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**HOUSE OF COMMONS
OFFICIAL REPORT**

**PARLIAMENTARY
DEBATES**

(HANSARD)

Saturday 19 October 2019

House of Commons

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The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Speaker's Statement

Mr Speaker: Before I call the Prime Minister to make a statement, I want to make a very few brief introductory remarks.

First, I want to thank—and I am sure that colleagues across the House want to join me in thanking—all the staff of the House who have worked so hard to facilitate the sitting today. [HON. MEMBERS: “Hear, hear.”] I know that many of them have had to make special arrangements to be here, as have many hon. and right hon. Members.

Secondly, I remind hon. Members of what I said in my statement at the start of the Session less than a week ago about the need to be mindful of the impact of what they say, not only upon other hon. and right hon. Members, but upon on others who follow our proceedings.

Thirdly, I can inform the House that I have selected amendment (a), in the name of Sir Oliver Letwin and others, to motion 1, and the manuscript amendment in the name of Peter Kyle and others to motion 2.

Fourthly, it may be to the convenience of the House to know that although the second motion is debatable, I think it will be convenient for the two motions to be debated together so that reference to the second motion may be made in the debate. If the second motion is moved, I will put the Question or Questions on that motion without separate debate.

Prime Minister's Statement

9.36 am

The Prime Minister (Boris Johnson): Mr Speaker, I want to begin by echoing what you have just said and expressing my gratitude to all Members of the House for assembling on a Saturday for the first time in 37 years, and indeed to all members of our House of Commons staff who have worked to make this sitting possible. I know that it has meant people giving up their Saturday and breaking into their weekend at a time when families want to be together, and of course it means missing at least the end of England's world cup quarter final. I apologise to the House for that; I wish I could watch it myself. I know that the hon. Member for Cardiff West (Kevin Brennan) has postponed his 60th birthday party—if not his 60th birthday—to be here. The House has gone to a great deal of trouble to assemble here on a Saturday for the first time in a generation, and I do hope that in assembling for the purposes of a meaningful vote, we will indeed be allowed to have a meaningful vote this evening.

With permission, Mr Speaker, I shall make a statement on the new agreement with our European friends. The House will need no reminding that this is the second deal and the fourth vote, three and half years after the nation voted for Brexit. During those years, friendships have been strained, families divided and the attention of this House consumed by a single issue that has at times felt incapable of resolution, but I hope that this is the moment when we can finally achieve that resolution and reconcile the instincts that compete within us.

Many times in the last 30 years, I have heard our European friends remark that this country is half-hearted in its EU membership, and it is true that we in the UK have often been a backmarker—opting out of the single currency, not taking part in Schengen, very often trying to block some collective ambition. In the last three and a half years, it has been striking that Members on all sides of this House have debated Brexit in almost entirely practical terms, in an argument that has focused on the balance of economic risk and advantage. I do not think I can recall a time when I have heard a single Member stand up and call for Britain to play her full part in the political construction of a federal Europe. I do not think I have heard a single Member call for ever closer union, ever deeper integration or a federal destiny—mon pays Europe. [*Interruption.*] Perhaps I missed it, but I do not think I have heard much of it. There is a whole side of the debate that one hears regularly in other European capitals that is simply absent from our national conversation, and I do not think that has changed much in the last 30 years.

If we have been sceptical, if we have been anxious about the remoteness of the bureaucracy, if we have been dubious about the rhetoric of union and integration, if we have been half-hearted Europeans, it follows logically that with part of our hearts—with half our hearts—we feel something else: a sense of love and respect for European culture and civilisation, of which we are a part; a desire to co-operate with our friends and partners in everything, creatively, artistically, intellectually; a sense of our shared destiny; and a deep understanding of the eternal need, especially after the horrors of the last century, for Britain to stand as one of the guarantors of peace and democracy in our continent—and it is our continent.

[The Prime Minister]

It is precisely because we are capable of feeling both things at once—sceptical about the modes of EU integration, as we are, but passionate and enthusiastic about Europe—that the whole experience of the last three and a half years has been so difficult for this country and so divisive. That is why it is now so urgent for us to move on and build a new relationship with our friends in the EU on the basis of a new deal—a deal that can heal the rift in British politics and unite the warring instincts in us all. Now is the time for this great House of Commons to come together and bring the country together today, as I believe people at home are hoping and expecting, with a new way forward and a new and better deal both for Britain and our friends in the EU. That is the advantage of the agreement that we have struck with our friends in the last two days. This deal allows the UK, whole and entire, to leave the EU on 31 October in accordance with the referendum while simultaneously looking forward to a new partnership based on the closest ties of friendship and co-operation.

I pay tribute to our European friends for escaping the prison of existing positions and showing the vision to be flexible by reopening the withdrawal agreement and thereby addressing the deeply felt concerns of many in this House. One of my most important jobs is to express those concerns to our European friends. I shall continue to listen to all hon. Members throughout the debate today, to meet with anyone on any side and to welcome the scrutiny the House will bring to bear if, as I hope, we proceed to consider the withdrawal Bill next week.

Today this House has a historic opportunity to show the same breadth of vision as our European neighbours and the same ability and resolve to reach beyond past disagreements by getting Brexit done and moving this country forwards, as we all yearn to do. This agreement provides for a real Brexit, taking back control of our borders, laws, money, farming, fisheries and trade, amounting to the greatest single restoration of national sovereignty in parliamentary history. It removes the backstop, which would have held us against our will in the customs union and much of the single market. For the first time in almost five decades, the UK will be able to strike free trade deals with our friends across the world to benefit the whole country, including Northern Ireland.

Article 4 of the protocol states:

“Northern Ireland is part of the customs territory of the United Kingdom”.

It adds

“nothing in this Protocol shall prevent”

Northern Ireland from realising the preferential market access in any free trade deals

“on the same terms as goods produced in other parts of the United Kingdom.”

Our negotiations have focused on the uniquely sensitive nature of the border between Northern Ireland and the Republic, and we have respected those sensitivities. Above all, we and our European friends have preserved the letter and the spirit of the Belfast/Good Friday agreement, and have upheld the long-standing areas of co-operation between the UK and Ireland, including the common travel area. As I told the House on 3 October, in order to prevent a regulatory border on the island of

Ireland we propose a regulatory zone covering all goods, including agrifood, eliminating any need for associated checks at the border.

But in this agreement we have gone further by also finding a solution to the vexed question of customs, which many in the House have raised. Our agreement ensures “unfettered market access for goods moving from Northern Ireland to the rest of the United Kingdom’s internal market.”

It ensures that there should be no tariffs on goods circulating within the UK customs territory—that is, between Great Britain and Northern Ireland—unless they are at risk of entering the EU. It ensures an open border on the island of Ireland, a common objective of everyone in the House. And it ensures for those living and working alongside the border that there will be no visible or practical changes to their lives: they can carry on as before.

I believe that this is a good arrangement, reconciling the special circumstances in Northern Ireland with the minimum possible bureaucratic consequences at a few points of arrival in Northern Ireland, and it is precisely to ensure that those arrangements are acceptable to the people of Northern Ireland that we have made consent a fundamental element of this new deal. So no arrangements can be imposed on Northern Ireland if they do not work for Northern Ireland. Under this agreement, the people of Northern Ireland will have the right to express or withhold their consent to these provisions by means of a majority vote in their Assembly four years after the end of the transition. If the Assembly chooses to withhold consent, these provisions “shall cease to apply” after two years, during which the Joint Committee of the UK and EU would propose a new way forward, in concert with Northern Ireland’s institutions.

As soon as this House allows the process of extracting ourselves from the EU to be completed, the exciting enterprise of building a new relationship with our friends can begin. That enterprise has been too long delayed, and the Labour party would delay it further. I do not wish this to be the project of any one Government or any one party, but rather to be the endeavour of the United Kingdom as a whole. Only this Parliament can make this new relationship the work of the nation, and so Parliament should be at the heart of decision making as we develop our approach. I acknowledge that in the past we have perhaps not always acted in that spirit.

So as we take forward our friendship with our closest neighbours and construct that new relationship, I will ensure that a broad and open process draws upon the wealth of expertise in every part of this House, including Select Committees and their Chairs. Every party and every Member who wishes to contribute will be invited to do so, and we shall start by debating the mandate for our negotiators in the next phase.

The ambition for our future friendship is contained in the revised political declaration, which also provides for the House to be free to decide our own laws and regulations. I have complete faith in this House to choose regulations that are in our best tradition—our best tradition—of the highest standards of environmental protections and workers’ rights. No one, anywhere in this Chamber, believes in lowering standards. Instead—

[Interruption.]

Mr Speaker: Order. There is a lot of gesticulation. The statement by the Prime Minister must be heard, and it will be.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, I am grateful.

No one believes in lowering standards. Instead, we believe in improving them, as indeed we will be able to do, and seizing the opportunities of our new freedoms. For example, free from the common agricultural policy, we will have a far simpler system where we will reward farmers for improving our environment and animal welfare, many of whose provisions are impossible under the current arrangements, instead of just paying them for their acreage. Free from the common fisheries policy, we can ensure sustainable yields based on the latest science, not outdated methods of setting quotas.

These restored powers will be available not simply to this Government, but to every future British Government of any party to use as they see fit. That is what restoring sovereignty means. That is what is meant in practice by taking back control of our destiny. Our first decision, on which I believe there will be unanimity, is that in any future trade negotiations with any country, our national health service will not be on the table.

I am convinced that an overwhelming majority in this House, regardless of our personal views, wishes to see Brexit delivered in accordance with the referendum—a majority. In this crucial mission, there can no longer be any argument for further delay. As someone who passionately believed that we had to go back to our European friends to seek a better agreement, I must tell the House that with this new deal the scope for future negotiation—for fruitful negotiation—has run its course.

The Opposition said that we could not reopen the withdrawal agreement. They said that we could not change a comma of the withdrawal agreement. They said that we could not abolish the backstop. We have done both. But it is now my judgment that we have reached the best possible solution. So those who agree, like me, that Brexit must be delivered, and who, like me, prefer to avoid a no-deal outcome must abandon the delusion that this House can delay again, and I must tell the House in all candour that there is very little appetite among our friends in the EU for this business to be protracted by one extra day. They have had three and a half years of this debate. It has distracted them from their own projects and their own ambitions, and if there is one feeling that unites the British public with a growing number of officials in the EU, it is a burning desire to get Brexit done.

I must tell the House again, in all candour, that, whatever letters they may seek to force the Government to write, it cannot change my judgment that further delay is pointless, expensive and deeply corrosive of public trust, and people simply will not understand how politicians can say with one breath that they want delay to avoid no deal and with the next breath that they still want delay when a great deal is there to be done.

Now is the time to get this thing done, and I say to all Members, let us come together as democrats to end this debilitating feud. Let us come together as democrats to get behind this deal—the one proposition that fulfils the verdict of the majority, but which also allows us to bring together the two halves of our hearts, to bring together the two halves of our nation. Let us speak now, both for the 52 and for the 48.

Let us go for a deal that can heal this country and can allow us all to express our legitimate desires for the deepest possible friendship and partnership with our neighbours, a deal that allows us to create a new shared

destiny with them, and a deal that also allows us to express our confidence in our own democratic institutions, to make our own laws, to determine our own future and to believe in ourselves once again as an open, generous, global, outward looking, free trading United Kingdom. That is the prospect that this deal offers our country. It is a great prospect and a great deal. I commend it to the House.

9.55 am

Jeremy Corbyn (Islington North) (Lab): I join you, Mr Speaker, in thanking all the staff—cleaning staff, catering staff, security staff, officials and our own staff—who have come into the House this morning. They have given up a weekend to help our deliberations. I also thank the Prime Minister for an advance copy of his statement.

The Prime Minister has renegotiated the withdrawal agreement and made it even worse. He has renegotiated the political declaration and made that even worse. Today, we are having a debate on a text for which there is no economic impact assessment and no accompanying legal advice.

The Government have sought to avoid scrutiny throughout the process. Yesterday evening, they made empty promises on workers' rights and the environment—the same Government who spent the last few weeks negotiating in secret to remove from the withdrawal agreement legally binding commitments on workers' rights and the environment.

This Government cannot be trusted, and the Opposition will not be duped; neither will the Government's own workers. Yesterday, the head of the civil service union Prospect met the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and, at the conclusion of that meeting, said:

"I asked for reassurances that the government would not diverge on workers' rights after Brexit... He could not give me those assurances."

As for the much-hyped "world-leading" Environment Bill, its legally binding targets will not be enforceable until 2037. For this Government, the climate emergency can always wait.

This deal risks people's jobs, rights at work, our environment and our national health service. We must be honest about what it means for our manufacturing industry and people's jobs: not only does it reduce access to the market of our biggest trading partner, but it leaves us without a customs union, which will damage industries across the country in every one of our constituencies. From Nissan in Sunderland to Heinz in Wigan, Airbus in Broughton and Jaguar Land Rover in Birmingham, thousands of British jobs depend on a strong manufacturing sector, and a strong manufacturing sector needs markets, through fluid supply chains, all across the European Union. A vote for this deal would be a vote to cut manufacturing jobs all across this country.

This deal would absolutely inevitably lead to a Trump trade deal—[*Interruption*—forcing the UK to diverge from the highest standards and expose our families once again to chlorine-washed chicken and hormone-treated beef. This deal—[*Interruption*.]

Mr Speaker: Order. I did say that the statement by the Prime Minister must be heard. The response of the Leader of the Opposition, in the best traditions of parliamentary democracy, must also be heard, and it will.

Jeremy Corbyn: This deal fails to enshrine the principle that we keep pace with the European Union on environmental standards and protections, putting at risk our current rules on matters ranging from air pollution standards to chemical safety—we all know the public concern about such issues—at the same time that we are facing a climate emergency.

As for workers' rights, we simply cannot give the Government a blank cheque. Mr Speaker, you do not have to take my word for that. Listen, for example, to the TUC general secretary, Frances O'Grady, who says—*[Interruption.]* She represents an organisation with 6 million affiliated members, and she says:

“This deal would be a disaster for working people. It would hammer the economy, cost jobs and sell workers' rights down the river.”

Listen to Make UK, representing British manufacturers, which says—*[Interruption.]* Government Members may care to listen to its comments on the deal. Make UK says that

“commitments to the closest possible trading relationship in goods have gone. Differences in regulation between the UK and the EU will add cost and bureaucracy and our companies will face a lack of clarity inhibiting investment and planning.”

Listen also to the Green Alliance, which says that the deal amounted to a

“very sad Brexit read from a climate perspective.”

The message is clear that this deal is not good for jobs and is damaging for our industry and a threat to our environment and our natural world. It is not a good deal for our country, and future generations will feel the impact. It should be voted down by this House today.

I also totally understand the frustration and fatigue across the country and in this House, but we simply cannot vote for a deal that is even worse than the one that the House rejected three times. The Government's own economic analysis shows that this deal would make the poorest regions even poorer and cost each person in this country over £2,000 a year. If we vote for a deal that makes our constituents poorer, we are not likely to be forgiven. The Government are claiming that if we support their deal, it will get Brexit done, and that backing them today is the only way to stop a no-deal exit. I simply say: nonsense. Supporting the Government this afternoon would merely fire the starting pistol in a race to the bottom in regulations and standards.

If anyone has any doubts about that, we only have to listen to what the Government's own Members have been saying. Like the one yesterday who rather let the cat out of the bag by saying that Members should back this deal as it means we can leave with no deal by 2020. *[HON. MEMBERS: “Ah.”]* The cat is truly out of the bag. Will the Prime Minister confirm whether that is the case? If a free trade agreement has not been done, would that mean Britain falling on to World Trade Organisation terms by December next year, with only Northern Ireland having preferential access to the EU market?

No wonder, then, that the Foreign Secretary said that this represents a “cracking deal” for Northern Ireland, which would retain frictionless access to the single market. That does prompt the question: why is it that the rest of the UK cannot get a cracking deal by maintaining access to the single market?

The Taoiseach said that the deal

“allows the all-Ireland economy to continue to develop and... protects the European single market”.

Some Members of this House would welcome an all-Ireland economy, but I did not think that they included the Government and the Conservative and Unionist party. The Prime Minister declared in the summer:

“Under no circumstances... will I allow the EU or anyone else to create any kind of division down the Irish Sea”.

We cannot trust a word he says.

Voting for a deal today will not end Brexit, and it will not deliver certainty. The people should have the final say. Labour is not prepared to sell out the communities that it represents. We are not prepared to sell out their future, and we will not back this sell-out deal. This is about our communities now and about our future generations.

The Prime Minister: I must confess that I am disappointed by the tone the right hon. Gentleman has taken today, because I had thought that he might rise to the occasion and see what the electorate—and, I believe, his own electorate—broadly want us to do, which is to get Brexit done. I thought he would wish to reflect the will of the people who voted for Brexit in such numbers in 2016 and have waited for a very long time.

