high time that I wrote in appreciation of the sterling work which Wetherspoon does in saving so many wonderful old buildings from demolition, tastefully restoring them, then breathing new life into them as venues to enjoy a chat, a drink and reasonably priced food. Brilliant!

As an opera-lover, I was intrigued to read about Opera House, in Tunbridge Wells, and the regular opera performances it holds. Just like The Landmark Trust, Wetherspoon is doing a lot to save British heritage for future generations. Thank you!

Incidentally, when The Silk Mercer (Devizes) was due to open, I vowed never to darken its doorway! A friend and I, attracted by 'taster' drinks, went in on its first day and I have been an occasional customer ever since. You taught me that beer has many subtle flavours, as has tea!

Yours sincerely

Mrs Pauline St John Osland

Devizes, Wiltshire

Tim replies: So pleased that you like our pubs. It's truly a privilege to have been party to so many restorations. You're not the only one to have been sceptical. Before we opened Opera House, which had lain empty for yonks, someone went on hunger strike outside, at the prospect of turning the building into a pub... I'm happy to say that we're now reconciled with the local community and won a civic award some years later for the restoration. In the end, people almost always judge you fairly.



Opera House, Tunbridge Wells

SHAKING WITH GRATITUDE

Dear Tim

In mid October, I headed back to Canada for the winter. Now retired, I've moved back and forth my whole life between Canada and the UK, love both greatly and will be back on my boat in Wiltshire come next spring.

Many mornings over the six months each summer, I make the 3.5-mile trek up from the marina, where my boat is moored, to the town of Devizes, making the return walk in the afternoon... and I never tire of it.

I have to get up to The Silk Mercer, in Devizes, in time for my large breakfast!

As someone trained in constitutional law in Canada, I think you have done a fabulous job, through your magazine, of informing a significant number of people about the issues surrounding Brexit.

And every Wetherspoon pub which I've visited over the years (probably 40 or so) has had the same great atmosphere, with portraits and stories along the walls about local historical people.

Whenever I arrive in a new town, the first thing I ask of people on the street is: "Does this town have a Wetherspoon?"

Please don't change anything in your pubs... just add more of them.

Love to shake your hand some time!

Yours sincerely

Phil Jones

Devizes, Wiltshire/Ontario, Canada

Tim replies: Many thanks for the compliments. When I was 17, my rugby team from Campbell College, Belfast, toured British Columbia and played five matches against Canadian schools. We had a fabulous time in a great country with overwhelmingly kind hospitality. Those were the days, my friend... Thanks for your comments about the constitutional issues. The continent of Europe, led by 'intellectuals', has been sleepwalking into a situation where democratic power has been ceded consistently to unelected bureaucrats over several decades. Democracy, as North Americans and others know, is essential for the future of humanity. A majority of Brits agreed, in 2016, to restore democracy. We will see in March next year whether that happens...

A SLICE WOULD BE NICE

Dear Tim

Could you please introduce gluten-free bread into your menus?

My husband and I both enjoy a cooked breakfast at your Staple Hill pub and sometimes at the Yate Shopping Centre pub – both near Bristol.

My only criticism is that, because I order the gluten-free breakfast, my husband gets toast with his breakfast, yet I don't.

Gluten-free bread can be frozen and toasted, just as well as ordinary bread. Please give me gluten-free toast with my breakfast, Tim.

I will add that your gluten-free menu is good, but would be better with gluten-free bread and rolls.

Thanks Tim.

Cornelia Morton

Frampton Cotterell, Bristol

Tim replies: I will discuss this with the catering team. From a pragmatic point of view and to maintain quality, we try to ensure that everything we sell shifts quickly, even if frozen. When we looked, in the past, at gluten-free bread, the view was that it won't sell at all at many pubs. That may change. As I say – I'll ask.

FOUR LEGS GOOD

Dear Tim

I am a regular customer of JDW's pubs, with six within easy access of my home, using public transport.

As I am confined to a wheelchair, the facilities you offer to people with disabilities are second to none. Especially worthy of praise is the disabled loo at the pub I visit most frequently – The Iron Duke, in Wellington.

However, a note of criticism: the tables.

Many of the tables are too high to use from a wheelchair. This is not a problem, in itself, as most of your customers are not wheelchair bound. Unfortunately, lower tables are often of a type which has only a single centre leg, meaning that a wheelchair cannot get close, since the footrest comes into contact with this leg when still too far away from the table to enable comfortable dining.

Any chance of some small tables with four legs? If you can, this would make my visits even better.

Hope you will be able to help.

Yours sincerely

Alan Chapman

Uffculme, Devon

Tim replies: Fair comment, although some customers feel that our DWCs are of a lower standard than the main loos. I will arrange for a couple of the tables you suggest at The Iron Duke – and see how that goes.

