

Project Fear from the EU is just absurd

I guess much of the latest round of Project Fear, now in its extreme phase, comes from EU sources. They are clearly worried that we might just leave without making them a large payment and without staying in their system for another 21 months. They seem to be trying to shock UK public opinion into buyer's remorse on Brexit. Their efforts are silly.

Doubtless some of the most ardent Remain MPs and peers, many of them on the Opposition benches, seek to play up any negatives the EU might throw them as they seek to disrupt the country and its government over Brexit. The latest scare stories do not merit the attention they get in some newspapers and in some of the media. A cursory questioning of any of these stories would show it is without substance.

Let's take the latest scares that we will run out of drugs and food. How could that possibly happen? Continental suppliers want to sell us their goods after March 29th 2019, as they do now. The EU does not have the power to ban them selling to us. We will control all the ports for the receipt of these goods, so we will decide what checks and payments will be required. We can appoint whatever people and deploy whatever technology we want to ensure smooth running of the import process under WTO rules. Why would we want to introduce new checks and taxes that make it difficult to import things we want? I was glad to see that No 10 has at last briefed that there are no stand by plans for the army to move food, as food will of course continue to roll in on ships and trucks as it does today. Our non EU imports come in smoothly at the moment showing we know how to do it, even with tariffs where the EU requires them.

Or lets take the stupid idea that France and Germany will ground all their planes that currently fly to the UK in order to stop our planes flying to their airports. They are not going to want to cut themselves off from the UK market, from London and the large international hub at Heathrow, and their airlines will not want to have to cancel all the tickets they are selling for flights after March 29th 2019. The EU does not have the power to stop planes flying between member states. What would they say to the Spanish co owners of BA if they wanted to damage BA, the main UK airline? How would they put up a case in court when an airline sued them for attempted damage to its business?

Then there is the wrong notion that EU citizens living in the UK and UK citizens living in the EU would be at risk of removal. The UK has made clear it is not going to ask people legally settled here under EU rules to leave, and I expect the rest of the EU to behave in the same manner towards UK people living on the continent. Advanced democratic countries obey international law, which does not permit mass deportations. Nor I am glad to say have I ever heard a mainstream UK or EU politician advocate anything so unpleasant.

During the referendum campaign when I was speaking to a public meeting in my own area, the Remain spokesman was a civilised former senior civil servant. He delivered a mild version of Project Fear about the job losses, recession, falls in house prices and the rest that his side forecast for the winter immediately after the vote. We now know that was all wrong. The public reaction in a mixed audience was fascinating. They laughed at the silliness of Project Fear.