The right hon. Gentleman is wrong about environmental and social protection. This Government and this country will maintain the very highest standards, and we will lead in environmental protection and social protection across Europe and the world. We lead, for instance, in our commitment to be carbon neutral by 2050, and as I have told him many times, Brexit gives us the freedom and the opportunity to do things that we have not been able to do and that are deeply desired by the British people, such as banning the live export of animals—that is to say nothing of shark fins—and many other things we can do differently and better.

The right hon. Gentleman is wrong about business. The overwhelming view of business is that there are great opportunities from Brexit. Also, both Stuart Rose, who is a former chairman of the remain campaign, and the Governor of the Bank of England have said today that this is a good deal for the British economy. As I look ahead, the only risks I see to the British economy are the catastrophic plans of the right hon. Gentleman and his semi-Marxist party. What British business wants is the certainty and stability of getting Brexit done on 31 October, and then the opportunity to build a new future with our European partners and to do free trade deals around the world.

The right hon. Gentleman is wrong about Northern Ireland, which, along with the rest of the UK, will exit the EU customs union, in defiance of what the European Commission and, indeed, the Irish Government had intended.

The right hon. Gentleman talks about trust. I do not wish to be unnecessarily adversarial today, but he patently does not trust his own party—he does not trust the shadow Chancellor—and, above all, he has not been willing to trust the people of this country by granting them the right to adjudicate on him and his policies in a general election. He will not trust the people, and he does not trust the people by delivering on the result of their referendum in 2016.

I suggest to the House, in all humility and candour, that it should ignore the right hon. Gentleman's pleadings and vote for an excellent deal that will take this country and the whole of Europe forward.

Mr Kenneth Clarke (Rushcliffe) (Ind): The Prime Minister began his statement, for which I am grateful, by saying how rare it has been for Members of this House ever to support federalism and a united states of Europe, and I entirely agree. Federalism and a belief in a European superstate are as rare in this country as they are, nowadays, in every one of the other 27 member states.

Does the Prime Minister accept that, for the past 50 years, the vast majority of the Conservative party and all four Conservative Prime Ministers in whose Governments I served believed that membership of the European Union gave us a stronger voice in the world politically, as one of the three leading members of the European Union, and gave us access to a free trade market that enabled us to build a strong and competitive economy? Will he reassure me—as I assure him that I will vote for his deal once we have given legislative effect to it—that, when he goes on to negotiate the eventual long-term arrangements, he will seek a solution in which we have the same completely open access across the channel and across the Irish border to trade and investment with the European Union as we have now, in both directions, even if we have to sacrifice the political benefits we have hitherto enjoyed from membership of the Union?

The Prime Minister: I wish to agree with at least part of my right hon. and learned Friend's analysis, because he says that there is scepticism across the continent about federalism and the desire to build a European Union superstate, and I think that he is right, but unfortunately that scepticism has not percolated up to the elites who run the EU and set the agenda in Brussels. *[Interruption.]*

Mr Speaker: Order. Every Member who has the Floor must be heard.

The Prime Minister: I am making a valid point, which is that in Brussels my right hon. and learned Friend's message has not really been perfectly understood, because they are continuing with a large number of federalist projects. At the European Council, only a couple of days ago, I heard the distinguished President of France calling for a union bancaire—a banking union, Mr Speaker; spelt b-a-n-c-a-i-r-e. There is a strong desire to intensify the process of integration—for example, by creating a defence pact—in a way that I think would meet the scepticism of not just my right hon. and learned Friend, but millions of people across the EU. I can give him an absolute reassurance that in the course of negotiations—in which we would want the entire House, or as many Members who want to be involved as possible, to take part—we will ensure that we get exactly what I think he desires: a zero-tariff, zero-quota free trade partnership so that there is maximum trade, and increasing trade, between our economies.

Ian Blackford (Ross, Skye and Lochaber) (SNP): May I join you, Mr Speaker, in thanking all the staff who have made today's sitting possible? I also thank the Prime Minister for advance sight of his statement.

Northern Ireland, 13; Scotland, zero—those are the number of references to Northern Ireland and to Scotland in the Prime Minister's statement. There was not one reference to Scotland. The Prime Minister has returned from Brussels to present a deal that he knows—that we

all know—is actually worse than Theresa May's deal. It is a deal that would see Scotland shafted by this United Kingdom Government and left at an economic disadvantage, with Scotland's views and interests totally disregarded by this Prime Minister and his Government.

The Scottish National party could not have been clearer: we would support any mandate to approach the European Union to remain in the single market and the customs union, or simply to remain in the European Union altogether. Yet the Prime Minister has made it clear that he is not interested in meaningful discussions with the SNP or our Scottish Government. He and his cronies in No. 10 do not care about Scotland. This Tory Government have sold Scotland out, and once against they have let Scotland down.

While, rightfully, Northern Ireland has been allowed special arrangements to remain in the single market and the customs union, the Prime Minister will not afford Scotland the same arrangements. He did not even consider giving Scotland a fair deal. Despite the fact that the Scottish people, like the people of Northern Ireland, voted overwhelmingly to remain in the European Union, this Prime Minister has never entertained the notion of giving Scotland the same arrangements that Northern Ireland gets in this deal.

The truth is that the Prime Minister does not care about Scotland. He and his Government have treated the Scottish Government, our Scottish Parliament and the Scottish people with nothing but contempt.

Not a single MP who cares about Scotland's future should consider supporting the Prime Minister today. They should stand with the Scottish National party and vote this deal down. Any and all assessments of any Brexit outcome show that the United Kingdom and Scotland will be poorer, no matter how we leave the European Union. People up and down Scotland know that the Prime Minister, his Brexit fanboys and the Vote Leave campaign have ignored and shafted Scotland.

England is getting what it voted for, Wales is getting what it voted for, and Northern Ireland is getting a special deal, yet Scotland, which democratically voted to remain, is being ignored and treated as a second-class nation by this Government. How will the Prime Minister justify himself to the people of Scotland at the general election? When he cannot, and when he fails, and when the Brexit-backing fan club from all quarters fails, will he finally respect the mandate of the Scottish people and let them have their say on our future?

The Prime Minister: I am sure the right hon. Gentleman and his colleagues will want to join me in congratulating the England rugby team on their 40-16 victory over Australia—

Ian Blackford *indicated assent.*

The Prime Minister: There was a lot of enthusiasm in that response.

The right hon. Gentleman was a little bit churlish in his response to my statement, because after all I did not mention England and I did not mention Wales, either. Of course, the reason why Northern Ireland is a particular subject of discussion—it is a legitimate point—is that there are particular circumstances in Northern Ireland at the border that deserve particular respect and sensitivity, and that is what they have received in the deal.

[*The Prime Minister*]

This is a great deal for England, a great deal for Wales, a great deal for Scotland and a great deal for Northern Ireland. The people of Scotland now have the chance, championed by wonderful Scottish Conservative MPs, to take back control of their fisheries from the end of next year. That will allow the people of Scotland at last to enjoy the benefits of their spectacular marine wealth in a way that they would be denied under the Scottish nationalist party which, as I never tire of telling you, Mr Speaker, would hand back control of Scottish fishing to Brussels.

Mr Iain Duncan Smith (Chingford and Woodford Green) (Con): May I take issue—gently—with my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister? For 27 years, some of us have been warning about the federal nature of the European Union. [*Interruption.*] I did say gently.

I am in real agreement, as I stand here today, with my right hon. and learned Friend the Father of the House, who has said that he will back this deal today. So will I. In that spirit, will my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister please come to the Dispatch Box and ask my right hon. Friend the Member for West Dorset (Sir Oliver Letwin), in recognising that we need to have a meaningful vote, to withdraw his amendment and give the British people what they are dying for, which is a decision on Brexit?

The Prime Minister: I am full of respect for the contributions that my right hon. Friend has made on this subject over many, many years. I did not mean in any way to exclude him or to say that he had not made important contributions on the subject of a federal Europe. What I said was that I had not often heard people speaking up in favour of the integration of this country into a federal EU.

On my right hon. Friend's point about the amendment that I believe is being proposed, and that I think you, Mr Speaker, have accepted from my right hon. Friend the Member for West Dorset (Sir Oliver Letwin), I do think that this is a momentous occasion for our country and for our Parliament, and that it would be a great shame if the opportunity to have a meaningful vote, which is what I believe this House has been convoked to do, were to be taken away from us. I say that with the greatest respect to my right hon. Friend, who I think is actuated by the best possible intentions.

Jo Swinson (East Dunbartonshire) (LD): The Prime Minister's deal removes protections on workers' rights. It puts a border—[*Interruption.*]

Mr Speaker: Order. We have all agreed recently on the importance of mutual respect. The leader of the Liberal Democrats is entitled to be heard and, believe me, she will not, under any circumstances, be shouted down.

Jo Swinson: The Prime Minister's deal removes protections on workers' rights. It puts a border down the Irish sea and, according to the Government's own analysis, will damage our economy on a scale greater than the financial crash. Today, hundreds of thousands of people will be outside demanding a final say in a people's vote. Is not it the truth that the reason why the Prime Minister refuses their calls is that he knows that, if given the option, the people will reject his bad deal and choose to remain in the European Union?

The Prime Minister: I am afraid that the hon. Lady is not correct in what she says. The new deal does absolutely nothing to remove protections from workers or from the environment. On the contrary, it gives us the opportunity to strengthen such protections. She asked for the people to have a final say at the ballot box, yet she has been preventing a general election. Instead of campaigning for a general election, she has been in Brussels asking the EU not to give this country a new and better deal. The mere fact that we have a great deal before us today is a tribute to the signal lack of influence of the Liberal Democrats in Brussels.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Mr Speaker: Order. I certainly do not anticipate that it will be possible to call everybody on the statement, and we will want to proceed with the debate on the motion. In the name of maximising participation, there is a premium upon brevity from those on the Back and Front Benches alike.

Mr David Davis (Haltemprice and Howden) (Con): Despite the fact that those who oppose Brexit have tried to undermine his negotiating position at every turn, despite the fact that the Benn Act sought to remove his strongest negotiating lever, the Prime Minister has done what they said was impossible two weeks ago and got the European Union to reopen and change its negotiating position. Does he agree that, during the referendum, this Parliament effectively made a promise to the British people to deliver on their decision, and that today is the day to deliver on that promise?

The Prime Minister: I thank my right hon. Friend for what he has said, and he is indeed correct. I do believe that this excellent deal dispels the doubts of many people about what this country could achieve and, indeed, will achieve in the future. I thank him—my fellow campaigner on this issue—for the way that he has stood up for the vision that we both share for our country as an open, global, free-trading, generous, outward-looking, but European economy, and that is what this deal allows us to be. I believe that it is a great step forward, and I hope that the House endorses it.

Nigel Dodds (Belfast North) (DUP): Weariness in this House over Brexit should not be an excuse for weakness on Brexit or weakness on the Union. This party has supported respecting the people of the United Kingdom's referendum decision to leave the European Union. We have supported that and we continue to support that, but it must be Brexit for the whole of the United Kingdom—leaving the single market and the customs union if that is what the rest of UK does, along with the rest of the UK. This deal puts Northern Ireland, yes, in the UK customs union, but applies, de facto, all the European customs union code.

The Prime Minister *indicated dissent.*

Nigel Dodds: Yes, it does. Read the detail. It also puts us in the VAT regime. It also puts us in the single market regime for a large part of goods and agrifood, without any consent up front, contrary to the agreement made in December 2017, which said that regulatory difference could happen only with the consent of the Executive and the Assembly. It drives a coach and horses through

the Belfast agreement by altering the cross-community consent mechanism. It was once said that no British Prime Minister could ever agree to such terms. Indeed, those who sought the leadership of the Tory party said that at the Democratic Unionist party conference. Will the Prime Minister now abide by that and please reconsider the fact that we must leave as one nation together? There may be special circumstances for Northern Ireland, but that can only be with the consent of the people of Northern Ireland, Unionists and nationalists together. That is the basis on which the peace process—the political process—has advanced. He must respect that.

The Prime Minister: Let me first say that I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman in this sense: together he and I, and the rest of his group, made a case powerfully to the EU that it was necessary for Northern Ireland to come out of the customs union—which was not, by the way, a point that was accepted by the EU—and we were successful in that. The right hon. Gentleman is critical of the arrangements, but the significant point about a customs union is that it is a union that sets its own tariffs and duties at the perimeter around that customs union, and that is what the whole of the UK will do, including Northern Ireland. And let us be frank, that is not what the European Commission or our European friends thought would be the result of these negotiations. I believe that it is a great success for Northern Ireland and the whole country.

The arrangements that have made that possible, of course, are temporary and determined by consent. I do think it a pity that it is thought necessary for one side or the other in the debate in Northern Ireland to have a veto on those arrangements because, after all—and I must be very frank about this—the people of this country have taken a great decision embracing the entire four nations of this country, by a simple majority vote that went 52:48 and which we are honouring now. I think that principle should be applied elsewhere, and I see no reason why it should not be applied in Northern Ireland as well. It is fully compatible with the Good Friday agreement.

Mr Philip Hammond (Runnymede and Weybridge) (Ind): Before I decide whether to jump on the Prime Minister's bus, I would like to be just a little clearer about the destination; I would like to be reassured that it remains the deep and special partnership with the European Union that we promised the British people in our 2017 election manifesto. In the absence of the UK-wide backstop, which has now gone from the package, the best way to give us that reassurance is to ensure a proper role for Parliament in the process of the future negotiations. So could the Prime Minister today make a commitment to accept the Nandy-Snell amendments, which the previous Government agreed would prevail?

The Prime Minister: I can certainly give that commitment.

Hilary Benn (Leeds Central) (Lab): This agreement will maintain friction-free access to the European market for Northern Ireland. Can the Prime Minister therefore explain why he is so determined to deny that exact same benefit to the rest of the United Kingdom? If he presses on with this path, he will not heal the rift to which he referred a moment ago; he will only serve to widen it further.

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman, for whom I have a high regard, is, I think, one of those who believes that we should delay further in the EU. I do not believe that. I think we should come out as one UK, and I think there is a very important difference between Northern Ireland and the other constituent parts of the UK. That is evident in the Good Friday agreement and it is evident in the need to treat that particular land border with a great deal of sensitivity and respect. That is something that is agreed in all parts of the House and is I think appreciated by the right hon. Gentleman himself.

Sir William Cash (Stone) (Con): Will my right hon. Friend personally guarantee that in the withdrawal Bill there will be a guarantee to protect in practice our parliamentary sovereignty and furthermore that, in relation to the withdrawal agreement, there will be provision to protect the United Kingdom from any harmful matters relating to our vital national interests under a parliamentary system that will guarantee that this House will decide if there are any situations where we need to prevent EU laws from being harmful to those vital national interests during the course of the future arrangements that have been put in place?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend has campaigned on this matter for many, many years. Indeed, there is a sense in which this occasion today is a colossal vindication of his parliamentary career, in that he has long campaigned for us to come out of the EU. He raises an important point about our ability to protect this country from injurious or vexatious legislation coming from the EU during the IP. I can certainly give him the assurance that we will have such protection.

Ms Angela Eagle (Wallasey) (Lab): The Prime Minister's predecessor said in this place that no British Prime Minister could ever accept a deal that put a border down the Irish sea. The Prime Minister himself went to the DUP conference not long ago and said the same thing. He has now agreed a deal that puts a border down the Irish sea, so can he tell the House why on earth anyone in the country, let alone anyone in this place, will ever believe a reassurance that he gives ever again?

The Prime Minister: I am afraid that the hon. Lady is simply wrong. There will be no border down the Irish sea. There are already checks for epidemiological purposes. There will be some customs checks, yes, but there will be no tariffs. There will be a single united customs union between all four nations of the UK, as she would expect. That is what we have delivered; and we have delivered it, by the way, in defiance of the scepticism and negativity of the Opposition, who continually said that it could not be done and that it was absolutely essential for Northern Ireland to remain in the customs union of the EU. We have solved the problem and we have taken Northern Ireland out.

Damian Green (Ashford) (Con): There are many of us, who do not often feature at the noisy ends of the debate, who campaigned hard for remain, but who accept the result of the referendum, because we are above all democrats. Many of us have said things like, "We will do anything to avoid no deal." Does the Prime Minister agree that today is the day actually to make those words mean something and vote for a deal?

The Prime Minister: I thank my right hon. Friend, who has done much to bring our party and, indeed, the House together on this matter. I could not agree with him more fervently. I really do think this is the day for everybody to put aside their differences and get this thing done. Our voters—the country—are looking at us. They expect us to deliver it. Let's do it today.

Rachael Maskell (York Central) (Lab/Co-op): The democratic consent process does not remove the border down the Irish sea; it simply moves the risk from determining the future of the border from Westminster to Stormont. So why does the Prime Minister believe that the deal will accord with the consensus built into the Good Friday agreement?