DEAR WETHERSPOON NEWS READERS

The elites are trying to con us. We must dispel the myth that we need a deal with the EU. We don't. A deal is a trap to keep us in the EU, so that food tariffs continue to weigh on shoppers – and are sent to Brussels to feed the fat cats in the EU bureaucracy. **WE WANT TO LEAVE AND WE WANT FREE TRADE. WE DON'T WANT A DEAL...**

CIRCLE OF DECEIT

1. BACKGROUND

The CBI, the FT, most big company directors, the City, media and politics supported the disastrous exchange rate mechanism (ERM) in the late 1980s, its successor the euro, Remain in the referendum and the argument that the UK economy would crash IMMEDIATELY after a leave vote. **They got it wrong on ALL these points.**

2. JUNE 2016

After losing the referendum, the same cabal decided that the best way to defeat the democratic will of the people would be to say that we mustn't leave without a deal.

3. THE REASONING OF THE ANTI-DEMOCRATS...

If the UK is not willing to leave without a deal, power is effectively transferred to EU negotiators, who can stop the UK from leaving the EU. They are under no obligation to offer a deal: "If you want a deal, you must pay £39 billion, stay in the customs union, agree our terms over Ireland etc."

4. THE PLAN TO FOOL THE PUBLIC...

WHY FOOD PRICES WILL, IN FACT, FALL...

At the same time, the cabal used a more graphic tactic to win over public opinion, so they would back the need for a deal. Their chosen tactic, a complete lie, repeated again and again, was that food prices would automatically rise, if we left the EU without a deal.

5. FREE TRADE/NO DEAL MEANS FOOD PRICES WILL FALL POST BREXIT...

Since the EU is a protectionist organisation which charges import taxes (tariffs) to most of the 93% of the world which isn't in the EU, leaving without a deal means that these taxes can be ended by the UK government in March next year – and there is nothing the EU can do about it. We don't need their permission. By taking this route, imports from the EU (7% of the world) would, as now, be tariff free under WTO rules. This free-trade approach has been adopted by successful economies like Singapore, Switzerland, Australia, Israel, Hong Kong, New Zealand, Canada and others.

6. OTHER ADVANTAGES OF FREE TRADE/NO DEAL

At the same time, we can reclaim fishing rights and avoid paying £39 billion to the EU.

7. PROMINENT REMAINERS 'DOUBLE DOWN' ON THE RISING FOOD PRICE MYTH...

There follows a series of fibs since the referendum, in which highly educated people have been 'rolled out' to persuade the public, who they must believe are stupid, that food prices will rise without a deal.

FRIDAY 7 JULY 2017

the guardian

WHOPPER

Katharine Viner, editor of The Guardian, said: "A deal is better than no deal. No deal would mean a reversion to WTO rules on trade between the EU and the UK. Among other things, it would mean, as Mr Barnier points out, that there would be customs duties of almost 10% on vehicle imports, of 19% on drinks, and an average of 12% on meat and fish."

SUNDAY 15 OCTOBER 2017

THE SUNDAY TIMES

"Sainsbury's boss David Tyler warns a 'no deal' Brexit would raise the cost of shopping"

MONDAY 17 OCTOBER 2016

FINANCIAL TIMES

"Clegg warns 'hard Brexit' will lead to 22% EU food tariffs"

TUESDAY 17 OCTOBER 2017

Resolution Foundation

"The director of Resolution Foundation, Torsten Bell, said:

Under a no deal Brexit scenario ... tariffs on clothing, footwear, beverages and tobacco will rise by 10 per cent. Tariffs on dairy products will rise by 45 per cent and by 37 per cent for meat products."

23.

CONCLUSION - REMEMBER 23 JUNE

Most MPs, economists, business people and City analysts read the FT, The Times and Barclays Bank reports. They speak to one another in the echo chamber of Remain and errors of fact are reinforced by the echo, so that 'lies become the truth'. Almost all the people in the circle of deceit, regarding food prices, went to Oxford and Cambridge universities. They obviously feel that the public is a bit thick and will believe this nonsense. Bad luck, folks, the lounge lizards, harbour sharks, reprobates, amateur philosophers, racing pundits, good-time boyos and gals have rumbled this nonsense. Remember what Abraham Lincoln said: You can fool some of the people, some of the time...

10 NOVEMBER 2018

THE TIMES DOUBLES DOWN ON THE LIE ABOUT FOOD PRICE RISES

Just in case Wetherspoon gained traction in other publications, The Times reports former Sainsbury's CEO Justin King as saying that food prices will go up, if we leave the EU without a deal.

9 NOVEMBER 2018 (THE PRO-REMAIN PRESS DOES NOT REPORT THE TRUTH ABOUT THE FREE-TRADE OPTION)

The 'echo chamber of Remain' is now fully at work. The pro-EU Times, the Financial Times and Guardian report on 9 Nov on Wetherspoon's results, but don't report the free-trade arguments. So, their mostly pro-EU readers remain unaware of the sophisticated free-trade approach adopted by many countries.

8 NOV 2018

Wetherspoon produces its quarterly results which include a 1,200-word essay on why the UK will be better off without a deal with the EU – by adopting 'free trade' as described here.

27 SEPT 2018

Barclays Bank press release. Sorry, readers, you just won't believe this:

An ominously entitled Barclays report (Scale, Disruption and Brexit) says that, in a no-deal Brexit, "food retailers would be affected by a new average tariff of 27% on food and drink entering the country from the EU, significantly more than the non-food levy of 3 to 4% affecting non-food producers". Nonsense, of course, since the UK can just abolish tariffs, REDUCING prices.

