

The Great Repeal Bill – the Bill all MPs have to support

I am happy with the principles behind the proposed legislation. Whilst we are leaving under the Treaty provisions, the actual legal abolition of EU power in the UK requires the repeal of the Act of Parliament which gave the EEC, then the EU, the powers in the first place.

The Bill is misdescribed as the Great Repeal Bill. It is really the Great Continuity Bill. Its prime purpose is to transfer all current directly acting EU laws and past court decisions into UK law. It is therefore reassuring to all those who voted Remain because they liked current EU laws and protections, as this legislation will preserve them and make them UK requirements on our departure.

Labour and the Lib Dems were keen to stress their wish to see areas like employment law protected. This Bill does just that. They will therefore need to vote for the Bill to carry out their clearly expressed wish that every EU employment protection survives Brexit. This should be an unusual Bill where the whole House wants to support it. There will of course be amendments which will cause debate and division, about how much detail has to be put into the Act itself. Anyone who does not vote for this Bill is supporting no continuity in our laws and uncertainties over what the law is in many fields.

Some are now saying what is the point of leaving the EU if we keep all the EU laws. The point is once they are UK laws, we in the UK can decide to keep them, improve them or remove them. The UK government has reassured the Opposition that it has no wish or intention to repeal or dilute any of the employment protections that stem from EU law all the time it is in office. The government does, however, wish to introduce new border controls and benefit and migration policies, which is only possible once we have taken back control and transferred the EU border and benefits law into UK law. This will of course need UK primary legislation which will go through a full parliamentary process to change what we currently have. I also trust the government will want to put through a new fishing policy which is kinder to both our fish and our fishermen. That too will need a full Parliamentary process with new legislation.

I have commented before on the so called Henry VIII powers. Most modern Acts of Parliament have needed Statutory Instruments to implement them and handle the details. The scope of this is debated by Parliament when the Act is passed. Each Statutory Instrument itself is put to Parliament, and Parliament can debate and vote on them if it wishes.