The Prime Minister: The deal is in perfect conformity with the Good Friday agreement, and it is open to the people of Northern Ireland to vary the arrangements that I have described if they so choose.

Sir Patrick McLoughlin (Derbyshire Dales) (Con): Was not the right hon. Leader of the Opposition right on 22 February 2016, when he said:

“We welcome the fact that it is now in the hands of the people of this country to decide”—[*Official Report*, 22 February 2016; Vol. 606, c. 26.]

whether we remain in the European Union? Did the people not come to a conclusion on that? He was right then; should we not now carry out that instruction?

The Prime Minister: The better angels of the Leader of the Opposition's nature may still agree with that position; my impression is that he has been in some way captured and held hostage by those who wish to convert the Labour party into the party of revoke, and of dither and delay, a second referendum, more turmoil, and more uncertainty for business for years to come.

Liz Saville Roberts (Dwyfor Meirionnydd) (PC): The Prime Minister asks us with passionate words to vote with our hearts for his deal, but my head cannot get round the fact that we are being asked to accept his words in trusting ignorance of their full implications, and my heart tells me that the people of Wales will never be well served by his Government; we are only ever an afterthought to this Prime Minister. He has refused to share the impact assessments, and he revealed this 535-page legal text for us to comprehend only today. How could Plaid Cymru ever support his billionaires' Brexit?

The Prime Minister: It seems to me that the right hon. Lady may conceivably have made up her mind about the 535 pages that she has in her hand before she scrutinised every word of the text. I am a fan of hers, but I gently remind her that, as she and I both know, Wales voted to leave. She should respect that.

Caroline Nokes (Romsey and Southampton North) (Ind): Twelve minutes into his statement, the Prime Minister spoke of the importance of this place in future negotiations. Could he please reassure me that today will see the end of the campaign to portray what is happening as “Parliament against the people”, and that we will today accept that it is Parliament working on behalf of people?

The Prime Minister: I thank my right hon. Friend for her point. She is absolutely right: this is the moment for Parliament and people to yoke arms, come together, and get this thing done. That is what our country wants.

Kate Hoey (Vauxhall) (Lab): The Prime Minister has said clearly that he wants a free trade deal by the end of 2020 for the whole of the United Kingdom. Will the Prime Minister tell us clearly that when that day comes, the protocol on Northern Ireland will be automatically changed, and that Northern Ireland will then be fully part of a free trade deal, with everything there being the same as in the rest of the United Kingdom?

The Prime Minister: As the hon. Lady knows, the arrangements envisaged for Northern Ireland in this deal lapse automatically, and the default position is full alignment with the UK in every respect, unless the people of Northern Ireland decide, by a majority vote, not to remain in alignment; that is always open to them, and that must be fair. The arrangements are for a very small range of policy. From the beginning, as I explained to the House, Northern Ireland will not only be able to take part in free trade deals, but will benefit from many of the advantages and attractions of Brexit, in the sense that we could, for example, regulate financial services differently and better, and have a freeport in Belfast.

Nigel Dodds *indicated assent.*

Mr Gregory Campbell (East Londonderry) (DUP) *indicated assent.*

The Prime Minister: I see my distinguished friends in the Democratic Unionist party accepting this good news, as is their customary way. There are many advantages to be had. On the point made by the hon. Member for Vauxhall (Kate Hoey), yes, there is the prospect of a free trade agreement between us and the EU, under which these arrangements would eventually be superseded. We would enter into free trade, as the right hon. and learned Father of the House indicated—a zero-tariff, zero-quota arrangement—and then the current arrangements would be obviated.

Greg Clark (Tunbridge Wells) (Ind): Will my right hon. Friend give a commitment, in law if necessary, that workers' rights in this country will never be inferior to those of the European Union?

The Prime Minister: Yes, I certainly can.

Mr Chris Leslie (Nottingham East) (IGC): Hon. Members are going to be promised—[*Interruption.*] Hon. Members are obviously going to be promised everything today by the Prime Minister; they should take it with a pinch of salt. I have to tell the Prime Minister that it speaks volumes that he and the Chancellor have refused to publish a fresh economic impact assessment of his proposal today. But I think the Chancellor has said, “Well, one was produced last year”—November 2018—by his predecessor, where, on the basis of an average free trade agreement, we would see the British economy lag by 5% of GDP. Can he at least give us the courtesy, at the Dispatch Box now, of saying that that model—that average free trade agreement: down 5%—is the expectation we could have of his plan?

The Prime Minister: No, it certainly is not.

Chris Grayling (Epsom and Ewell) (Con): My right hon. Friend will remember from the referendum the strength of feeling that he and I experienced in some of our most deprived communities about Brexit. Could he gently explain to the Leader of the Opposition the sense of betrayal that will be felt in those communities if we do not now deliver Brexit?

The Prime Minister: My right hon. Friend is completely correct in what he says. I think it is a feeling that is well known to Members on the other side of the House and well known on our Benches as well. The people of this country, wherever they come from, are coming together now in a desire to get Brexit done, and I hope that this House will today reflect that will.

Joanna Cherry (Edinburgh South West) (SNP): At present, the United Kingdom consists of England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland. In both Northern Ireland and Scotland there is no mandate for Brexit. The deal we are being asked to vote for today gives Northern Ireland a deal that keeps it close to the single market and the customs union, subject to its consent. Can the Prime Minister explain to me and my constituents in what way it strengthens the Union of the United Kingdom for Scotland alone to have foisted upon it a Brexit it did not vote for?

The Prime Minister: I am afraid there is a complete conceptual confusion here. Scotland, Northern Ireland—the whole of the UK is coming out of the customs union. Particular arrangements are being put in place to avoid a hard border in Northern Ireland, which I think is an objective that the whole House supports. As for the people of Scotland, they had a referendum, as the hon. and learned Lady knows full well, in 2014, and they voted very substantially to remain in the United Kingdom. That was the correct decision. They were told it was a once-in-a-generation decision, and I see no reason whatever to betray that promise that was made to them then.

Justine Greening (Putney) (Ind): The Prime Minister, I think, has said that he now wants to speak for the 52% and the 48%, but does he recognise that the rhetoric, the actions and the way that this Government have approached Brexit achieve the exact opposite of that, actually? Does he also recognise that dismissing the concerns of communities such as my own is no way to bring even England back together, and dismissing the concerns of other nations within the United Kingdom is also no way to bring the UK and Britain back together either?

The Prime Minister: I certainly did not mean to dismiss anybody's concerns, let alone her own. I recognise, as I think I said in my opening statement, that this is an issue that has aroused deep feeling across the country on both sides, but it is my strong belief that the way forward for this country now is to deliver Brexit, get it done and move our country forward. That is the way, I believe, that people can honestly and passionately express their pro-European views in a new deep and special partnership of the kind that my right hon. Friend—both of us—campaigns for.

Mr Barry Sheerman (Huddersfield) (Lab/Co-op): Forty years ago I heard a Conservative leader speak, and although I disagreed with much of what she believed in,

I believed in her loyalty, I trusted her, and she brought the nation together with a great speech. I did not hear that this morning. What I heard was a man who leads this country but who people do not trust. He keeps saying, "Trust". Who will trust the British people? If we want the British people to trust us, does he agree that we should have a referendum so that people can judge this deal for what it is? We can then have a general election after that.

The Prime Minister: I think the best way to show our trust in the people is to repay their trust in us by honouring their mandate and delivering on the verdict of the people. That is what we should do today, and I hope very much that the hon. Gentleman will join us in the Lobby tonight.

Mrs Sheryll Murray (South East Cornwall) (Con): Will my right hon. Friend reassure the fishermen in my constituency that he will put right the wrong heaped on them more than 40 years ago, and that they will get a better share of fish from UK waters?

The Prime Minister: They certainly shall, and I congratulate my hon. Friend and thank her for everything she does to stick up for UK fishing. Fishing has a glorious future in this country, in the west country, and in Scotland too, if only the House will do the right thing and allow us to come out on 31 October.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Mr Speaker: Order. I think the hon. Member for Slough (Mr Dhesi) thinks that nodding at me vigorously to the extent that it virtually constitutes a bow is the most efficacious means of being called. He may well have his opportunity in due course, but first I want to hear from Caroline Lucas.

Caroline Lucas (Brighton, Pavilion) (Green): How can this House have any confidence in the Prime Minister's claims that he does not want to lower standards, when his own deal precisely moves the so-called level playing field from the binding withdrawal agreement to the non-binding political declaration? Is not the truth that this deal takes a wrecking ball to our social and environmental standards, and the reason that he will not put it back to the British people is that he knows full well that they can see through his bluster and see that this is a profoundly bad deal?

The Prime Minister: I am afraid the hon. Lady has totally misread or misunderstood the provisions in the agreement. It is stated plainly in the political declaration that we will maintain the highest possible standards, and it is up to this House to do so. I think it is the will of this House, and this Government, to have even higher standards. This is the party and Government who have banned microbeads and are cracking down on plastics. We are leading the world in going for zero carbon by 2050. We are world leaders in environmental and animal welfare protection, and we will continue to be so outside the EU.

Mr Speaker: The time has come to uncork the Gauke.

Mr David Gauke (South West Hertfordshire) (Ind): The Prime Minister said that he wanted to leave with a deal, and he has shown determination and flexibility to

[Mr David Gauke]

reach a deal, for which he deserves credit. He will be aware, however, that unless we reach a free trade agreement in the next stage of negotiations, there is a risk that Great Britain will leave the implementation period without a deal with the European Union. Can he commit today to showing the same determination and flexibility to ensure that we reach a deep and special partnership through a free trade agreement with the European Union, before we allow the implementation period to come to an end?

The Prime Minister: My right hon. Friend makes an excellent point—indeed, that was really the substantive point that I have been discussing with our European Union friends in the past couple of days. That is where they want to go now. They are interested in our timetable and in whether 14 months is enough, and it is absolutely right to focus on that. I think that it is enough; I think we can do it in 14 months. [Interruption.] The right hon. Member for Islington South and Finsbury (Emily Thornberry) asks why from a sedentary position. She may not know that we are already in perfect regulatory alignment with the European Union, and it may have escaped her that we already have zero-tariff and zero-quota arrangements with the EU. We have a fantastic opportunity to do a free trade deal. Yes, 14 months is a blistering pace, but we can get it done. I remind doubters and sceptics—[Interruption]—there they all are. They said that it was impossible to reopen the withdrawal agreement, they said we would never get rid of the backstop, and they said we would never get a deal. There is a very good deal on the table here today, and I hope they vote for it.

Mr Speaker: Patience rewarded. I call Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi (Slough) (Lab): Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. While addressing the Democratic Unionist party conference in Northern Ireland, the Prime Minister promised that there would be no border down the Irish sea, whether customs, regulatory or any other sort. He promised the same thing to his Conservative colleagues during his pursuit of power to become the jungle king. Would the Prime Minister like to take this opportunity to formally apologise to the DUP, his Conservative colleagues and the good people of Northern Ireland for having sold them down the river and for having broken yet another promise?

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman, but I must say in all candour and humility that he misrepresents what I think is an excellent deal. It takes Northern Ireland out of the EU customs union and preserves it in the UK's customs territory. It does not create a border in the Irish sea; it allows us together, as a single United Kingdom, to do free trade deals around the world. I think his constituents would want him to support this deal and get Brexit done tonight and on 31 October.

Mr John Baron (Basildon and Billericay) (Con): I wholeheartedly commend my right hon. Friend for abolishing the anti-democratic backstop. On that basis, I will, having opposed the previous deal, be supporting this deal today. May I suggest this to him? Given that

I and most of us in this place want a fair and good trade deal, and prefer that to no deal, does he accept that by abolishing the anti-democratic backstop we actually not only make a good and fair trade deal more likely, but we almost guarantee it given the common position we start from and our common interests with the EU?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend is spot on. He is right that both sides have a strong incentive to do a very good, best-in-class free trade deal by the end of next year. That is our ambition and that is what we are going to achieve.

Luciana Berger (Liverpool, Wavertree) (LD): The Prime Minister's Brexit Secretary was on television this morning. He confirmed that no economic analysis of the deal has been done. I ask the House to let that sink in: no economic analysis of the deal, on which we are all expected to vote today, has been done. How does the Prime Minister anticipate that Members on all sides the House can, in good faith, be expected to vote on a deal today that will impact on our country for decades to come?

The Prime Minister: I respectfully point out to the hon. Lady that the deal has been welcomed by a broad range of opinion, including the Governor of the Bank of England and the CBI. The choice for her today is between this deal, which I believe is very good for this country both economically and politically, and no deal. That is what she has to decide between.

Mr Peter Bone (Wellingborough) (Con): Article 126 of the withdrawal agreement states that the transition period ends on 31 December 2020, but a few articles later, in article 132, it states that that can be extended for a further two years. If it was extended, we would still effectively be in the European Union six and a half years after the referendum. Will the Prime Minister say that while he is Prime Minister he will not consider extending past 31 December 2020?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend, with his customary sagacity and grip on detail, is absolutely right about article 126. That article provides for the UK and the EU to decide that matter by Joint Committee. The UK would therefore have discretion or a veto in that matter. I can tell him now that I certainly would not want to extend beyond the end of next year, nor do I see any reason for delay—as indeed nor do I see any reason or excuse for delay beyond 31 October.

Mr Pat McFadden (Wolverhampton South East) (Lab): There is a philosophical problem at the core of the Prime Minister's argument today: he is promising his colleagues—particularly his most ardent Brexit-supporting colleagues—that the proposals before us offer a pathway to the deregulated future of which they have always dreamed, and at the same time, he is saying to Labour colleagues that he now has a new-found love for all the European workers' rights that he built a journalistic career slagging off in the strongest terms. Both of these things cannot be true, so which one is?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman is right in what he says, but, of course, the first few things he said were wholly incorrect. There will be a high

standard maintained—the very highest standards maintained—for workers' rights and environmental protection. If he is not content with that, it is open to him as a Member of this House, as I have said, to take part in the setting of the mandate for the future partnership and to engage, as all parliamentarians are invited to, in drawing up the terms of our future partnership, and I hope he takes up that offer.

Richard Drax (South Dorset) (Con): As I understand it, the £39 billion for an FTA is based on EU alignment. Will my right hon. Friend confirm and reassure me that that will not affect or restrict UK tax, foreign or defence policies?

The Prime Minister: I can certainly give my hon. Friend that assurance.

Lady Hermon (North Down) (Ind): The Prime Minister will be well aware of the considerable anxiety, and indeed anger, caused to the Unionist community in Northern Ireland since the publication of his Brexit deal. I would like him to take this opportunity, since he has not bothered until now, to reach out and reassure the Unionist community. I would like him to take this opportunity publicly to reassure the people in Northern Ireland that there is nothing in his deal that undermines the constitutional status of Northern Ireland, as guaranteed by the Belfast/Good Friday agreement, and the consent principle. I pay tribute to the Taoiseach, Leo Varadkar, who has given a very solemn explanation about his commitment to the constitutional status of Northern Ireland, but as a Unionist, I need to hear a British Prime Minister making that commitment to the Unionist community.

The Prime Minister: Of course, and I am grateful to the hon. Lady. I wish to reassure her that I make an absolute commitment to the constitutional status of Northern Ireland, which is inviolable and intact. It may be that she has not seen the statement from Lord Trimble, who said of the change in the agreement that we have secured:

“Whilst, previously, the people of Northern Ireland were to have an agreement imposed on them, now we have a mechanism for the consent of the people of Northern Ireland”—

and that is

“fully in accordance with...the Good Friday Agreement.”

Alistair Burt (North East Bedfordshire) (Ind): My right hon. Friend is right to characterise the political participation of the UK in the EU as too often uncertain, and it is one of the great regrets of my time here that what he says is true. We will never know, in a way, what the EU might have looked like if the United Kingdom had been a full partner, but if a new relationship with us outside the EU, for which I will be voting today, is to be a success, not only for the trade negotiations but for the diplomatic links, does he agree—as they read our newspapers and know what we say—that the relentless, persistent and too often 1940s anti-EU rhetoric must come to an end, no ifs and no buts?

The Prime Minister: My right hon. Friend is absolutely right: it is time that this country moved on. I may say that the best way in which he could show his support tonight for this deal would be gently to suggest to my

right hon. Friend the Member for West Dorset that he remove the amendment standing in his name, which I am afraid is an impediment to such a verdict tonight.

Alison Thewliss (Glasgow Central) (SNP): In my constituency, 71% voted to remain. The world-class researchers who are doing world-class and life-saving research at universities in Glasgow are not half-hearted Europeans. The children at Pollokshields Primary in Erasmus Plus programmes are not half-hearted Europeans. Those citizens who are completing projects in Glasgow funded by the European social fund are not half-hearted Europeans either. Does the Prime Minister agree that the only way for the people in my constituency to be full members of the European Union and retain that citizenship is for Scotland to be an independent country?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Lady is making a very important point. People feel very strongly about this matter, and they also feel very differently about it. What we have today is an opportunity to take the country forward with a new relationship that allows people who feel wholeheartedly passionate about Europe to express those feelings. Yes, students, professors, academics, artists and creators of all kinds will be able to share their enthusiasms with their friends across the EU under this deal; that is vital, and it is part of our ambition for the UK and for Europe.