30 AUGUST 2018

LIKE MIKE BRUMBY (NO. 17) MONTAGNE MAKES A SCHOOLBOY HOWLER

Barclays Bank economist Fabrice Montagne issues a report to clients, including Wetherspoon, saying, in effect, that the free-trade/no-deal option won't work because most people correctly assume "losses from cancelled tariffs would be outweighed by the benefits of attracting new international business". THERE ARE NO LOSSES TO THE UK GOVERNMENT BECAUSE THE TARIFFS ARE SENT TO BRUSSELS!!! (you idiot, FABRICE!)

AUGUST 2018

Theresa May, a complete captive of "food prices will rise" and "a deal at all costs", visits President Macron of France, accompanied only by dyed-in-the-wool Remainers, and begs him to back Chequers. No chance of agreeing on anything following the Adonis/Clarke/Clegg visit to Juncker, of course.

SUMMER 2018

Separately, Lord Adonis, Ken Clarke MP and Nick Clegg visit JC Juncker and say, in terms, "if you make no concessions, the public will change its mind about Brexit".

SUNDAY 12 AUGUST 2018

THE SUNDAY TIMES

Oliver Shah, Caroline Wheeler and Tommy Stubbington "Supermarkets on Brexit: no deal 'will hike food bills by 12%'"

Supermarket giants have warned the Treasury that a no-deal Brexit would force up the price of the average weekly food basket by as much as 12%. Senior executives from some of the big four supermarkets made the alarming prediction in briefings to the Treasury on the impact on food prices of a no-deal Brexit. The biggest tariffs on imports from the EU could include cheese, up by 44%, beef, up by 40%, and chicken, up 22%."

THURSDAY 23 AUGUST 2018

BRC

NOT TRUE

Helen Dickinson, chief executive at the British Retail Consortium: "The Government's technical notices demonstrate the facts of a No-Deal Brexit - reduced availability and higher prices of food and medicine, increased delays and red tape at borders, and a VAT bombshell for consumers and businesses."

TUESDAY 26 DECEMBER 2017

British Retail Consortium

"SHOPPERS TO LOSE OUT IF UK DOESN'T ADOPT EU GLOBAL TRADE DEALS

As a member of the EU, the UK currently benefits from zero or low rate tariffs on various imports from trade deals that the EU has negotiated with third countries. From the day after the UK leaves the EU, on 30 March 2019, it will no longer be covered by these international agreements, so imported goods will be subject to higher tariffs and potential customs barriers. For consumers this means higher prices."

NOT TRUE
NONSENSE SENT OUT ON BOXING DAY

THE EU DEBATE

Unlike the Financial Times or the business news section of The Times, Wetherspoon News tries to present both sides of the argument in respect of the EU. In the following pages, we present three articles which support Brexit and three which support Remain. Democracy is built on a foundation of ideas and debate. If, like the Financial Times, you write, think and talk in a way which presents only one side of the debate, judgement is inevitably flawed. The Financial Times has got it wrong over the ERM, the euro, the result of the referendum and the immediate economic consequences of a Leave vote. That's its tragedy. However, many people believe the Financial Times, today, that we need a 'deal'. That's ours...

Tim says: "Sometimes, those who live far away, and are not involved in the fraught day-to-day debates, can see things more clearly than we natives can. Here, the very intelligent Tony Abbott gives a view of Brexit from the Aussie perspective."

TONY ABBOTT: HOW TO SAVE BREXIT

Britain has nothing to fear from no deal

It's pretty hard for Britain's friends, here in Australia, to make sense of the mess that's being made of Brexit. The referendum result was perhaps the biggest-ever vote of confidence in the United Kingdom, its past and its future. But the British establishment doesn't seem to share that confidence and instead looks desperate to cut a deal, even if that means staying under the rule of Brussels. Looking at this from abroad, it's baffling: the country that did the most to bring democracy into the modern world might yet throw away the chance to take charge of its own destiny.

Let's get one thing straight: a negotiation that you're not prepared to walk away from is not a negotiation – it's surrender. It's all give and no get. When David Cameron tried to renegotiate Britain's EU membership, he was sent packing because Brussels judged (rightly) that he'd never actually back leaving. And since then, Brussels has made no real concessions to Theresa May because it judges (rightly, it seems) that she's desperate for whatever deal she can get.

The EU's palpable desire to punish Britain for leaving vindicates the Brexit project. Its position, now, is that there's only one 'deal' on offer, whereby the UK retains all of the burdens of EU membership but with no say in setting the rules. The EU seems to think that Britain will go along with this because it's terrified of no deal. Or, to put it another way, terrified of the prospect of its own independence.

But even after two years of fearmongering and vacillation, it's not too late for robust leadership to deliver the Brexit that people voted for. It's time for Britain to announce what it will do if the EU can't make an acceptable offer by March 29 next year – and how it would handle no deal. Freed from EU rules, Britain would automatically revert to world trade, using rules agreed by

the World Trade Organization. It works pretty well for Australia. So why on earth would it not work just as well for the world's fifth-largest economy?

