

The ERG and Mrs May

There is considerable misunderstanding in the media about the ERG. The ERG is the European Research Group. There are paying MP members who contribute jointly to research staff to help them, and non paying members like myself who contribute our own research to the Group and also attend its meetings. As the name implies all the research is geared to understanding the impact of the EU on public policy and in the last two years to detailed consideration of leaving the EU and establishing a new relationship.

There are many MP members. We all agree that the draft Withdrawal Agreement is unacceptable and as far as I know all will vote against it if it reaches the Commons as draft legislation. The ERG as a Group does not have a view on the future of the PM. Jacob Rees-Mogg (Chairman) has announced in public that he has submitted a letter, and Steve Baker is very active in promoting a vote. There are some other ERG members who have stated they have sent letters. There are some members who have sent letters but do not wish to make a public statement. There are members consulting their Constituency Associations about it. There are some members who do not wish to send letters for a variety of reasons. The Group has only had one formal discussion of this matter when Jacob advised us of his intentions, because the future of Mrs May is not within the normal remit of this Research group. Our aim as a Group is to concentrate on the issues around withdrawal and to set out a clear path on the ones where the Group has something important to say, as on the Irish backstop. Members of the ERG between us have over the last two and a half years set out a comprehensive approach to Brexit and urged the government to take it up. We have written and spoken on the legislation needed, on the legal and constitutional issues, on food and fishing, borders and immigration, trade and tariffs, the economy and taxation, transport security.

The campaign to have a confidence vote is now effectively led by Jacob Rees Mogg and Steve Baker. As Steve has stated on tv he thinks 48 letters should now have gone in. Clearly more letters have gone in than the number of public declarations. I do not believe Sir Graham Brady will fail in his duty. When he has received and opened 48 such letters he has to tell the PM immediately, and organise a vote promptly.