James Brokenshire (Old Bexley and Sidcup) (Con): I support my right hon. Friend in securing this deal, but he will acknowledge the concerns that have been expressed in relation to Northern Ireland. In addition to the commitments that he has given, especially over the Belfast/Good Friday agreement, please will he reaffirm his commitment to a new deal for Northern Ireland, investing in its infrastructure, investing in its prosperity and investing in its future as a proud part of our precious United Kingdom?

The Prime Minister: I pay tribute to my right hon. Friend for everything that he has done for Northern Ireland. I think he would agree that the one thing that would really make a difference now to all those policy fields in Northern Ireland, and take Northern Ireland furthest forward the fastest, would be if we could get the Stormont Assembly up and running again and if the parties came together for government in Northern Ireland once more.

Helen Hayes (Dulwich and West Norwood) (Lab): At any point in the past three years, the Government could have agreed to internationally binding legal commitments to maintain existing workers' rights and environmental protections and ensure that rights keep pace in the future. At every stage, they have refused to do so. Can the Prime Minister explain why people across this country should believe his empty promises now? If he is so confident that the British public will not see through his hollow rhetoric, why is he so afraid of giving them a final say?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Lady will know that the provisions on workers' rights and environmental protections in the political decision are very ambitious. We want to maintain the highest possible standards. She should understand that whenever the EU introduces

[*The Prime Minister*]

a new provision on workers' rights, even if it is in some way inferior to our own by then, Parliament will have an opportunity to consider that new provision from the EU and put it into UK law.

Jeremy Wright (Kenilworth and Southam) (Con): The Prime Minister said at the outset of his statement that the debate about our membership of the European Union has not just paralysed our politics but profoundly divided our society. The longer we have that debate, the more difficult it will be to reunite our country. Is it not incumbent on all of us in this place today to act in a way that seeks to settle that debate, not perpetuate it—and not to reject a good deal in the fruitless and impractical pursuit of a perfect deal?

The Prime Minister: My right hon. and learned Friend is perfectly right. I think that this deal is about as perfect as you could get under the circumstances, if I say so myself, but yes, of course there are difficulties with it. I accept that people have objections to the current arrangements; all I can say is that those arrangements are there expressly by consent and are time-limited. We will go forward with a new deep and special partnership with our European friends that will supersede those arrangements. I think we should be very proud of the deal that we have today. Let us knock it through, if we possibly can, tonight.

Tom Brake (Carshalton and Wallington) (LD): Would the Prime Minister agree to pass an Act making it unlawful for us to leave at the end of the transition phase without a deal?

The Prime Minister: If I may say so respectfully, I do not believe that such Acts have necessarily been conducive to a stable negotiating position. By the way, I have not done enough in this statement to thank my team and those in the Foreign Office, the Department for Exiting the European Union and all the Departments of State, as well as the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, David Frost and the many others who have worked to make this deal happen. I want to thank them very much for what they have done. I respectfully say to the right hon. Gentleman that I do not think their position has been made easier by measures passed in the name of the right hon. Member for Leeds Central (Hilary Benn). Not a good idea!

Mr Speaker: I call David Top Cat Davies.

David T. C. Davies (Monmouth) (Con): The people of Wales voted to leave, but many had concerns about a no-deal Brexit. Can I thank the Prime Minister for coming forward with a deal that respects the result in Wales and delivers on the concerns of those who did not want a hard Brexit? As the Welsh would say: mae'n hi'n bryd. Diolch yn fawr.

The Prime Minister: Diolch yn fawr, Mr Speaker. I am grateful to my hon. Friend, who speaks for Wales, as ever. It is a great deal for England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Pete Wishart (Perth and North Perthshire) (SNP)
rose—

Mr Speaker: The hon. Member for Perth and North Perthshire (Pete Wishart) can now cheer up, because he is going to be heard.

Pete Wishart: I have a cheery disposition, Mr Speaker, but Scotland says we reject this—[*Interruption.*]

Mr Speaker: Order. I want to hear the hon. Gentleman, but I could not do so. I want to hear his dulcet tones. Blurt it out, man.

Pete Wishart: I am grateful, Mr Speaker. Scotland says today that we reject this rotten deal. We will be taken out of the European Union, which we value and cherish, against our national collective will, be deprived of the customs union and single market and be left at a competitive disadvantage to our friends in Northern Ireland. Is it not the case that Scotland can retain its EU membership only by becoming a normal independent nation?

The Prime Minister: I am afraid that the hon. Gentleman is sadly in error if he thinks that Northern Ireland is part of the EU customs union. It is simply not; it is part of the UK customs union, as indeed is Scotland, which is greatly to the benefit of the people of Scotland.

Mr Nigel Evans (Ribble Valley) (Con): Ribble Valley voted 57% to leave. Every constituency in Lancashire, whether held by a Labour or Conservative MP, voted to leave the EU in 2016. What message would my right hon. Friend send to Members representing leave constituencies? How should they vote tonight?

The Prime Minister: I remember vividly campaigning with my hon. Friend at cattle markets and elsewhere where he attracted strong support for his views. He is right. I hope very much that people in the House tonight will respect the views of their constituents—not just their belief that Brexit needs to be done, but their passionate desire to move on to our dynamic domestic agenda of expanding our health service, improving our healthcare, investing in education, putting more police officers on the street and taking this country forward. The Labour party offers nothing but dither, division, doubt and delay. It is completely mistaken.

Tulip Siddiq (Hampstead and Kilburn) (Lab): The Prime Minister used the phrase “European friends” over and over again in his statement, and we in this House know that he likes to treat his friends with great generosity. Bearing that in mind, will he distance himself from the comments last week of the Security Minister, who said that our European friends in this country could face deportation if they did not get settled status by next year?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Lady has raised a very important point. Perhaps I should have said more about it in my opening remarks, because I think that this is one of the things that the Government have done well over the last few years. Perhaps we should have been faster, but we are finally giving the 3.4 million the assurances that they need, and the EU settled status scheme is now working extremely well. It is vital that everybody—all the EU citizens living in our country—has the reassurances that they need.

I might add that it is also vital—this is a point that I made to our colleagues in Brussels—that there should be symmetry. At the moment there is not perfect symmetry, and it is important that as we come out and give our EU nationals the treatment they deserve, that is reciprocated on the other side of the channel. By and large it is, but there is some progress to be made.

Stephen Crabb (Preseli Pembrokeshire) (Con): Will the Prime Minister confirm what business has been telling us for many months now—that there is enormous pent-up investment waiting to be released into the UK economy when the fog and lack of clarity of this stage of Brexit has been lifted? Will he also confirm that very last thing that business wants to see from today's proceedings in this House of Commons is further delay, fogging and confusion?

The Prime Minister: My right hon. Friend is completely right. I do think that the whole business world has been, as it were, holding its breath and waiting for us to get this thing done. There is massive confidence and excitement about this country and its future. Businesses want to invest: let us give them an opportunity to do so in the course of the next few weeks and months.

Frank Field (Birkenhead) (Ind): I agree with the sentiments expressed by the right hon. Member for Ashford (Damian Green). Does the Prime Minister not agree that one of the confusions that we face, in the House but more so in the country, is that some—not all—of those who wish to remain often appear in Brexit clothing? Does he agree that today there is a motion on the Order Paper for those of us who want to deliver on the promise in the referendum, and that only one vote is necessary?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman has spoken with his customary honesty and insight. I think it would be a good thing if the House were able to have what I think was promised to it and to the country, namely a meaningful vote tonight, but my fear is that the vote that we have will not prove to be meaningful, and I think that, given the solemnity of this occasion, that would be a great pity.

Mr Speaker: In the name of breadth and equality, having called Mr Stephen Crabb, I now call Mr Marcus Fysh. [*Laughter.*]

Mr Marcus Fysh (Yeovil) (Con): The Union is of massive importance to many in this House. Will my right hon. Friend commit himself to mitigating, subsidising and defraying the costs of any new arrangements for customs within Northern Ireland?

The Prime Minister: Yes. Not only that, but if my hon. Friend studies the agreement, he will see that it is open to the UK authorities to give support of any kind that is necessary to alleviate any impacts that may result from the arrangements that we will put in place, whatever the implications may be for state aids.

Stephen Timms (East Ham) (Lab): Does the Prime Minister understand the worries of manufacturers about new rules of origin checks and other red tape that his deal would impose on them, and the fears of Make UK that reassurances in the deal negotiated by his predecessor have been dropped from his deal?

The Prime Minister: The reason I am not worried about that is that there are no new rules of origin checks. This is a deal that I hope the right hon. Gentleman will get behind and support, because it represents stability and certainty for business.

Kirstene Hair (Angus) (Con): I think it important that other voices from Scotland are asking Scottish MPs to vote for this deal, such as the National Farmers Union of Scotland, the Scottish Fishermen's Federation, the Federation of Small Businesses, the Scottish Chambers of Commerce and the Scotch Whisky Association. They all believe that it is best for industry, the economy and jobs. Scottish Conservatives will vote for this deal, and Scottish nationalists will once again vote for a no-deal Brexit.

The Prime Minister: There speaks the true voice of Scotland! My hon. Friend is perfectly correct in what she says, and I venture to say that the constituents of SNP Members overwhelmingly tonight want that party—even that party—to get Brexit done and move this country on. I bet they do, Mr Speaker!

Sammy Wilson (East Antrim) (DUP): The Prime Minister has said there will be no border down the Irish sea, yet every good imported from GB to Northern Ireland will be subject to a customs declaration, a physical movement subject to checks, and tariffs have to be paid until it can be proved where the goods are going to. Will he accept that while he may have avoided a regulatory border between Northern Ireland and the Republic, he has put a legal, customs and economic border between the country to which we belong and the economy on which we depend? Rather than a great deal, this will do a great deal of damage to the Union.

The Prime Minister: On the contrary. What this does is protect Northern Ireland by extracting Northern Ireland whole and entire from the EU customs union and allowing Northern Ireland to join the whole UK in setting our own tariffs. In so far as there may be checks at a few places in Northern Ireland, physical checks would involve only 1% of the goods coming in. If that is too much of a burden, it is open to the people of Northern Ireland, by a majority, to decide that they no longer wish to participate in those arrangements. It is being done by consent. It is a very, very ingenious scheme that gets Northern Ireland out of the customs union and allows the whole UK to do free trade together, with minimum bureaucracy.

Henry Smith (Crawley) (Con): The British people are watching this place very carefully and history is recording what we say. The clear majority message from my constituents is that they want the Brexit they voted for delivered, and this deal does that. Can I have an assurance from the Prime Minister that we will not only maintain, but enhance, our environmental and animal welfare standards?

The Prime Minister: I can indeed give that assurance, and I can tell my hon. Friend, who campaigned to leave the EU for those reasons among others, we will indeed have higher standards of protection for animal welfare, the environment and other matters.

David Hanson (Delyn) (Lab): North Wales is a major artery to Northern Ireland by road and by boat, and to the Irish Republic by road and by boat, but also to the Irish Republic through Northern Ireland by road and by boat. Given what the Prime Minister has said today—there will be no tariffs on goods “unless they are at risk of entering the EU”; that is in his statement—where and when will the border checks be, and where and when will there be tariffs, because people will face them under his proposals?

The Prime Minister: There are not any tariffs on goods, as the right hon. Gentleman knows full well, going GB-NI or NI-GB.

Vicky Ford (Chelmsford) (Con): We all know that the people of our country are desperate to end this uncertainty, but we often forget that the people of the other 27 countries are also desperate to end this uncertainty, and our Prime Minister has needed to get consent from all 27 countries. Does he agree that if this House fails to back this deal today, or seeks to kick the can down the road again, we will create more uncertainty, not less?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend is exactly right, and the choice is very clear today for this House and for the country: it is really this deal or a no-deal Brexit. I do not think, by any stretch of the imagination, it can be right for the UK to delay beyond 31 October when that is expensive, pointless and a waste of spirit and an expense of shame that would achieve absolutely nothing whatever.

Dr Sarah Wollaston (Totnes) (LD): Evidence matters, Prime Minister. How can he possibly assure our constituents that this is a good deal if he has not carried out an economic impact assessment of what it will cost them? If he has carried that out, why on earth are we not able to see it as we debate this today?

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to the hon. Lady, but I direct her to the answers I have already given on that point. Many business groups have already come out in support of the deal because it gives certainty and stability and allows the country to move on. I think it will, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Preseli Pembrokeshire (Stephen Crabb) just said, unleash a great deal of investment in the UK.

Steve Brine (Winchester) (Ind): I thank the Prime Minister for his statement and the tone in which he has delivered it. He and I have had some robust conversations in the last six weeks, and he has done what he promised me he would do: sought a Brexit deal and brought it back to this House. I was pleased to hear him mention the 48%. There are a lot of people for whom we need the losers' consent to deliver Brexit safely. Does he agree that the way to do that is with the deal he has proposed, which is well worthy of all our support?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend's support means a great deal to me. He and I did have long conversations about this, and I did my best to convince him that I was in earnest in seeking a deal. I truly was, and I am very pleased with the result that we have secured. I am delighted that he feels able to support it tonight. To get back to the key point, the deal gives people who love

Europe, in the broadest possible way, a real chance to move forward and work with us to develop a new partnership with our European friends. That is the opportunity. Everything else is stasis and division. This is the way forward.

Seema Malhotra (Feltham and Heston) (Lab/Co-op): Yesterday, the hon. Member for Basildon and Billericay (Mr Baron) said:

“I am doing my best to persuade colleagues...who, like me, voted three times against Theresa May's deal, to look at this in a favourable light...provided we can get that clear assurance, and I have been given it so far by people like Michael Gove and Dominic Raab...that...if those trade talks fail up to December 2020, we will be leaving on no-deal terms.”

Have members of the Prime Minister's Cabinet given those assurances? If, indeed, no deal is therefore not ruled out by supporting the Prime Minister today, why will he not tell the country the truth?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend the Member for Basildon and Billericay (Mr Baron) made it clear in the House just now—perhaps the hon. Lady was listening—that he wants and will work for a great new free trade agreement. That is indeed what we will do. I respectfully say to the hon. Lady, as I say to all hon. Friends and Members, that if they wish to avoid a no-deal outcome, the single best thing we can all do is vote for the deal tonight.

Robert Halfon (Harlow) (Con): I strongly support the deal. Is it not the case that, whatever the Government, we in this Parliament will be able to strengthen workers' rights without recourse to an external authority? Is it also not the case that we will be able to spend the billions of pounds we save from leaving the European Union on public services and cutting the cost of living for ordinary folk across our country?

The Prime Minister: That voice of Harlow is completely right. By the way, we will be able to get on with investing in hospitals in my right hon. Friend's area. Yes, of course, it is open to this House and this country to strengthen workers' rights beyond the standards in the EU. As I said, every new regulation or directive that comes from Brussels on this matter will, of course, be capable of being scrutinised by this House, which will be able to decide whether it is right to implement it in UK law. It seems to me that we cannot say fairer than that. We can go further than the EU, but we can also track it if we choose.

Sir Vince Cable (Twickenham) (LD): Following the earlier question from the right hon. Member for South West Hertfordshire (Mr Gauke), the Prime Minister will know that there is a great deal of anxiety in the business community that it faces a cliff edge at the end of next year. Will he reiterate what seemed to be his assurance that the transition will be extended until his free trade agreement has been concluded?

The Prime Minister: If the right hon. Gentleman is worried about a cliff edge—I, frankly, am not as worried as he is, because I think we will do a great free trade deal by then—the best thing he can do is vote for this deal tonight. I am looking at him carefully to see whether he might have that in his heart; I hope he does. He says that he is opposed to a no-deal Brexit and that is the way to avoid it.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Mr Speaker: Order. I am sorry to disappoint the remaining right hon. and hon. Members but, having called no fewer than 55 Back Benchers, I judge that it is time to proceed to the debate on the motions.

European Union (Withdrawal) Acts

Mr Speaker: Before I call the Secretary of State of State for Exiting the European Union to move motion 1, I remind the House that I have selected amendment (a) in the name of the right hon. Member for West Dorset (Sir Oliver Letwin).

11.25 am

The Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union (Stephen Barclay): I beg to move,

That, in light of the new deal agreed with the European Union, which enables the United Kingdom to respect the result of the referendum on its membership of the European Union and to leave the European Union on 31 October with a deal, and for the purposes of section 1(1)(a) of the European Union (Withdrawal) (No. 2) Act 2019 and section 13(1)(b) of the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018, this House approves the negotiated withdrawal agreement titled Agreement on the withdrawal of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland from the European Union and the European Atomic Energy Community and the framework for the future relationship titled Political Declaration setting out the framework for the future relationship between the European Union and the United Kingdom that the United Kingdom has concluded with the European Union under Article 50(2) of the Treaty on European Union, as well as a Declaration by Her Majesty's Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland concerning the operation of the Democratic consent in Northern Ireland provision of the Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland, copies of these three documents which were laid before this House on Saturday 19 October.