A world trade Brexit lets Britain set its own rules. It can say, right now, that it will not impose any tariff or quota on European produce and would recognise all EU product standards. That means no border controls for goods coming from Europe to Britain. You don't need to negotiate this: just do it. If Europe knows what's in its own best interests, it would fully reciprocate in order to maintain entirely free trade and full mutual recognition of standards right across Europe.

Next, the UK should declare that Europeans already living here should have the right to remain permanently – and, of course, become British citizens if they wish. This should be a unilateral offer. Again, you don't need a deal. You don't need Michel Barnier's permission. If Europe knows what's best for itself, it would likewise allow Britons to stay where they are.

Third, there should continue to be free movement of people from Europe into Britain – but with a few conditions. Only for work, not welfare. And with a foreign worker's tax on the employer, to make sure anyone coming in would not be displacing British workers.

Fourth, no 'divorce bill' whatsoever should be paid to Brussels. The UK government would assume the EU's property and liabilities in Britain, and the EU would assume Britain's share of these in Europe. If Britain was getting its fair share, these would balance out; and if Britain wasn't getting its fair share, it's the EU that should be paying Britain.

Finally, there's no need on Britain's part for a hard border with Ireland. Britain wouldn't be imposing tariffs on European goods, so there's no money to collect. The UK has exactly the same product standards as the Republic, so let's not pretend you need to check for problems we all know don't exist.

Some changes may be needed but technology allows for smart borders: there was never any need for a Cold War-style Checkpoint Charlie. Irish citizens, of course, have the right to live and work in the UK in an agreement that long predates EU membership.

Of course, the EU might not like this British leap for independence. It might hit out with tariffs and impose burdens on Britain as it does on the US – but WTO rules put a cap on any retaliatory action. The worst it can get? We're talking levies of an average 4 or 5 per cent. Which would be more than offset by a post-Brexit devaluation of the pound (which would have the added bonus of making British goods more competitive everywhere).

UK officialdom assumes that a deal is vital, which is why so little thought has been put into how Britain might just walk away. Instead, officials have concocted lurid scenarios featuring runs on the pound, gridlock at ports, grounded aircraft, hoarding of medicines and flights of investment. It's been the pre-referendum Project Fear campaign on steroids. And let's not forget how employment, investment and economic growth ticked up after the referendum.

As a former prime minister of Australia and a lifelong friend of your country, I would say this: Britain has nothing to lose except the shackles that the EU imposes on it. After the courage shown by its citizens in the referendum, it would be a tragedy if political leaders go wobbly now. Britain's future has always been global, rather than just with Europe. Like so many of Britain's admirers, I want to see this great country seize this chance and make the most of it.

Tony Abbott served as Prime Minister of Australia from 2013 to 2015

By Tony Abbott

The Spectator / 27 October 2018

Tim says: "The equal worst financial judgement in the last 40 years emanates from the CBI. The latest director-general is Carolyn Fairbairn, who has an awful record in making predictions about things concerning Brexit. Here she is, one year ago, predicting Armageddon because of 'the spectre of no deal'. Wrong again, Carolyn. In the last three months, as reported in November 2018, the UK economy has grown at three times the rate of the doomed eurozone."

CAROLYN FAIRBAIRN: A BAD BREXIT WILL COST BRITAIN DEAR IN LOST BUSINESS

It's an unavoidable truth that Brexit is already affecting investment and jobs. Every day companies describe ambitions shelved and contingency plans drawn up to move people and supply chains out of the UK.

There is no time to lose. We are approaching a watershed, where a trickle of lost opportunity could become a flood and even an emergency. This makes the next European Council vital, for our economy and across the EU. To avert serious economic cost, the stalemate must be broken. The evidence is piling up and must not be ignored by either side.

In surveys by the CBI and the Bank of England, about 40 per cent of businesses say they've delayed or cancelled new investments because of Brexit uncertainty. Large companies are scrapping plans for innovation centres, logistics hubs and office buildings. Small companies are holding back on recruitment or plans to export. Whether the impact is 4,000 jobs or four, the result is missed opportunities. Lost investment that not only means jobs never created but also lower productivity and living standards in the years ahead.

Brexit is also harming recruitment. Four in every ten businesses surveyed by the CBI say Brexit has made it harder to find and retain people. This is felt across all sectors: from universities and tech companies seeking the best from global talent pools to construction businesses, tasked with building infrastructure and 300,000 new homes a year, finding that EU workers are not returning after holidays, with Christmas breaks coming; crops going unpicked in Cornwall; public services, already struggling and now seeing fewer vital workers wanting to come to the UK – for example, a 96 per cent reduction in nurses applying to work here from the EU.

Most companies now have contingency plans in the event of a no-deal scenario. There is no desire to press go, but 10 per cent of these businesses have already started implementing them. Without further clarity, another 25 per cent will follow by the end of the year. Another 25 per cent by the end of March. That's 60 per cent by Easter. Thousands of jobs leaving the UK, and in most cases irreversibly.

