

More Project Fear leaked to the newspapers

I find it difficult to believe 2 years on the civil service are still writing and leaking absurdly pessimistic scenarios about Brexit. Ministers have offered clear directions that they should work up the best way of leaving without a deal. That is what they were charged to do. I am told by Ministers that is what they are doing. Ministers assure us all will be ready to leave in March 2019 and to carry on importing goods from the EU if we still want to buy them. The Germans are particularly keen that should be true, given the size of their trade surplus! So why are some other civil servants inventing nonsensical outcomes and leaking them when Ministers have asked them not to and told them these forecasts are just silly?

Apparently according to the latest leak someone in the civil service thinks if we leave without a deal Calais will not co-operate and so create interruptions to the supply of imported food and pharmaceuticals to us. No sensible person could make that up. The people running Calais port want to earn fees for running a smooth business. They do not have legal powers to discriminate against particular cargoes going to particular places. If they did try any such thing Oostende, Zeebrugge, Antwerp, Rotterdam and other Belgian and Dutch ports would be delighted to lift the business from Calais, assuming the French competitors were also in an illegal sulk.

There is then the rest of the world. They are looking to see if the EU messes up its very lucrative food export business to the UK by imposing food tariffs and other barriers. If they do there will be plenty of suppliers from outside the EU selling us products, to say nothing of the response of UK farmers if the EU makes itself less competitive.

The leak is revealing. It shows that there is still a strand of thinking in the civil service that wishes to stop Brexit, and is busy inventing difficulties that do not exist. They seem to want to help those on the continent that think they can reverse Brexit and keep our money flowing into their expensive organisation. What they are all succeeding in doing is creating an ever bigger volume of support for leaving with No Deal, as they keep on working to ensure any deal on offer will be a bad one for the UK.