Mr Speaker: With this it will be convenient to discuss motion 2:

That this House approves the withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the European Union under Article 50 of the Treaty on European Union on exit day, without a withdrawal agreement as defined in section 20(1) of the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018.

Stephen Barclay: Today is the time for this House to come together and move forward. Someone who previously did that, and whom many Members of the House will still remember, was the former Secretary of State for Northern Ireland Mo Mowlam. Her biography was called "Momentum" before that was a faction forcing out its own colleagues—*[Interruption.]*

Mr Speaker: Order. I understand that passions are inflamed, but I appeal to colleagues to weigh their words and to try to preserve the principle of political difference, personal amiability.

Stephen Barclay: That spirit of bringing people together was what I was seeking to pay tribute to. After 1,213 days and frequent debates in this Chamber, now is the time for this House to move forward. Another pivotal figure in bringing different views together was Lord Trimble, who won the Nobel peace prize for his contribution to the Good Friday agreement. He has made clear his support for this deal, confirming that it is fully in accordance with the spirit of that agreement, and the people of Northern Ireland will be granted consent over their future as a result of the deal that the Prime Minister has negotiated. This deal also delivers on the referendum in a way that protects all parts of our Union against those who would seek to use division and delay to break it up, particularly those on the SNP Benches. As such, it is a deal that honours not one but two referendums by protecting both our democratic vote but also our United Kingdom.

[*Stephen Barclay*]

This House called for a meaningful vote. Yet some who championed that now suggest that we should delay longer still. I respect the intention of my right hon. Friend the Member for West Dorset (Sir Oliver Letwin) who, indeed, has supported a deal three times and has indicated his support today. However, his amendment would render today's vote meaningless. It would cause further delay when our constituents and our businesses want an end to uncertainty and are calling for us to get this done. The public will be appalled by pointless further delay. We need to get Brexit done by 31 October so that the country can move forward and, in that spirit, I ask him to withdraw his amendment.

Kevin Brennan (Cardiff West) (Lab): The Secretary of State pointed out that some hon. Members have voted against a Brexit deal since the referendum, including the Prime Minister, who did so twice. Why do the Government not have the courage, therefore, to allow the same privilege to the people of this country by allowing them to make their judgment on this deal?

Stephen Barclay: If the hon. Gentleman really thought that, he would have supported an election to let the people have their say on this issue, but he declined to do so. It is important that politicians do not pick and choose which votes they adhere to and that we respect the biggest vote in our country's history.

Rehman Chishti (Gillingham and Rainham) (Con): The Secretary of State has just said the public do not want a delay. I was in Rainham yesterday, and 100% of the people I met said that they want Brexit delivered and that this Prime Minister's deal delivers on Brexit. I applaud the Secretary of State and the Prime Minister for getting this done.

Stephen Barclay: I very much agree with my hon. Friend, who speaks not just for his constituents but for people and, indeed, businesses up and down the country who want to see Brexit done.

Mr Iain Duncan Smith (Chingford and Woodford Green) (Con): Does my right hon. Friend agree that those who now call for a second referendum have denied the result of the first referendum? How, then, could the British people ever trust us to follow through on a second referendum?

Stephen Barclay: I very much agree with my right hon. Friend. Indeed, some of those voices distrust not only one referendum but two referendums, and now they want a third referendum on which to campaign.

Kate Hoey (Vauxhall) (Lab): The right hon. Gentleman will know that many of us have long campaigned to leave the European Union. Will he tell me now why this agreement does not give an opportunity for the people of Northern Ireland to opt in and consent to what has been decided? That would have made a crucial difference to people on the pro-Union side in Northern Ireland who, like me, genuinely feel that, somehow, the United Kingdom Government are letting them down and giving in to others.

Stephen Barclay: As the hon. Lady should know, the unilateral declaration published with the documentation on both the withdrawal agreement and the political declaration does, indeed, allow for a consent mechanism for the Northern Ireland Assembly. As the Prime Minister set out in his statement, it is right when we make a decision based on a majority across the United Kingdom that the Assembly reach a decision on that basis without one community having the power of veto over the other.

Lady Hermon (North Down) (Ind): The Secretary of State has followed the example of the Prime Minister in quoting David Trimble. I pay tribute to David Trimble as a great leader of the Ulster Unionist party; he now sits as a Tory Member of the other place. I asked the Prime Minister and am now asking the Secretary of State for a clear guarantee that there is nothing in this new Brexit deal that undermines or weakens the constitutional status of Northern Ireland, as guaranteed in the Belfast/Good Friday agreement and the consent principle. Do not quote Lord Trimble to me. Give me a clear commitment.

Stephen Barclay: I refer the hon. Lady to the letter that the Prime Minister sent to President Juncker on 2 October. The first commitment within that letter was the absolute commitment of this Prime Minister and this Government to the Belfast/Good Friday agreement. We share that commitment not just within the United Kingdom but with our friends in the Irish Government. That is why we have shown flexibility in the arrangements, some of which have caused difficulty to some colleagues in the House, to address the concerns, particularly in the nationalist community, about the possible impact on the Belfast/Good Friday agreement.

Nigel Dodds (Belfast North) (DUP): The hon. Member for Vauxhall (Kate Hoey) mentioned the opt-in, which was in the letter that the Prime Minister sent to Jean-Claude Juncker two weeks ago—that is where it came from—but it has since been abandoned. The Prime Minister and others seem a bit bemused, but that was an opt-in.

Secondly, the Secretary of State now talks about it having to be agreed by majority vote. Can we now take it that the Government's policy is to do away with vetoes on, for instance, getting the Assembly up and running? Four of the five parties in Northern Ireland want the Assembly up and running—the Assembly will meet on Monday, which is good news—so does that veto no longer apply? [*Interruption.*] I see the Prime Minister nodding, for which I am grateful. That is a very big breakthrough in Northern Ireland.

Stephen Barclay: It is also worth clarifying—this speaks very much to the unilateral declaration and the concerns on how it operates—that this is about a reserved matter that applies to our international agreements as a United Kingdom and not the powers that sit with the Assembly, within the Good Friday agreement. That is why there was not a willingness to give one community a power of veto over the other.

Nigel Dodds: It is simply not true to say that agriculture and manufactured goods, and so on, are reserved matters. These are matters devolved to the Northern Ireland Assembly. The Secretary of State is just not correct.

Please do not use that argument. This was recognised by the Prime Minister in the letter he sent to Jean-Claude Juncker only a few weeks ago.

Stephen Barclay: The difficulty with that argument, with great respect—I do very much respect the right hon. Gentleman’s concerns—is that Stormont is not sitting at present. That is why we have the mechanism set out further in the unilateral declaration on how that declaration on how that will be addressed if Stormont is not sitting.

Alistair Burt (North East Bedfordshire) (Ind): When, a few weeks ago, I voted for the European Union (Withdrawal) (No. 2) Act 2019—distressingly, it is often referred to as the Benn Act, rather than given its full title: the Benn-Burt Act—it was with the clear intention of ensuring that maximum effort was committed to the negotiations in order to secure a deal and prevent the risk of no deal. I am grateful to the Prime Minister and to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for having succeeded in an objective that did not at the time seem to gather favour. Now that they have succeeded in that, I want a vote on it tonight. Having referred to the good intentions of my right hon. Friend the Member for West Dorset (Sir Oliver Letwin) in moving his amendment today, which I will be voting against, could the Secretary of State give some reassurance to the House as to why he believes it is not necessary if we are to fulfil the terms of the deal and the efforts that have been made in the past few weeks?

Stephen Barclay: I will come to that precise point shortly, but I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for his support—perhaps the legislation should now be called the Burt-Benn Act, rather than the Benn-Burt Act.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Stephen Barclay: I will make a little more progress before taking further interventions.

This is a deal that the Prime Minister was told was impossible. We were told that the withdrawal agreement could not be changed. Indeed, the shadow Brexit Secretary used to hold up the text of the agreement and say that not a word had been changed. We were told that the backstop could not be removed; it was the all-weather, all-life insurance on which the European Union relied. We were told that there was insufficient time for a new deal, and indeed that the negotiations were a sham—and sometimes that was just from the voices on our own side.

The real significance of the Prime Minister’s achievement is that the people of Northern Ireland will have a vote that will give them consent over their future arrangements, and there will no longer be any European veto over what those future arrangements will be. Just as importantly, the deal changes the dynamics of the future negotiations. Before, many Members of the House were concerned that the backstop would be used as leverage, with the EU holding the prospect of our being permanently stuck in its orbit against us. Indeed, many Members spoke about it being easier to leave the EU than to leave the backstop. With this new deal, because of the need

for Northern Ireland’s consent over its future, the dynamics of the future relationship will change, because the EU’s interests will be aligned with ours in reaching a future relationship that benefits both sides.

Frank Field (Birkenhead) (Ind): In my constituency, 52% of people voted to leave and 48% voted to remain. When we come to the sheer weight of legislation that will be needed to put into force the referendum result, might we not only keep faith with the 52% by leaving, but remember, as we have experienced today in the House, that 48% did not wish to leave?

Stephen Barclay: I very much respect that point. The right hon. Gentleman has always reached out to build consensus across the House, which is important. The commitment that the Prime Minister gave in his statement, on how the House will be consulted on the new phase of negotiations, is intended in part to address the concerns that the right hon. Gentleman and other Members across the House have raised, in order to have a balanced approach to the future relationship.

Jonathan Edwards (Carmarthen East and Dinefwr) (PC): I listened intently to the Prime Minister’s statement and the debate that followed, and it seemed that assurances were given to Europhiles that the intention in phase 2 would be to follow close regulatory alignment with the EU, yet a carrot was offered to Eurosceptics in the form of there being unalignment, and even the suggestion that no deal would not be off the table in phase 2. Both cannot be true, so which is it?

Stephen Barclay: Paragraph 77 sets out our commitment to high international standards and to their being reciprocal, as befits the relationship that we reach with the European Union. The hon. Gentleman really should have more confidence that we in this House will set regulation that is world leading and best in class, that reflects the Queen’s Speech, with its world-leading regulation on the environment, and that reflects the commitments that many in the House have sought on workers’ rights. We should also be mindful that, of course, it is this House that went ahead of the EU on paternity rights and parental leave. We can go further than the EU in protecting people’s rights, rather than simply match the EU.

Simon Hoare (North Dorset) (Con): It is my assessment that the deal struck by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister accords with the Good Friday agreement. I think it presages a new golden age for relationships north and south of the border, which is to be welcomed. I congratulate the Government on adopting the stance of consent rather than veto—that reflects modern island-of-Ireland politics today.

Stephen Barclay: As Chair of the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee, my hon. Friend speaks with great authority on this issue. I know that he in particular will have recognised the importance of the fact that the whole of the United Kingdom will benefit from our future trade deals around the world, with every part of the United Kingdom, including Northern Ireland, leaving, as the Prime Minister said in his statement, whole and entire.

Mr John Baron (Basildon and Billericay) (Con): It is right that we examine the detail in this place, and the Secretary of State is doing a great job in answering the questions, but may I suggest to him that we, as a collective body, need a slightly more optimistic note? It is my firm belief that now we have got rid of the backstop, we will achieve a fair and good trade deal by December 2020. We should be focused on that, rather than on all the minor detail. It is a bright future, if we decide to take it today.

Stephen Barclay: My hon. Friend is right to talk of the opportunity for trade deals that Brexit unlocks. We start from a position of great understanding of the respective economies—a big part of a trade deal is usually negotiating that understanding at the start—and we can seize the opportunities of those trade deals around the world. That is exactly why we need to move forward.

Gareth Snell (Stoke-on-Trent Central) (Lab/Co-op): Should the House divide later on the amendment tabled by the right hon. Member for West Dorset (Sir Oliver Letwin), the amendment will have my support. I suggest to the Secretary of State that there is a way through that brings the consensus he talks about: we support the amendment and the Government table the legislation next week so that we can scrutinise the detail. We can then make meaningful decisions on Second and Third Reading, but, crucially, those of us who have some reservations about the Government's trustworthiness can see the commitments that the Secretary of State and the Prime Minister have made from the Dispatch Box, which I welcome, written on the face of the Bill before we make that final, crucial decision on how we continue the process.

Stephen Barclay: I respect the care with which the hon. Gentleman has looked at these issues, but his constituents, like many throughout the country, now want the country to move forward and for us to get this deal done. There is of course a distinction between the meaningful vote today and the further opportunities there will be on Second and Third Reading of the withdrawal agreement Bill for assurance to be provided for in line with the statements that the Prime Minister has made from the Dispatch Box today.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Stephen Barclay: I shall give way once more and then I must make some progress.

Jonathan Reynolds (Stalybridge and Hyde) (Lab/Co-op): Surely the crucial point of this new deal is that it offers Great Britain a fairly hard Brexit in order to facilitate trade agreements with countries for which European standards are incompatible. An economy cannot be a European-style economy and a US-style economy at the same time. The Secretary of State is not giving us an economic assessment to tell us what jobs and industries will grow on the back of this deal and what goods and services will be cheaper to compensate for loss of aerospace, automotive, financial services and so much more. He cannot tell us that today.

Stephen Barclay: The hon. Gentleman really should listen to business leaders like Sir Stuart Rose who says that we should get this deal done; to the Bank of England Governor, who says that this will be a boost to

our economy; and to the many business leaders who want an end to this uncertainty. We cannot simply keep debating the same issues in a House that has said no to everything and refused to say yes to anything.

John Redwood (Wokingham) (Con): This debate should be about restoring the independence of our country in accordance with the votes of the referendum. Given that in the implementation period the EU will have massive powers over us, is there something that the Government can build into the draft legislation to give us reassurance that the EU will not abuse those very excessive powers?

Stephen Barclay: Yes, I am happy to give that reassurance to my right hon. Friend. That is something that we can commit to do as we move forward.

Mr Dominic Grieve (Beaconsfield) (Ind): My right hon. Friend spoke earlier about there not being pointless delay, and I actually agree with him about that. This matter has to be brought to a conclusion, but he must be aware that quite apart from approving it in its generality, we also have a duty as a House to look at the detail of this deal in primary legislation. In the course of that, the House is entitled to pass amendments which, provided they do not undermine the treaty itself, are wholly legitimate. The difficulty is that, by insisting that the Benn Act be effectively subverted and removed, the impression the Government are giving is that they have other intentions—of taking us out at such a gallop that that proper scrutiny cannot take place. I wish the Government would just listen a little bit, because I think that they would find there is much more common ground on this than they have ever been prepared to acknowledge, instead of which they continue to give the impression that they just want to drive a coach and horses through the rights of this House to carry out proper scrutiny.

Stephen Barclay: I have always had great respect for the legal acumen and the seriousness of my right hon. and learned Friend, but there is an inconsistency in his case when he talks about wanting to look at legislation in more detail, having supported the Benn-Burt legislation that was passed in haste, and having supported the Cooper legislation, which needed to be corrected by Lord Pannick and others in the House of Lords, because it would have had the effect of doing the opposite of what it intended as it would have forced a Prime Minister to come back to this House after the EU Council had finished, thereby making a no deal more likely rather than less. That Cooper legislation is a very good example of where my right hon. and learned Friend did not look at legislation in detail, and, indeed, where it would have had a perverse consequence at odds with his arguments for supporting it at the time. Indeed, there is a further inconsistency: he championed section 13, but when the Prime Minister secured a new deal, which my right hon. and learned Friend said that he could not achieve, he then denies the House a right to vote in a meaningful way as required by his own section 13 because he no longer wants it to apply on the same rules as it did when he passed it.

Sir Bernard Jenkin (Harwich and North Essex) (Con): I am most grateful to my right hon. Friend for giving way. This deal has hardly lacked scrutiny, given the

number of times it has been voted on and debated in this House, although we now have an altered deal. May I just point out that the implementing legislation is simply that: it does not alter the substance of the agreement but merely implements the agreement in domestic law. We can do that very quickly and amend that Bill after ratification of the agreement if necessary, because it is only a piece of domestic implementing legislation. There is no case for delaying that legislation, and I am going to vote for the deal today, if I get the chance.

Stephen Barclay: First, I welcome the support of my hon. Friend. One issue that the shadow Secretary of State and I agree on is that, on these issues, there has not been a lack of scrutiny, given the frequency with which we seem to debate them in the House.