Financial services are often used as the example, but this is happening across sectors, across regions. Multinational broadcasters are eyeing Berlin and Amsterdam, automotive firms are overhauling supply chains, and telecoms firms are building databanks in Latvia. It's not just large companies. The CBI has heard from SMEs making sheds in Belfast, skateboards in Somerset and cancer drugs in the Midlands, all considering moving production to France or Dublin.

We must be clear – it is the spectre of no deal that is casting such a long shadow. Companies are preparing for the worst while still hoping for the best. Negotiators on both sides should be under no illusion about the impact of no deal. Rising costs for consumers and businesses, disruption at ports and airports, confusion over everything from contracts to chemicals regulation, uncertainty for citizens, and cross-border services in disarray.

A fragile picture, but one that can be repainted if progress is made now – 75 per cent of the UK's biggest companies with contingency plans say agreement on transitional arrangements would give them enough certainty to put these plans on hold. That's a prize worth fighting for.

The budget highlighted the opportunities that lie ahead for the UK – to be a leader in the fourth industrial revolution and build a high productivity, knowledge-led economy.

But this is only possible if we secure a good Brexit. A bad Brexit would stop us in our tracks. And the starting point must be a breakthrough in Brussels in three weeks' time.

Three things are needed. First, on citizens' rights, "touching distance" needs to become a proper deal that sets minds at rest for 4 million people; second, a commitment to the Good Friday Agreement and Common Travel Area that supports the people and businesses of Northern Ireland; and third, a financial settlement that recognises the value of the £600 billion annual trade between the EU and the UK, with clarity from the UK and flexibility from the EU.

These are times of great change and I remain hugely optimistic about the UK's future. But without urgency, clarity and unity on both sides, leading to progress in Brussels in December, I fear that the flow of lost opportunity will turn into a flood, hitting the most vulnerable in our society hardest.

By Carolyn Fairbairn

The Times / 24 November 2017

Tim says: “The brilliant Cambridge University professor Robert Tombs outlines the dire threat to UK democracy emanating from the attempt by the elite to thwart Brexit.”

EXPERTS DON'T DEFINE DEMOCRACY; THE PEOPLE DO

Our present turmoil seems to be a lurch away from our historical traditions of pragmatism and frankly rather dull politics. Are we not a sensible people, who have a suspicion of “extremes” and “ideology”, and who regard “moderation” and “compromise” as the essence of political wisdom?

It is true that we have a political system whose outward appearance is one of long continuity. We have avoided violent political conflict for over three centuries. For one thing, evolutionary change is easier without a codified constitution. Political extremism is hobbled by first-past-the-post. So our system seems stable.

But every so often, the pot boils over. Indeed, our political constitution is the result of a long series of crises and upheavals. We don't need to go back as far as Magna Carta – though it is worth remembering that what is still the basis of our fundamental legal rights was the consequence of a rebellion. It was foreign invasion backed up by popular resistance that consolidated our parliamentary system in 1688. It was mass violence that began a succession of reforms in 1832. The primacy of the Commons was the result of an angry “Peers versus People” battle. Our three main parties hatched from crises. Division over agricultural tariffs wrecked the old Tory Party. Divisions over Ireland did permanent damage to the Liberals. It took the First World War to bring us genuine democracy and to bring Labour into the front rank of politics. None of these great changes was planned by the political elite: they came about through the inability of that elite to stop changes they disapproved of.

Parliamentary sovereignty really meant, and still means, the unchallenged right to put the people's will into law. Past rulers had the good sense to accept the inevitable: that, more than anything, is the secret of our political stability. Those who claimed the elite knew best found themselves on the scrap-heap of history.

Now part of the elite is making a sustained and possibly successful effort to oppose a legally enshrined majority choice: made first in the 2016 referendum, then confirmed in the 2017 general election, when 85 per cent of the vote went to parties committed to respecting the result.

I cannot think of a precedent in modern times on this scale and with this persistence. Of course, there has been plenty of elite dissidence in the recent past. The 20th century saw both Right-wing and Left-wing minorities paying allegiance to foreign ideologies and foreign powers. They were vocal and sometimes influential, but few in number. They are now more numerous. Globalisation and our membership of the EU have created a new elite whose careers, interests and social relationships largely exist outside the boundaries of Britain. For them, the idea of “taking back control of our borders” is a threat and even a moral affront. What is now being proposed by the government as the best deal available is in historical terms a monstrosity. It is practically unheard of in modern international relations for an independent state to place itself under foreign jurisdiction and foreign legislation. One would have to think of colonial status (for example of the American colonies before 1776) for an adequate analogy. For a modern democratic state to deny its own citizens even an indirect voice in deciding the laws governing them for an indefinite period would previously have been unimaginable: taxation without representation, to the tune of £39 billion.

I am not presuming to judge the motives of today's Remainers, or whether they are right or wrong in their analysis of Brexit and its consequences. Now, as in the past, one can oppose the will of the majority on principle, argue against it and try to alter it. But the extremism of their arguments, the predictions of disaster, the assertions that people will die due to lack of medicine, the unwillingness to look dispassionately at the evidence are more strident than is normal in our politics. The lavishly funded

campaign to undermine and block a democratically chosen policy has gone far beyond previously accepted political bounds.

