

My interventions in the debate on the Northern Ireland Protocol Bill

Rt Hon Sir John Redwood MP (Wokingham) (Con): I congratulate the Foreign Secretary on her very patient and good diplomacy. Will she confirm that this very moderate measure is completely legal and essential to the peace and good will of Northern Ireland?

Liz Truss, Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs: I can absolutely confirm that this Bill is both necessary and legal, and the Government have published a legal statement setting that out.

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Rt Hon Sir John Redwood MP (Wokingham) (Con): The protocol makes very clear the primacy of the Good Friday agreement for peace in Northern Ireland and says that the EU will respect our internal market. The EU is doing neither. What is the right hon. Gentleman's policy to persuade it to do so?

David Lammy, Shadow Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs (Lab): Negotiate—just as Labour did to get the Good Friday agreement. We negotiate. We do not break international law and alienate our partners and allies not just in Europe but across the world, and the right hon. Gentleman should know better.

As we debate the Bill, we should ask ourselves some simple questions. First, will it resolve the situation in Northern Ireland? Secondly, is it in the best interests of our great country? Thirdly, is it compatible with our commitment to the rule of law? Let me take each of those in turn.

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Rt Hon Sir John Redwood MP (Wokingham) (Con): Has my right hon. Friend noticed how Labour always takes the side of the EU, even when, as in this case, the EU is damaging the Good Friday agreement and diverting trade expressly against the legal provisions of the protocol?

Brandon Lewis, Secretary of State for Northern Ireland: My right hon. Friend makes a fair point. He will know from attending oral questions to the Northern Ireland Office that I have regularly had to listen to the hon. Member for Hove at the Dispatch Box taking the side of the EU—but then, the hon. Member wants to rejoin the EU, so I suppose we should not be surprised.

We should also be clear about the reality, when we hear about the flexibility of the European Union and the offer it has made, based on its October offer. That would be a backwards step from the current situation, which is already not working for businesses and people in Northern Ireland.