It is also worth reminding ourselves of what the motion is addressing today. The motion is addressing the withdrawal agreement and the political declaration secured by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. The mechanism to implement that—the withdrawal agreement Bill—has still to be debated. Indeed, even that pertains only to the winding-down arrangements and not, as is often referenced in this House, to the future trade deal that we want to get on and debate. It is therefore rather odd that the main issue—our relationship with Europe—is being thwarted because of a circular, endless debate on the same issue, when we need to support the deal today in order to unlock the withdrawal agreement Bill that we need to debate.

Sir Patrick McLoughlin (Derbyshire Dales) (Con): Is not the simple fact of the matter that all the people who cry out for a deal have to support the deal that has been brought forward by the Prime Minister? It is a first step on the way to many other opportunities that this House will have to discuss this particular issue, but we really have to move forward now and respect the result of the referendum three and a half years ago.

Stephen Barclay: My right hon. Friend is absolutely right. This is the first step, not the final one. The House will have further opportunities to debate these issues.

Caroline Flint (Don Valley) (Lab): Does the Secretary of State agree that amendment (a) is a panic measure by the right hon. Member for West Dorset (Sir Oliver Letwin) and others, because they had no idea or confidence that a deal would be before us today that would allow those of us in this House who want to secure a deal to move on and leave the European Union by 31 October? As a result, if the House votes for amendment (a) today, we will be forced—even if a deal is approved—to seek an extension until 31 January, underlining that the sponsors of Benn Act had only one motivation: to delay Brexit and stop it.

Stephen Barclay: I very much agree with the right hon. Lady's points, as well as with the principle and consistency that she has shown throughout the debate. It is indeed an interesting snippet within the point that she raises that some of the voices in the media this morning were complaining that there had been insufficient time between the deal on 17 October and the debate in the House today, 19 October. And yet, this is the timescale that the Benn legislation itself required of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister when it came to bringing issues before the House.

Luciana Berger (Liverpool, Wavertree) (LD): I thank the Secretary of State for very kindly giving way. He has used the word “scrutiny” on a number of occasions in his contribution so far, yet he was on BBC News this morning confirming that no economic analysis has been done on the deal presented to the House today. *[Interruption.]* Government Members may shake their heads, but how can this House be expected to vote on something so fundamental to the future of our country without that analysis?

Stephen Barclay: I suspect that a point on which the hon. Lady and I could agree is that there is probably no level of analysis that is going to change her vote and her mind. As a former Treasury Minister, I am always aware—as I am sure the Chancellor himself would recognise—that it is indeed difficult to model a deal that was only done on Thursday, which cannot anticipate what changes the new EU Commission under new leadership will make, which does not set out what changes the UK will make in response to that, and which cannot second-guess what changes will happen in the wider world economy that will clearly have an impact on such an economic model.

Jim Shannon (Strangford) (DUP): The Secretary of State represents North East Cambridgeshire and is a member of the Conservative and Unionist party. I am a member of the Democratic Unionist party. A Unionist in Strangford at this moment in time is a second-class citizen by comparison with a Unionist in North East Cambridgeshire. Can the Secretary of State tell me why the Unionist people in Northern Ireland—my children, my grandchildren and their birthright—will be secondary to Unionists anywhere else across the United Kingdom? Does he not understand the angst, fear and annoyance of Unionists in Northern Ireland? We have been treated as second-class citizens in this deal and, as I see it, our opinion means nothing.

Stephen Barclay: Members from across the House who have seen the assiduous nature of hon. Gentleman, particularly in Adjournment debates, will know that his constituents never get a second-class service from him. In the deal that the Prime Minister has negotiated, he has tried to operate in the same spirit that I know the hon. Gentleman does by ensuring that Northern Ireland remains part of the United Kingdom customs union and leaves whole and entire. As a consequence, the hon. Gentleman's constituents, like mine in North East Cambridgeshire, will benefit from the great trade deals that I know the Secretary of State for International Trade intends to negotiate.

Mr Mark Francois (Rayleigh and Wickford) (Con): The aim of amendment (a) is clear. The emperor has no clothes; it is to stop us leaving the European Union at any cost. The European Research Group met this morning. Normally, our meetings are private, but in the circumstances, there were three things that I thought I could share with the House. First, the officers overwhelmingly recommended backing the Prime Minister's deal. Secondly, the ERG overwhelmingly recommended the same and no member of the ERG spoke against it. Thirdly, and most importantly, we agreed that those who vote for the deal vote for the Bill. If the deal is passed today, we will faithfully vote the Bill through to the end, so that we can leave the European Union. You have our word.

Stephen Barclay: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for his support, which, coming from someone who opposed the previous deal, is a reflection of the fact that this is a deal for everyone—a deal for the 52 and for the 48; a deal for Northern Ireland and for Cambridgeshire. This is a deal that benefits the United Kingdom—in particular, by enabling us to move forward and, above all, take back control of our fisheries.

Alan Brown (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (SNP) *rose*—

Stephen Barclay: On which point I am sure the hon. Gentleman is about to intervene.

Alan Brown: Obviously, Northern Ireland is getting preferential treatment. Although it has not brought the DUP on board, Northern Ireland is getting special access to the single market and the Government have promised more money to Northern Ireland, yet Scotland is being left high and dry. Can the Secretary of State confirm that Scottish Tory Members did not ask for any concessions for Scotland—that they got no concessions and are just Lobby fodder?

Stephen Barclay: I can tell the hon. Gentleman very clearly what the Scottish Conservative MPs secured, which is control of our fishing policy—something that he and other Members would give back to Brussels.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Stephen Barclay: Let me make some progress, then I will take further interventions.

By contrast with the efforts of the Prime Minister—who was told that a deal was impossible and that neither the backstop nor one word of the withdrawal agreement could be amended—the Leader of the Opposition appears to have rejected the deal before he has even read it. This is an Opposition who cannot see further than opposition for opposition's sake.

The shadow Brexit Secretary, the right hon. and learned Member for Holborn and St Pancras (Keir Starmer), will always, unlike the Leader of the Opposition, have read the detail. He has been in post throughout the three years, but during that time has used a wide range of arguments to support his case. He said in July 2018:

“We respect the result of the...referendum”,

and he recognised that we are leaving the European Union, but he now says that

“any outcome...must be subject to a referendum and we would campaign for remain”.

He said that Labour's concerns were never about the withdrawal agreement or the backstop;

“They were about the Political Declaration”.

That is what he put on Twitter on 17 October this year, yet he used to stand in this Chamber and object to the withdrawal agreement because it had not changed. At the time of the third meaningful vote, which was purely on the withdrawal agreement and not the political declaration, he still objected to the withdrawal agreement. In 2018, he said that Labour could not support a withdrawal agreement without

“a mechanism for universal exit”,

which is exactly what my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has secured through the vote of consent for the Northern Ireland Assembly, but the shadow Secretary

of State now says that the issue is no longer about the withdrawal agreement; it is instead about the political declaration.

For much of this debate, Labour has been for being a participant in the EU customs union, yet we have heard from a senior member of the Labour party that its real position is 100% remain. As one media report alleged this week, during the cross-party talks, Labour even rejected a copy-and-paste of its own proposal, describing it as “unacceptable”.

Some in government have cautioned against listening to experts during this debate, but it is clear from business experts and the Bank of England's Governor—

Keir Starmer (Holborn and St Pancras) (Lab): The Secretary of State and I were in the same room at the time; he knows very well that that is not true—the idea that I would not know our own proposal. He knows that; he was there. Withdraw it!

Hon. Members: Withdraw!

Stephen Barclay: If hon. Members will give me a moment, the shadow Secretary of State and I have always conducted our debates in the House with great courtesy, so in that spirit, of course I withdraw that. That is a good illustration of what today's debate is really about. We could get into the detail of whether we are presenting something aligned to what he has previously said and whether the sense is the same, but today is about this House and the country coming together and moving on from these debates and the talks, although the real issue in the talks was some people's desire for a second referendum, rather than a desire to get into the detail of how we could resolve the issues.

Alex Chalk (Cheltenham) (Con): This is at least the seventh opportunity the House has had to avoid a harmful no deal. There were three occasions relating to the former Prime Minister's deal; there was the European Free Trade Association; there was Norway; and there was the customs union. Does my right hon. Friend agree that it would be folly to let this final opportunity to avoid a damaging crash-out slip through our fingers?

Stephen Barclay: I know that my hon. Friend speaks for his constituents, and for businesses across the country, who recognise that now is the time to support this deal and for the House to move on.

Mr Edward Vaizey (Wantage) (Ind) *rose*—

Stephen Barclay: I give way to the right hon. Gentleman. *[Interruption.]*

Mr Vaizey: We will find out if the Secretary of State made the right decision in giving way. I have a genuine question.

Dr Julian Lewis (New Forest East) (Con): For once.

Mr Vaizey: Yes. I am asking for a friend. If the Letwin amendment is passed and the Bill comes in next week and is agreed to before 31 October, we will leave on 31 October, but if the Letwin amendment is not passed and the Bill comes forward next week but is not agreed to by 31 October, we will leave with no deal—yes or no?

Stephen Barclay: I say yes to this: to proceed, we need to comply with section 13 of the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018. That is the argument that the right hon. Gentleman and many others have repeatedly made. If we are to deliver that and avoid any further delay, it is important that we defeat amendment (a).

Rehman Chishti: The Secretary of State says that the deal is about moving on. One of the real obstacles that prevented us from moving on was the backstop. I resigned from the Government and a party position in November over the backstop. Can he confirm that what we have now completely gets rid of the backstop and is about moving on?

Stephen Barclay: I can very much confirm that. The Prime Minister was told that the backstop could not be removed, but its removal is exactly what he has achieved. He was told that was impossible, but he has delivered.

Mr Mark Harper (Forest of Dean) (Con): I am listening very carefully to the debate about the timing. Is it not clear that if the Letwin amendment is defeated and we make a decision today that is actually complying with—not subverting, but complying with—the Benn-Burt Act by bringing forward a deal and winning that vote, yes, we will have to get the legislation through this House quickly, and that will probably mean sitting for long days and probably long nights, but we can get it done? However, if the amendment passes and there is an extension, my guess is that that legislation will go on and on, and we will never leave. The right hon. Member for Don Valley (Caroline Flint) is absolutely right: if we want to get this done, vote against the Letwin amendment, for the motion today and get the legislation through by the end of October—and get Brexit done.

Stephen Barclay: As a former Government Chief Whip, my right hon. Friend is absolutely right on the process that applies. The other issue that is sometimes forgotten is that our friends and colleagues in Europe do not want any further delay and do not want to see any extension, but want to see us get on.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Stephen Barclay: I will give way one further time, and then I will move on.

Nick Boles (Grantham and Stamford) (Ind): My right hon. Friend does not want to answer the question from the right hon. Member for Wantage (Mr Vaizey), so I will. If the Letwin amendment passes, and the Government bring forward the Bill at the start of next week and that Bill passes before 31 October, we will leave on 31 October without a delay. If the Letwin amendment fails, and the Government bring forward the Bill and some people in the ERG, such as the hon. Member for Basildon and Billericay (Mr Baron), suddenly discover that they prefer the idea of a no-deal Brexit and the Bill fails, we will leave on 31 October with no deal.

Stephen Barclay: The problem with the hon. Gentleman's argument is that it is at odds with the argument put forward by the right hon. and learned Member for Beaconsfield (Mr Grieve), who says that we need to

pass this amendment to have more scrutiny and delay and to take much longer, yet the hon. Gentleman says that we need the amendment to be able to leave on —[*Interruption.*]

Mr Baron: On a point of order, Mr Speaker.

Mr Grieve: On a point of order, Mr Speaker.

Mr Speaker: I will come to the right hon. and learned Gentleman, but I call Mr John Baron.

Mr Baron: I do not usually do this, but given that there was a very factual error in the comment just made by an Opposition Member, may I say, just for the record, that I have never been a member of the ERG and I am not a member of the ERG?

Mr Speaker: That is a matter of extraordinary interest in the House and possibly across the nation—I say that to the hon. Gentleman in the friendliest spirit—but it is not a matter for adjudication by the Chair. However, the hon. Gentleman has advertised his non-membership of the ERG, and I hope he feels better for it.

Mr Grieve: On a point of order, Mr Speaker. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is entirely mistaken and cannot have been listening to what I said when I intervened on him. I am in entire agreement with my hon. Friend the Member for Grantham and Stamford (Nick Boles), who asked him the question, because that must be the position. The intention behind the Letwin amendment is to secure that insurance policy—nothing more, nothing less.

Mr Speaker: I say, mainly for the benefit of those observing our proceedings who are not Members of the House, that in common with the overwhelming majority of purported points of order, that was not a point of order. However, the right hon. and learned Gentleman has put his point on the record, and he, too, will doubtless go about his business with an additional glint in his eye and spring in his step as a consequence.

Stephen Barclay: The problem with the right hon. and learned Gentleman's argument is that it is at odds with what he says about section 13. Each time it is a different argument, but the purpose is always the same, and that is to delay any resolution, to stop this House moving forward and to stop us getting Brexit done.

There are many in this House who have said repeatedly in debates that their principal concern is avoiding a no-deal exit. My right hon. Friend the Member for Ashford (Damian Green), on the Prime Minister's statement, made that point. Today is the opportunity for all Members of this House to demonstrate that they want to avoid a no-deal exit, to support this deal and to get Brexit done. This is a deal that takes back control of our money, borders and laws. It gives the people of Northern Ireland the freedom to choose their future. It allows the whole United Kingdom to benefit from our trade deals, and it ensures that we move forward as one complete Union of the United Kingdom.

In securing the new deal, the Prime Minister observed with his EU colleagues that a failure by them to listen to this Parliament, and in particular its decision on the

[Stephen Barclay]

backstop, would indeed be a failure of statecraft. They have listened; they have acted; and they have reached a new deal with the Prime Minister. It would now be a failure of this Parliament not to approve this deal and to fail to respond to that flexibility from EU leaders as required.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Mr Speaker: Order. Before I call the shadow Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union, I will hear a point of order from the hon. Member for Redcar (Anna Turley).

Anna Turley (Redcar) (Lab/Co-op): On a point of order, Mr Speaker. I would be grateful for your advice. I was shocked to hear the Secretary of State mention the name of Mo Mowlam in his introductory remarks. Mo Mowlam said that the EU contributed to the Northern Ireland peace process and that it was crucial in underpinning dialogue and cross-community contacts. She emphasised the precariousness of the process and the need for continued “substantial” support from the European Union. May I seek your advice, Mr Speaker, on how we can seek to defend her legacy when it is abused in such a way?

Mr Speaker: As the hon. Lady knows, I recognise the sincerity with which she speaks, and the constituency basis, of which I hope colleagues are conscious, that motivates her to defend the legacy of Mo Mowlam. As she also knows, she has successfully found her own salvation through that bogus, but sincere, point of order. Her point is on the record, and it can be studied by colleagues in the House and by people outside.

12.11 pm

Keir Starmer (Holborn and St Pancras) (Lab): Today, we meet on a Saturday for the first time in 37 years, with huge decisions before us this afternoon. Those decisions are not just about whether this deal gets over the line, and getting Brexit done, but about what it means for our country. There has been a lot of attention on how the deal operates in Northern Ireland, and rightly so, but that should not be allowed to mask the political project that is driving this deal. That is why Labour has focused on the political declaration, and any examination of the detail of that political declaration reveals its true purpose and the intent of the deal.

No customs union—that strikes at the heart of our manufacturing sector. Once in the doldrums, decimated by Prime Minister Thatcher—[*Interruption.*] Mr Speaker, my dad was a toolmaker. He worked in a factory all his life in manufacturing, and we lived through those doldrums. That is why when I go to a factory or plant I am proud, for myself and for my father, when I see manufacturing through the just-in-time process and the revival that has gone on in parts of manufacturing. Go to any of those manufacturing plants, and the management and unions speak with one voice: “Do not take us out of the customs union.” This deal does just that, and it will do huge damage to manufacturing.

What of services? Nothing in this deal is different from that of the previous Prime Minister—the weakest of weak deals for services, which make up 80% of our

economy. What the deal does is clear: it rips up our close trading relationship with the EU, and the price will be paid in damage to our economy and in job losses. Anyone doubting that should look at the words that have been stripped out of the deal put forward by the previous Prime Minister. Put the text side by side and ask some difficult questions.

Paragraph 20 used to read:

“The Parties envisage having a trading relationship on goods that is as close as possible, with a view to facilitating the ease of legitimate trade.”

The words “as close as possible” have been stripped out. Why?

Now it is said that we want “as close as possible”. Now it is said that there are all sorts of assurances, but between the text as it was under the previous Prime Minister and the text before us today, the words “a trading relationship on goods that is as close as possible” have been taken out and that is not an accident.

James Frith (Bury North) (Lab): At the heart of this is the question of destination: not an abstract of moving on today, but the impact of a deal on everyday life in towns like mine. The Government should stop selling this sell-out deal to us as if this is the decision today. For all the talk of a deal of Norway plus and Canada plus plus, the Government are presenting us with Britain minus: minus protections, minus opportunities, minus prospects. If the Government are confident in the deal, they should put it to a final say. Now the deal is through the gate and people know more than they did, they should have a say on whether this is what they want. Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that a final say is the only way through this mess?