To behave in this way seems to me reckless and fundamentally subversive of democracy. The purpose of democracy is not to find the right answer to technical problems, as judged by “experts”, but is to maintain an acceptable political community based on consent. The EU has aspired to establish the rule of experts in order to constrain democratic choices that the elite thought dangerous.

Remainers are attempting to fix us to that system not merely by opposing a democratic decision, but by denying that such a decision is possible. This, they assert, is harsh “reality”: There Is No Alternative. As the EU accumulates crises, it is a strange kind of reality. If Brexit is defeated, it will prove not only the impotence of democracy in Britain, it will confirm the impotence of democracy throughout the EU. The lid will have been screwed down. We all know the eventual consequences of that. Our long history of peaceful politics has been based on accepting the will of the majority. Attempting quite openly to thwart it is a dangerous step backwards – and a long way backwards.

Robert Tombs is professor of French history at St John's College, Cambridge

By Robert Tombs
The Telegraph / 17 November 2018

Tim says: “Tut, tut, Philip. Calling Boris a liar is a bit harsh. Like you, Boris is a successful writer. He was also, for eight years, a very successful editor of the famous Spectator magazine – not an easy gig in the Internet age. He was also twice elected mayor of London – not easy in a Labour city and he also led the successful Leave campaign in the referendum. In contrast, the Financial Times has participated in the surreptitious transfer of democratic power from the people of the UK to unelected apparatchiks in Brussels. Who is the most moral, Philip? A good question for a debate in the cerebral FT...”

BORIS JOHNSON AND THE FLIGHT TO ENGLISH NATIONALISM

Gradualists and moderates are a dwindling band in the Conservative party

Boris Johnson has lied his way through life and politics. This week he lodged a public application for Theresa May's job as Britain's prime minister. By any judicious test of character, the former foreign secretary is unfit for high office. Britain's Conservatives do not seem to care. Brexit has anaesthetised their moral sensibilities. If America's Republicans can put Donald Trump in the White House, why not Mr Johnson in Downing Street?

When David Cameron conceded a referendum on EU membership to Tory Eurosceptics, the then prime minister imagined it would serve two ends. It would shore up his premiership against the anti-European sniping and, by settling the argument in favour of staying in the EU, would reunite the party. Instead, the referendum was lost, Mr Cameron lost his job, and the Tories have become the party of English nationalism. Not something to be called statesmanship. There are still Conservatives who would settle for the pragmatic incrementalism that has won the party election after election during the past couple of centuries. Look hard enough and you can even find Tory internationalists who view European engagement as the party saw it when Britain joined the EU – a way to amplify its voice in the world.

This dwindling band of Burkean moderates, however, has been drowned out by the swell of Tory MPs and local activists on a mission to wrench Britain out of the EU, whatever the cost. The politics of identity has triumphed over common sense. Mr Trump has leaned on a base of angry, often elderly, white men to drag Republicans to the nativist right. This is the demographic that cheers loudest when Mr Johnson damns Mrs May for offering the smallest concession in the Brexit negotiations.

Whether Mr Johnson believes an uncompromising rupture with Brussels is in the national interest is doubtful. Erstwhile colleagues say he was a last-minute convert

to the Leave side of the argument. The volte-face, and his post-referendum reinvention as the hardest of the hardliners, were all about personal ambition. This is a politician who has never wrestled with the detail or dilemmas of serious policymaking; nor been troubled by principle. It is all about winning. And Mr Trump after all was once a registered Democrat.

Mr Johnson's dishonesty has been closely chronicled, whether it be making things up while a young journalist (for which he was sacked by The Times newspaper) or lying to the then leader of his party Michael Howard (for which he was sacked from the shadow cabinet). His serial adultery has filled the pages of the tabloid press. Colleagues at Westminster have a veritable fund of stories of Johnsonian mendacity.

Unsurprisingly, consistency is not a strong point. Mr Johnson poses as a cosmopolitan – sometimes as a One-Nation – Conservative. This is hard to square with casual but ugly references to “piccaninnies”, “watermelon smiles” and former US president Barack Obama's Kenyan ancestry; or with the demonising of Turkish migrants by the Leave side in the Brexit campaign.

As with Mr Trump, the brazenness seems to work. The crowd cheering Mr Johnson's make-me-leader speech at the Conservative conference in Birmingham were untroubled by small matters of personal ethics. He has identified a bigger enemy on the other side of the Channel. The nation is in danger of being betrayed. The prime minister, Mr Johnson warns, is colluding with foreign powers in the subversion of the nation's governance. Her “Chequers” plan for an orderly exit from the EU would see a shackled Britain dragged through the streets of Brussels.

This is all fanciful nonsense, but it is nonsense that appeals to a party that, like Mr Trump's Republicans, wants to throw up the barricades against the outside world. The Tories used to count themselves the party of business. Mr Johnson's response to

boardroom criticism of his hard Brexit formula has been terse: “Fuck business.”

The Conservatives, you could say, have been here before. Britain's relationship with the outside world and divisions between nationalists and internationalists were at the root of the 19th-century divide over the Corn Laws. At the turn of the 20th century they fuelled a second split over imperial tariff preferences. In both cases, the Tories paid the price of a long spell in opposition before the logic of electoral arithmetic assured victory for the realists.

