

Open letter to the Democrat visitors to Westminster about Northern Ireland

Dear members of Congress

You are welcome in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. You will find many MPs here grateful to the USA for helping produce a peace on the island of Ireland after many years of terrorist violence. As one who survived the Brighton bombing the world is a much better place for the Agreement between the nationalist and Unionist communities of Northern Ireland. It is best they work through the ballot box and in a devolved elected Assembly together.

Before entering the UK debate and negotiations with the EU it would be a useful courtesy if you would read both the Good Friday Agreement which we all support, and the Protocol to the UK/EU Withdrawal Agreement. This will remind you that it is the EU's lopsided and heavy handed interpretation of the Protocol which is undermining the Good Friday Agreement. Asking the UK to go along with the EU will intensify the unhappiness of the Unionist community and make it unlikely Unionist Assembly members will resume joint working with nationalist parties. The Unionists see the Protocol as a fundamental change to their constitutional status as part of the UK and its internal market, and illegal under the Act of Union of 1801 and successor Acts which gave them that status. The Good Friday Agreement is based on the wise central proposition that changes can only come about if both communities, nationalist and Unionist, give their consent.

Let me reassure you that as an Englishman I wish both nationalists and Unionists well in Northern Ireland. I and my fellow Englishmen and women have no wish to keep Northern Ireland in the UK against its will. If at any time it becomes clear from opinion polls majority opinion is shifting in Northern Ireland to leaving the UK we would be happy for a border poll to be held and would accept its result. Current opinion polls say that around two thirds of Northern Irish voters wish to remain within the UK.

The UK did recently give a poll to Scotland when around a half of voters were indicating they wanted to leave the UK. The referendum produced a 55% vote to stay. As a majority of voters in the UK voted to leave the EU the UK cannot accept rule by the EU in part of our country. We voted for the freedoms the USA enjoys to make her own laws and impose her own taxes. I am sure you can understand that. If I had been alive in 1776 I trust I would have supported American independence.

Yours sincerely

John Redwood