Keir Starmer: I do agree, but I really want to press this point. As I say, this is not just about getting a deal over the line. That is not the end of it. It is what we are getting over the line and what it means for our country. I invite the Secretary of State to intervene on me. Why were the words “as close as possible” taken out of the text? If the Government’s aspiration is to be as close as possible, why take the words out? [*Interruption.*] Nothing.

Let us again go through the exercise of laying the two texts alongside each other. The words about alignment are all but gone. A deliberate decision has been taken to take out the aspiration of a trading relationship that is as close as possible and a deliberate decision has been taken to take out all the words about alignment. That is not an accident. That is not a typo. That is a deeply political decision that tells us everything about the direction of travel under this deal.

Lilian Greenwood (Nottingham South) (Lab): Does that not go precisely to the heart of why those of us on the Labour Benches will not be able to vote for this deal? We are hearing from our colleagues in the trade union movement, who represent millions of workers including those who work in manufacturing, that this deal will be damaging for the future of jobs and livelihoods. How can we trust the Tories on workers’ rights when, throughout the whole time I was a trade union officer and throughout the whole time I have been a Member of Parliament, this Government have reduced working people’s rights?

Keir Starmer: I am grateful for that intervention.

Simon Hoare: Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

Keir Starmer: I will make one more point and then I will give way. I just want to reinforce my point and then I will pause.

Not only have the aspiration for “as close as possible” and the references to alignment been taken out, but the new text removes the backstop as the basis of the future relationship—not the backstop in its own right, but as the basis for the future relationship. That is very important because it means that the starting point for the next stage is a baseline FTA with no safety net for workplace rights, consumer rights and environmental standards. They have gone from the binding legal withdrawal agreement altogether. They are found—I will come back to them—in the political declaration. They have gone out of the binding agreement and into the political declaration.

Simon Hoare: While we listen to the right hon. and learned Gentleman’s confession entitled, “Why I wish I voted for the previous deal,” could he actually share with the House his honest assessment? Unless a deal says, “We will remain in the European Union and there will be no changes,” he will find false tests and artificially high hurdles that preclude him from voting for anything that does not ignore the referendum result.

Keir Starmer: That is just utter nonsense. Let me answer that directly: I have stood at this Dispatch Box and pressed amendments on the customs union time and again, and Government Members have voted against them. We have put forward the basis for a deal and we voted for it on the Opposition side of the House, so that intervention is just nonsense.

It is obvious where this ends: either with an FTA that significantly weakens rights, standards and protections, or in no deal and WTO terms at the end of the transition.

Stephen Timms (East Ham) (Lab): I am grateful to my right hon. and learned Friend for focusing attention on manufacturing. Is it his assessment that this deal would lead to new rules of origin checks and other red tape on UK manufacturers exporting to the EU?

Keir Starmer: Yes, and anybody who has read the text knows it, because it is absolutely clear that there will have to be those checks.

Let me make one broader point that was made to me by manufacturers—this is not me speaking; it is what they have said to me. I will not name the company, but people from one of our major motor manufacturers said to me, “We don’t think that we would ever be able to take advantage of any new trade agreements, because we could never prove that 50% of our components come from the UK, and that is one of the rules.” That was their concern—*[Interruption.]* I will make this point, because it is really powerful and if people have not grasped this, they do not know what they are voting for. They said to me, “Our components come from across the EU and at the moment, we can show that 50% of them satisfy the rule to take advantage of the trade agreements that the EU has struck.” Their position is that they could never satisfy that requirement if the area is shrunk to the UK and therefore, their point to

me was not that they are against new trade agreements—businesses are not—but that they will not be able to take advantage of them. That is what they said to me.

Chris Grayling (Epsom and Ewell) (Con): The thing that puzzles me is this: I hear the right hon. and learned Gentleman setting out strong objections to the strategy that this Government have pursued, yet, had the Labour party agreed to hold a general election when it was first mooted, that election would be over by now, and if Labour had persuaded the country, there would be a Labour Prime Minister at the Dispatch Box. What is it about the Labour party’s position that it is not willing to put to the country?

Keir Starmer: I think I said this in the debate last week, but I will say it again: I am not going to vote for a general election until I know that no deal is off the table and we have an extension. It is as simple as that.

Norman Lamb (North Norfolk) (LD): I have really agonised this week over whether to support this deal, and it has been profoundly difficult. Does the shadow Secretary of State share my concern with regard to Northern Ireland that by disturbing the careful balance within the Good Friday agreement between the two communities, we run the risk of inflaming Unionist opinion in potentially a very dangerous way, just, in a sense, as the hon. Member for Strangford (Jim Shannon) made clear in his intervention?

Keir Starmer: I am concerned about the position in Northern Ireland, and the Secretary of State quoted me on this earlier. It is true that I and the Labour party had reservations about the backstop—I am not sure that there were many people who did not have reservations about it—but on analysis, we thought that it was right for Northern Ireland and therefore, we focused our attention on the political declaration. I criticised it; I said what I thought was wrong with it. I was critical, for example, of the fact that it did not hardwire dynamic alignment of workplace rights, but ultimately, we thought that upholding the Good Friday agreement was more important and more significant.

I will also say this, because again, it is very important to read the small print: while it is true that the current deal says that Northern Ireland remains, as it were, in the UK’s customs territory, it goes on to explain that for goods going into Northern Ireland, the only ones that escape going effectively into the EU’s customs union are those that are at no risk of going beyond Northern Ireland and are not going into manufacturing, so the volume of goods that cross the border that truly are treated as if Northern Ireland is in the customs union is only that small category. The burden of proving that is on the person who is exporting. Can the Secretary of State, or anybody, explain how that can operate without very careful and extensive checks?

Anna Soubry (Broxtowe) (IGC): The right hon. and learned Gentleman is making a powerful speech. He makes a good point about the backstop, because it was indeed a backstop: it was there in the last event, as it were. Does he agree that this is a new agreement, especially in relation to Northern Ireland? This is not a backstop; this is their future, and essentially it is in perpetuity. He is providing careful analysis to the House—

[Anna Soubry]

I can see right hon. and hon. Members understanding and listening—but frankly the danger is that we will be bounced into a decision today with terrible consequences for our Union and our country.

Keir Starmer: I agree. I will develop that point in a moment, but I will take a further intervention first.

Caroline Lucas (Brighton, Pavilion) (Green): The former Prime Minister used to say that no deal was better than a bad deal. Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman share my concern that the current Prime Minister has just let it slip that this deal, heroically, manages to be both? It is a bad deal with a back door to no deal if no extension to the transition is agreed at the end of next year.

Keir Starmer: I agree, and that is a point that I will develop. In recognition of the previous Prime Minister, although she said that, I always felt that she had a profound sense of public duty, that she properly recognised the real risks of no deal, and that ultimately she would not have taken us there. I do not have that trust in the current Prime Minister.

David Hanson (Delyn) (Lab): Will my right hon. and learned Friend explore further the customs checks issue? If a lorry leaves Dumfries or north Wales for Northern Ireland, and its ultimate destination is the Republic of Ireland, where and when will the customs checks take place?

Keir Starmer: There have to be checks, and they have to be done at the border with England, Scotland and Wales, or Northern Ireland—there is no getting away from that. The argument that the Prime Minister tried to deploy earlier that he is not putting a border in the Irish sea is just wrong—it is absolutely wrong. Any goods that do not fall within the restricted category of goods proven not to be going any further than Northern Ireland and not to be going into manufacturing will be subject to checks, because that is the test written into the deal.

Mrs Madeleine Moon (Bridgend) (Lab): Ultimately, the bottom line is the future of people's livelihoods. Never mind our emotional passions about being or not being in the European Union; what are the implications for workers and their jobs? Ford is leaving Bridgend, where it has 1,700 jobs—with 12,000 jobs across the south Wales economy—because it was worried about a no-deal Brexit. I have looked at this text, and there is a real risk that this is the end of just-in-time manufacturing in the whole UK. Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree?

Keir Starmer: I do, and I am deeply concerned, because I am proud of our manufacturing base and the revival that it has gone through.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Keir Starmer: I have taken a lot of interventions and will take more later, but first I will make some progress.

It is important that we work through not just the technicalities of the deal, but where it leads us politically, because this is about the direction of travel for our

country. If we go to a bare FTA, which is what it would mean, the Government's own estimates show that there will be a loss of approximately 6.7% to growth in GDP over 15 years, and every region and nation will be poorer for it. The Prime Minister's letter of 19 August to Donald Tusk made it clear that from the Government's point of view and his own, the point of our exit is to allow the UK to diverge from the rights and standards of the EU. Let's nail this one: you do not need that if you want to go up and have better standards. We do not have to break the rule to bring in better standards—we can do that under the existing rule—so anybody who wants to change the rule is not doing it to have the freedom to bring in better standards, because they do not need to change the rule for that; the only reason to diverge is to go down. That is why, on this question of divergence, it is very important to focus on the level playing field protections. As I say, those have been taken out of what is legally binding and put into the political declaration, and they apply in full only until the end of the transition period in 2020.

It is obvious where the Government are going. They want a licence to deregulate and diverge. I know they will disavow that, I know they want the deal through, and I know they will say, "Never. Of course not", but it is obvious where it leads. Once we have diverged and moved out of alignment with the EU, trade will become more difficult. The EU will no longer be seen as our priority in trade and the gaze will go elsewhere to make up for it. Once we move out of alignment, we will not move back, and the further we move out, the harder it will be to trade with the EU27, and once that happens, we will have broken the economic model we have been operating under for decades, and we will start to look elsewhere—across to the United States.

Our gaze will shift to the United States, and that is a different economic model. It is not just another country; it is a different economic model, a deregulated model. In the US, the holiday entitlement is 10 days. Many contracts at work are called contracts "at will". Hugely powerful corporate bodies have far more power than the workforce. This is not a technical decision about the EU but a political direction of travel that takes us to a different economic mode—one of deregulation and low standards, where the balance between the workforce and corporate bodies is far worse.

Anna McMorrin (Cardiff North) (Lab): Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that this is a project and ideology for the right by the hard right? It does not get Brexit done. We should be thinking about our children's future. We need to put this back to the people. We need to listen to all those people, to the hundreds and thousands marching out there today, to those young people, and give them a say in their future.

Keir Starmer: I agree with the tenor of that comment.

Kevin Hollinrake (Thirsk and Malton) (Con): The right hon. Gentleman talks about workers' rights. The EU entitlement for holiday pay is four weeks. In the UK, it is 5.6 weeks. If we wanted to reduce that entitlement and to reduce standards, why would we not have done that already?

Keir Starmer: Because the Labour party and other Opposition parties would never countenance it, and I do not think the Government would either. [Interruption.]

Mr Speaker: Order. Mr Hughes, you are a most eccentric denizen of the House. The shadow Secretary of State for Brexit is not conducting a private conversation with you. Calm yourself!

Clive Efford (Eltham) (Lab): The Conservatives have luxuriated in telling us that the Benn Act undermined their negotiations by forcing them into preventing no deal from being on the table if we left on 31 October, but the Prime Minister has said that he has negotiated a “great deal” with that restriction in place, so what possible argument can they have for not agreeing that we cannot leave at the end of the next phase of negotiations with no deal, at the end of 2020? Why would they not accept that restriction, given that they negotiated what the Prime Minister calls a great deal?

Keir Starmer: I have never accepted the proposition that insuring the country against no deal undermines the negotiations. I remind Members that at no point in the two years of the negotiating window that closed on 29 March did the House take no deal off the table. The entire negotiations were carried out with the risk of no deal. The previous Prime Minister brought back a deal, and half her own side would not vote for it.

Mr Duncan Smith: The right hon. and learned Gentleman is being very generous in giving way. May I take him up on the very philosophical and logical argument that he is now trying to make? The argument from the Opposition Dispatch Box seems to be that the Opposition must have the European Union to protect them on workers’ rights because there is almost likely to be a permanent Conservative Government that will threaten those workers’ rights. Why do Labour Members not have the courage to say that they would fight an election, would make the case for stronger workers’ rights and would win that election, which would be democracy in action rather than someone else protecting them?

Keir Starmer: Of course we would, but the point is this, and it has not been answered by any of these interventions. Since the current rule allows you to have higher standards, why do you write into the deal that you want to diverge?

Mr Pat McFadden (Wolverhampton South East) (Lab): When Labour was in government, we legislated to go beyond European minimums many times, which included granting 6 million workers an extra eight days’ paid leave. For much of the time we were doing that, it was being vociferously opposed by the Conservative Opposition, and particularly by the present Prime Minister, who built his journalistic career on attacking measures of that kind.

The point that my right hon. and learned Friend is making is correct. This is not just about the legislation that we pass here; it is about the common rule book that gives us market access across the European Union. The Prime Minister cannot promise a deregulatory future to the European Research Group and a regulatory future to the Labour party.

Keir Starmer: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend, who has made the point very carefully and ably.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Keir Starmer: I have given way many, many times. I am going to make some progress, and then I will give way again.

Of the two possible outcomes, one is this deregulated free trade agreement which in the end, whatever people say, will drive us away from the European economic model towards a different economic model. We will look back on this as a turning point in our history of much greater significance than whether this deal technically gets over the line tonight. The other possible outcome, which has been put to me in interventions, is that there is no deal at the end of the transition period, and that has to be significantly addressed. I know that some colleagues are tempted to vote for the deal because they believe that it prevents or removes the possibility of crashing out on World Trade Organisation terms. It does not. Under the previous deal, if the future relationship was not ready by the end of the transition, the backstop kicked in, which prevented WTO terms. That has gone. This is a trapdoor to no deal.

Let me quote the words of the hon. Member for Basildon and Billericay (Mr Baron). I hope that I do so accurately, but if I do not, he will correct me. What I understood him to say was this:

“The reason I am inclined to vote for this one”—
—this deal—

“is very simple... if the trade talks are not successful...then we could leave on no-deal terms.”

Mr Baron *rose*—

Keir Starmer: I will give way to the hon. Gentleman, because I said that I would.

Mr Baron: The right hon. and learned Gentleman is right with the quote, but he has been very selective and taken it out of context, because I continued to make the point that it is a commercial reality that leaving no deal on the table in any negotiations makes a good and fair trade deal more likely. That is something I, and the vast majority of colleagues in this place, actually want. We want a free trade agreement agreed with the EU by December 2020, and my firm belief—I am not alone here—is that by scrapping the previous backstop, we stand more chance of achieving it.

Mr Speaker: I ask the hon. Gentleman to put his full quote in the Library for the delectation of colleagues.

Keir Starmer: I am genuinely grateful for that intervention, which I wanted to take, but the fact remains that the hon. Gentleman is right when he says that if the trade deals

“are not successful... then we could leave on no-deal terms.”

Before we rush into the Lobbies, let us explore what that means.

The decision on extending transition, under this deal, needs to be taken by the end of July next year. That is eight months away. It is very hard to see how any Government could negotiate a completed future relationship within such a short timeframe, particularly a Government who want to diverge. The Prime Minister brushed this away earlier by saying, “Well, we’re aligned.” That is true, and if he wanted to stay aligned he could probably do a trade deal a lot more quickly, but this Prime Minister and this Government want to diverge. So, the idea that this does not lead to a no-deal Brexit is wrong,

[Keir Starmer]

and nobody should vote for this deal on the basis that it is the way to ensure that we do not leave at the end of 2020 on WTO terms.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Keir Starmer: I am going to make a little more progress, then I will give way.

Today, the Prime Minister dangles prospects of workers' rights and indicates amendments he might be inclined to take down the line—promises, promises. I know these are really important issues for—

Mr Bob Seely (Isle of Wight) (Con): Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

Keir Starmer: I will make this point and then I will give way.

I know how important these issues are to many Members on the Opposition Benches, particularly the question of workplace rights, environmental rights and consumer standards. I remind all Members of this House that not a single trade union supports this deal. I urge everyone in the House to reflect on the likelihood of this Prime Minister keeping his promises.

This point has been made, but I am going to make it again. Last November, the Prime Minister told the DUP conference, in terms, that

“regulatory checks and even customs controls between Great Britain and Northern Ireland”

would be

“damaging”

to the

“fabric of the Union”.

He went on to say that

“no British Conservative government could or should sign up to any such arrangement”.

His words.

What does this deal do? It puts checks and controls between Great Britain and Northern Ireland. It creates a customs border in the Irish sea. It does precisely what the Prime Minister told the DUP last November he would not do—typical of this Prime Minister. So, those who are considering today putting their trust in this Prime Minister need to reflect on how he has treated his supply and confidence partners—promise, then burn. I ask how anybody could trust any promise he is now making.