In the normal run of things, the same would happen again. After all, Mr Johnson's Elizabethan daydreaming will not long survive contact with the economic consequences of Brexit. And, no, the nation cannot reinvent itself as Singapore. The complication is that this latest rush to the nationalist fringe has coincided with the ascendancy within the Labour party of Jeremy Corbyn.

As the Conservatives have slid rightward, Mr Corbyn has dragged Labour to the populist far-left. He has his own brand of snake oil to sell. Mr Johnson has made Brussels the enemy; for Mr Corbyn it is capitalism and all its works.

Presented with such a choice, it is hard to know where the electorate will eventually land. It is possible that Mrs May could yet survive. Mr Johnson's petulant displays of disloyalty do him no great favours and Mrs May left the conference in better shape than expected. It is much harder, though, to imagine how the Tories will be saved from English nationalism or Labour from Mr Corbyn's reheated Marxism.

By Philip Stephens
Financial Times / 4 October 2018

Tim says: “Another illuminating article from the former Aussie High Commissioner to the UK, Alexander Downer. These descendants of convicts usually talk sense...”

WHAT AUSSIES REALLY THINK OF BREXIT (AND CORBYN)

Alexander Downer is coming to the end of his four-year stint as High Commissioner to the UK. His common sense will be missed

When friends speak, you should listen – and you would be hard pressed to find a better friend of this country in the London diplomatic corps than Alexander Downer. The 66-year-old, who has just finished a four-year stint as the Australian High Commissioner, is an Anglophile by instinct and upbringing. He spent much of his childhood here because his father was appointed to the job in 1964.

When Downer's father left in 1972, he worried about this country joining the European Economic Community and what that would mean for relations with Australia and other Commonwealth countries. So there is a neat symmetry in his son being High Commissioner when Britain decided to reverse that decision. But Downer is not particularly ideological about Brexit. In 2016 he dutifully joined in the chorus of diplomatic panjandrums urging Britain to vote Remain. But since then, he has been quick to talk about the opportunities it presents.

On its own, he says Brexit won't be transformative: 'Your fate when you leave the EU will depend much more on the domestic policies you pursue than the fact you're not in the EU. You will do well if you open your markets and you embrace free trade; there was never a country that embraced free trade that was poor as a result.'

Free-trade will also mean leaving the customs union: 'If you stay in the single market and the customs union, you have left the decision-making part of the EU but you remain in the rest of it... I can tell you what, you wouldn't persuade the average Aussie to contract out decision making to ASEAN [Association of South East Asian Nations], they'd just change the government if the government tried to do that!' Some Tory MPs might think the same is true in Britain.

Downer argues that the more attention the customs union gets, the more voters will reject it: 'The more the public understands that remaining in the customs union means that other people make all of your trade policy for you, they would regard that as completely unacceptable. I don't think they necessarily know the details of what all these terms mean, because they've got other things on their minds; you can't blame them for that. But I think if you were a really effective politician, you could make a very strong point on this.'

You might think: Downer would say that, wouldn't he? After all, if Britain stays in the customs union there is no chance of that UK-Australia trade agreement. But he is surely right that it would be absurd for the sixth largest economy in the world not to have control over its trade policy.

On a UK-Australia free trade deal, Downer is keen to offer reassurance, emphasising it is nothing to be afraid of. He stresses that Australia doesn't want 'radical change to regulations' and that farmers shouldn't fear the market being flooded with cheap beef and lamb, as Australia 'doesn't have much interest in the British market'. Rather, its sights are focused on Asia, where 'there is a massive rise of the middle class. Honestly, we cannot produce enough meat at the moment to meet the market demand in Asia.'

Whether the agricultural lobby is reassured by this answer remains to be seen. But when Downer talks about the Australia-US free-trade deal, you can see why Canberra is so keen on one with Britain. Downer points out that in the 13 years since the deal was signed, trade between the two countries has increased by 50 per cent and investment is up 130 per cent. Interestingly, Downer adds that he would like a UK-Australia trade deal to be accompanied by the kind of immigration accord Australia and the US have, which allows professionals to work in each other's country for two years, with the option to renew indefinitely.

If Brexit was the greatest political shock of Downer's time in London, the second was Jeremy Corbyn's Labour party winning 40 per cent of the vote last June. But Downer doesn't think that Corbyn will ever become PM.

'People, I think, will start to worry about the policy and professionalism,' he says. 'When you've left the EU, you'll be on your own in terms of policies – you won't have Brussels making policies for you any more. So, the quality of your policies would be very important.'

But Downer reckons that 'It's the hint of anti-westernism that comes from Corbyn which I think is electorally really dangerous.' He thinks the public's reaction to Corbyn's response to the Salisbury attack backs this up. He is, though, deeply worried about the possibility of a Corbyn premiership and what it would mean for the world: 'Britain is the second greatest western power, and for Great Britain to become, or the government of Great Britain to become, a trenchant critic of western foreign policy and the western alliance... People would feel very uncomfortable about that. People in Australia would be very surprised and disheartened if that were to happen, and that wouldn't be just people who support the Liberal party, there would be a lot of people in the Australian Labour party as well.'

Perhaps Downer's most important advice is that the Brexit debate has 'laid a little more bare the division between the liberal elite and the mainstream of British society'. The 'great challenge' will be to reconnect them once this is over. If the two sides were looking for a marriage counsellor, they could do worse than this softly spoken Australian.

By James Forsyth
The Spectator / 12 May 2018

Tim says: “Martin Wolf laments the attitude of UK Eurosceptics to the European ‘project’. Martin is a great political and economic philosopher, so I invite him to discuss this point over a pint. The instinct of the thinking Leaver is that the future of humanity depends on democracy and universal suffrage. Germany, for example, would not have declared war on all of Europe, in the last century, had it been a properly functioning democracy, we Leavers believe. Remainers, like Martin, are less trustful of democracy and believe that a ‘supra-national body’, like the EU, is essential for future peace and prosperity. I feel sure that Martin is wrong and that the troubles in Greece and elsewhere show that supra-national control breeds a desire for ‘strong leaders’ who, unlike Theresa May, can face up to the unelected bullies who inevitably control non-democracies.”

BREXITERS MISUNDERSTAND THE EUROPEAN PROJECT

It is legitimate to believe the EU has over-reached, but not to despise its goals

“What happened to the confidence and ideals of the European dream? The EU was set up to protect freedom. It was the Soviet Union that stopped people leaving. The lesson from history is clear: if you turn the EU club into a prison, the desire to get out won't diminish, it will grow...and we won't be the only prisoner that will want to escape.” Thus did Jeremy Hunt address the Conservative party conference this week.

This is a breathtaking remark. It is breathtaking because it came from the foreign secretary, the person entrusted with managing the relations of the UK with foreigners; because negotiations with the EU, a particularly important and powerful group of foreigners, are coming to their moment of crisis; because it came from a politician with a reputation for sobriety; and because it came from a man who campaigned for Remain. It is breathtaking, above all, because the parallel Mr Hunt drew between the EU and Soviet Union was so stupid and offensive.

The Soviets sent tanks into East Berlin in 1953, Budapest in 1956 and Prague in 1968. The EU is hardly threatening the UK with similar brutality. It is merely stating that the proposals put forward by the British government for the withdrawal agreement, especially its “Chequers plan”, will not work. This is not keeping the UK in a prison: this is negotiation. Disagreement with the UK's proposals over withdrawal is just that: disagreement. The EU is right, too. The plan will not work.

In a serious country, a foreign secretary who made such a remark, at such a moment, about such important, friendly countries

would be sacked. Let him follow Boris Johnson on to the backbenches. In a serious governing party, he would have been booed. But Mr Hunt said it because he believed that this sort of malevolent stupidity is popular in the Tory party. That is terrifying.

Behind the offensive remarks uttered by Mr Hunt lies a lack of the imagination needed to understand what the EU is. Yet that is a necessary condition for dealing with it sensibly, now or in future. For the people who currently lead it, the survival of the EU is an existential issue. Relations with a departing UK are, by comparison, relatively insignificant.

The great difference is that, in their bones, the English mostly lack fear. Most continentals do not. On the European mainland, only Finland, Portugal, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland survived the second world war unconquered. What was the sovereignty of the Netherlands worth in 1940? Four days. As an Irish minister told me after the Brexit referendum, first of all the EU is a peace project. But it is not built on fear alone. It is also built on hope – of a prosperous, integrated Europe able to speak up in the world.

It is legitimate to reject this project. Brexiters do. It is legitimate to believe the EU has over-reached. On monetary union, I agree. It is legitimate to believe the EU has under-reached. On defence, I also agree. But it is illegitimate for a sane person to despise the EU's goals or hope that it will collapse into chaos.

Goals create structure. This is a peace project that works by embedding mutual relations in a framework of equally applicable and legally binding rules.

The mutual trust necessary to make the EU work depends on this. The rules need to be clear and subject to an authoritative legal process. Once countries receive benefits without meeting obligations, the EU will disintegrate.

Chequers does not meet these requirements: it demands that the UK be outside the EU's customs area for goods, in order to negotiate deals of its own, but also inside it, in order to get rid of EU customs and regulatory controls. The EU has red lines, too. It cannot accept such freeriding. The UK is not imprisoned; it is just not getting what it wants. Like it or not, the EU is also far more potent in these negotiations than the UK, because it is far bigger.

Chequers is itself a response to the difficulty in reaching agreement over Ireland. At the core of the EU is the idea that small countries should be protected from the big countries (and so the big from themselves). Preserving peace on the island of Ireland is more important to the EU than letting the UK's customs area stay undivided. From its point of view, UK withdrawal created the problem, and so the UK must fix it.

I have no idea whether there will be a deal, whether parliament will pass it, or whether there will be a second vote. But, if zealots promote a “stab in the back” myth, according to which EU obduracy snatched a glorious Brexit from the British people, the legacy will be poisonous. Responsible politicians would not go anywhere near this. But Mr Hunt is not a cause of the derangement; he is a symptom.

By Martin Wolf
Financial Times / 4 October 2018