Rushanara Ali (Bethnal Green and Bow) (Lab): This deal not only rules out the customs union; it rules out a single market relationship, which affects service sector jobs, alongside the manufacturing jobs. As my right hon. and learned Friend said, it is going to be a bonfire of labour standards and environmental standards. Does he agree that this is a Trojan horse for a no-deal Brexit? That is why our colleagues on this side of the House must vote it down, as must others who believe in the national interest.

Keir Starmer: I agree completely.

Greg Clark (Tunbridge Wells) (Ind): The right hon. and learned Gentleman will have heard the Prime Minister make a commitment to me and this House that he would legislate, if necessary, to ensure that workers' rights

in this country could not be inferior to those in the European Union. On the question of trust and confidence, if such legislation were pursued in parallel with the withdrawal agreement Bill, or in that Bill, so that they could be decided together, surely that would give him the confidence he requires.

Keir Starmer: I am grateful for that intervention. The point is this: the Prime Minister said that no British Conservative Government could or should sign up to any such arrangement, but now it is said that he could sign up to it. That is exactly why we should not trust that. It is why we should support amendment (a). [Interruption.] It is an important intervention, and I take it seriously. That is why amendment (a) is so important, because it gives the House an opportunity to know precisely what the commitment is and what words will go into the legislation.

I am not prepared, I am afraid—nor are the vast majority on the Opposition Benches—to take the Prime Minister's word. There is more than enough evidence that his word does not mean anything and cannot be trusted.

Mr Jim Cunningham (Coventry South) (Lab): I was one of those who worked in industry in Coventry during the period of the Thatcher Government when, as my right hon. and learned Friend, like his father, will know, every week we saw thousands of jobs lost in the motor car industry. Big companies such as Jaguar Land Rover are very worried about the industry's future, bearing in mind that they will have certain things to prove and that if they cannot, they will have to pay tariffs, which could affect jobs and so on. If anyone wants to know why the Opposition are suspicious of any Government in relation to trade union rights, they have only to look at the Government's Trade Union Act 2016, under a previous Prime Minister. They will see exactly what the Government have in mind.

Keir Starmer: I am grateful for that intervention, which reinforces the point. Manufacturing, which had been on its knees, has now revived, at least in part. Why would anybody, whichever way they voted, want to take an axe to it? I will never understand that.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Keir Starmer: I will make some progress and then give way again. [Interruption.] I have given way so much. I will give way again. I do need to make some progress so that others can get in.

I turn briefly to amendment (a) in the name of the right hon. Member for West Dorset (Sir Oliver Letwin). I thank him and colleagues across the House for the cross-party work they have done in recent months. The amendment, which is genuinely cross-party, is in that spirit. It makes it clear that this House will not be bounced into supporting what is a very bad deal without a proper chance to scrutinise it. It would allow the House to ensure that the legal text is acceptable and provide time to seek changes in the passage of implementing legislation. It would ensure that the Benn Act can be applied.

May I say this? The amendment does not cause delay, because that exercise will have to be gone through anyway. It is not a vote to delay; it is a vote to get on with looking at the next stage, which will have to be

looked at. What it does provide is an insurance policy against signing up to a deal that is not what it seems, with the risk of a no-deal Brexit to boot.

The deal before the House is a thoroughly bad deal. It is a bad deal for jobs, rights and living standards. It is a bad deal for the future direction of the country. It will put us on a path to an entirely different economy and society: one of deregulation and divergence. It will end in either a bare bones free trade agreement or no deal in eight months. It stands against everything that the labour and trade movement stands for—*[Interruption.]*

Mr Speaker: Order. We do not need people, in a rather juvenile fashion, calling out. The right hon. and learned Gentleman will give way if and when he wants to give way, as was true of the Secretary of State. Notwithstanding the notably generous-spirited instincts of the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, the right hon. Member for Surrey Heath (Michael Gove), I am not aware of the shadow Brexit Secretary having asked him to be his mentor.

Keir Starmer: If we pass this deal today, it will be a long way back for the communities we represent. I urge all Members to reject it.

12.49 pm

Sir Oliver Letwin (West Dorset) (Ind): I beg to move amendment (a), in motion 1, leave out from “with a deal,” to end and add

“this House has considered the matter but withholds approval unless and until implementing legislation is passed.”

Amendment (a) has been tabled in my name and those of many other right hon. and hon. Members, and I do not need to detain the House for long. The purpose of the amendment, as has been said in several interventions and speeches, is to keep in place the insurance policy provided by the Benn Act that prevents us from automatically crashing out if no deal is in place by 31 October.

When the Prime Minister brings his implementing legislation to this House next week, I will vote for it, but we all know that the votes on that legislation, throughout its passage, will be tight. The Prime Minister has a strategy—I fully accept that, and I accept that it is rational in its own terms—and it is that he wants to be able to say to any waverers, “It is my deal or no deal. Vote for the implementing legislation, or we crash out.” I understand that strategy, but we cannot be sure that such a threat would work.

Sir Desmond Swayne (New Forest West) (Con): Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Sir Oliver Letwin: I will not, if my right hon. Friend will forgive me, because I am going to be so brief that I will not take interventions.

Despite my support for the Prime Minister’s deal, I do not believe that it is responsible to put the nation at risk by making that threat. I am moving this amendment to ensure that whichever way any future votes may go—today, next week or the week after—we can be secure in the knowledge that the UK will have requested an extension tonight which, if granted, can be used if and to the extent necessary, and only to the extent necessary, to prevent a no-deal exit.

12.51 pm

Ian Blackford (Ross, Skye and Lochaber) (SNP): It is a considerable pleasure to follow the right hon. Member for West Dorset (Sir Oliver Letwin), and I commend him for his amendment and for his contribution this afternoon.

We heard, “An equal partner within the Union, and a nation within the European Union,” but the broken promises of 2014 from this Government and the Better Together campaign could not be starker than they are today. Scotland has been totally and utterly shafted by this Prime Minister and this Tory Government. Scotland is the only part of the United Kingdom where democratic rights are not being respected. England voted leave, Wales voted leave, and Northern Ireland gets to remain in the EU single market and customs union—a special arrangement to protect its interests and people. Scotland, however, has been ignored. Scotland is being dragged out of the European Union against its will.

Sixty-two per cent. of Scotland voted to remain, yet this Tory Government and this Brexit fanatic Prime Minister have ignored Scotland’s wishes and interests by bringing forward a deal that will weaken our economy. The Scottish National party categorically rejects this appalling Brexit deal, and we will vote it down today. Not only would it be devastating for Scotland, dragging us out of the European Union, the single market and the customs union against our will, but it is clear that the right-wing Brexiteers have been assured by senior Tory Ministers that backing this deal could lead to a no-deal crash out if trade talks fail next year.

Anyone tempted to vote for this deal today needs to be warned that it is a blank cheque for the Vote Leave campaign that is now running the Tory Government to crash us out of the European Union on a no-deal basis at the end of the transition next year. The Prime Minister’s deal is not a deal at all. It is the gateway to a no-deal Brexit, taking us off the cliff edge not at the end of October, but at the end of 2020. Let me be clear that any Brexit would have disastrous implications for Scotland’s economy.

Geraint Davies (Swansea West) (Lab/Co-op): Although I agree with amendment (a) and the idea that it will stop a no deal, does the right hon. Gentleman agree that, in this deal, we have no guarantee from the Prime Minister that he will avoid crashing out after the transition period? Any trade deal will take longer than a year to put together, as we know, so is this not really a death row deal? We will be crashing out in a year, which is why it is our duty to vote against it.

Ian Blackford: The Prime Minister and the Secretary of State were both given the opportunity to rule that out, and neither did. Colleagues right across the House who are tempted to vote for this deal today should take note, because there is a very real risk of a no-deal Brexit by the back door.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Ian Blackford: I will make some progress, as I know many colleagues wish to speak.

The viability of our economic future will be brought into question because of the damage the deal would do to investment, to population growth and to our key exports. All Brexit assessments show that the United

[*Ian Blackford*]

Kingdom and Scotland will be poorer, no matter how we leave the European Union. If the Government disagree, why have they not done an economic impact assessment on their deal?

How are Members of Parliament supposed to debate and decide on the details of this deal when the Government have not provided a detailed analysis? It beggars belief that, on something so fundamental to all our citizens' futures, there is no economic impact assessment.

Ian Paisley (North Antrim) (DUP): The right hon. Gentleman will appreciate that he and I come to this from very different perspectives. However, I believe we should be united on this issue today. This is not a good deal for Northern Ireland, and I plead with him not to suggest that what would be a bad deal for Northern Ireland should be a good deal for the people of Scotland. If this had applied to the people of Scotland, I would be voting against it for his sake and for his people's sake. That is why I encourage him to vote against it for our sake.

Ian Blackford: We will certainly vote against it, because I do not believe this is a good deal—period.

How did the Prime Minister even sign up to a deal without understanding the impact on the economy? What a dereliction of duty. The truth is that the Prime Minister is not concerned about the economy and is not concerned about the facts. The Brexiteers did not care about facts during the referendum campaign, and it looks as if they are doing the same now.

The truth must hurt, because the truth is this: every version of Brexit will leave us worse off. It will continue to damage our relationship with the European Union, but it will not grant as much scope to develop relations with other countries. It is also clear that the heightened economic uncertainty has been forecast to reduce business investment by £1 billion in 2019, damaging our economy and leaving Scotland poorer.

Martin Docherty-Hughes (West Dunbartonshire) (SNP): I am mindful of these words:

“What a fool I was. I was only a puppet, and so was Ulster, and so was Ireland, in the political game that was to get the Conservative Party into power.”—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 14 December 1921; Vol. 48, c. 44.]

Although the DUP may be choking on the words of Carson, I am sure that my right hon. Friend, as a member and a leader of our political party, will remind the Government that Scotland will not be duped a second time.

Ian Blackford: My hon. Friend is correct. I say to the Conservatives and to those Conservative Members who are here, for now, from Scotland that if this deal goes through, and if it has the impact on Scotland of creating a competitive disadvantage, it is increasingly clear—we see it from the messages that are coming to us, even today—that people who voted no in our referendum in 2014 want Scotland's right to choose. I make this guarantee: Scotland will become an independent nation, and in short order.

Justine Greening (Putney) (Ind): The House is faced with an impossible choice. This is like being asked to buy a house based on the estate agent's details, which

are designed to sell it, with no chance of looking inside or seeing any sort of contract. We spend about two months a year debating and scrutinising the Finance Bill, and that is for a one-year Budget for Britain. Is it not absolutely ridiculous that we cannot see even the Bill, let alone the economic impact assessment, before being allowed to make a decision?

Ian Blackford: Absolutely. Heaven knows what the term of the mortgage might be. Let me make it clear that I certainly will not be buying any house from this Prime Minister.

Brexit in any form will damage the branding, reputation and standing of Scottish produce, our civil society, our regulatory alignment to key markets, our commercial and political relationships abroad, and even recognition of skills and qualifications. Scotland relies on the skills and labour that the EU offers for its economic growth. Brexit will serve only to weaken our access to a vital labour market. Considering that Scotland's native population is declining, we need more migration to our country, not less.

Stephen Kerr (Stirling) (Con): I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for finally giving way. What he is not telling the House is that every major business group in Scotland is encouraging us to support the deal today. The Scottish Chambers of Commerce, the CBI, the Federation of Small Businesses, the National Farmers Union of Scotland and the Scottish Fishermen's Federation are all pleading with us to bring the uncertainty to an end by voting for this deal. Do not listen to SNP Members; they are not Scotland.

Mr Speaker: Order. We are grateful to the hon. Gentleman, but I remind the House that interventions must be brief. We need to expedite progress—subtle hint.

Ian Blackford: It is illuminating to hear such voices in the House, because I am afraid that the harsh reality is that many business and industry organisations in Scotland see the impact, and not just in Scotland but throughout the UK. The British Chambers of Commerce, the National Farmers Union, the food and beverage association and the Timber Trade Federation have all talked about the negative impact of the deal, but we never get the truth from the Scottish Conservatives.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Ian Blackford: I am going to make some progress, because I am aware that other colleagues wish to speak.

It did not have to be like this. If the Prime Minister had any interest in the people of Scotland, he would have engaged with our Scottish Government. From the very beginning the Scottish Government sought to compromise. We did that by offering up “Scotland's Place in Europe”, with a compromise position for all the United Kingdom, and for Scotland, to remain in the single market and the customs union. I have to tell the House that we had no engagement with the UK Government over those papers, but I can say that Michel Barnier, when I went to see him, had read every page. That is the difference between the attitude of our friends and colleagues in Europe and the disdain that our Scottish Government have been shown by Westminster.

Our plan was dismissed out of hand, and then followed by years of the UK Government ignoring Scotland and ignoring our Parliament.

With Northern Ireland getting access to the single market and the customs union, it is clear that the Prime Minister is willing to put trust in the people of Northern Ireland to manage its relationship, so it is inexplicable that he will not trust the people of Scotland, who also voted overwhelmingly to remain in the European Union, to do the same. This offer gives Northern Ireland a competitive advantage over Scotland.

While we respect and understand the unique circumstances of Northern Ireland—I want to be clear that everyone in the SNP wants to see the continuation of peace and stability—the proposal in this deal is, in effect, to keep it in the single market and the customs union. That was our compromise position, and the UK Government completely ignored us—they ignored Scotland.

The Prime Minister has shown the people of Scotland total contempt. This is a Prime Minister who has no mandate from Scotland, yet he seeks to impose his Brexit against our democratically expressed will, silencing the wishes of our people and weakening our economy. This Prime Minister, and his Brexit fan club in No. 10, do not care about Scotland. They are obsessed with only one thing: winning and delivering their Brexit fantasy at any cost.

The dishonesty and lies of the—*[Interruption.]* I hear Ministers shouting from the Front Bench, “Not true!” Where was the engagement with the Scottish Government on our place in Europe? It simply did not happen. That is absolutely and completely true.

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (Michael Gove) *indicated dissent.*

Ian Blackford: The right hon. Gentleman can shake his head, because he does not like the reality.

Michael Gove *rose—*

Ian Blackford: The dishonesty and lies of Vote Leave brought the country to vote for Brexit in the first place—*[Interruption.]*

Mr Speaker: Order. Resume your seat, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. As far as I am aware, the right hon. Gentleman is not currently giving way—*[Interruption.]* Order. The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster should not stand there portentously, as though he has an absolute right to intervene. It might be courteous to allow him to do so, but such an allowance has not yet been made.

Ian Blackford: Today, the House will be listening to our voices, Mr Speaker. Perhaps the right hon. Gentleman might catch your eye later on.

The dishonesty and lies of Vote Leave brought this country to vote for Brexit in the first place. The Prime Minister and many in his Cabinet should be ashamed of that. They have torn their country, their Parliament and their own party apart. This is the beginning of the end of their precious Union and their distorted Etonian vision for society. Scotland will not be ignored any more. The deal must be stopped and binned today.

Whether or not the deal passes today, the Government need an extension. The deal is devastating for Scotland. We will not vote for it, and we call for the extension period to be used for an election, so that we can get rid of this rotten Tory Government out of Downing Street. Scottish National party MPs are here to do our job—to stand stronger for Scotland. Those from all parties who ever want to lay claim to representing the voices and interests of the people of Scotland cannot support this deal. They cannot inflict economic and social harm on our society.

We have heard myth after myth from the Prime Minister and his cronies, but the facts are clear. The European Union accounts for 56% of the UK’s exports and 65% of imports, either through the EU directly or through other countries with which the EU has trade arrangements. The direct value of EU trade is more than triple the value of US trade. The Brexit Secretary even said that the EU was the UK’s most important partner.

There are 100,000 jobs in Scotland at risk. Our fishermen, farmers and crofters will all be disadvantaged by this deal. As the Scottish Seafood Association put it, this could “switch the lights off” for a small exporter:

“Five separate certificates all have to be done on October 31. For a small exporter that is possibly trying to sell 30 kilos of top quality langoustines to a restaurant in Paris, switch the lights off, that restaurant owner is going to go and buy his lovely langoustines somewhere else.”

Those are not my words; that is from the Scottish Seafood Association. I hope that people in Scotland can see that those on the Government Front Bench are laughing. People’s livelihoods are at risk and the Government Front Benchers think it is funny. They should be utterly, utterly ashamed of themselves.

The Scottish National party will not stand by and let this Government rip apart our economy and our country’s future. We are Europeans and Scotland is a European nation. Members from all parties should unite with the SNP and bring this Government down. A general election is now the best way to stop this Prime Minister and stop this dangerous Brexit.

Let me say that anyone, any single Member here, who backs the Tory Prime Minister and his cheating Vote Leave campaign this afternoon by shafting Scotland will never, not ever, be forgiven by the people of Scotland. Overnight, we saw the reports, the rumours and the whispers. Will the Labour party really allow its Members of Parliament to vote for this catastrophic Brexit deal? Let me remind the Labour party what the TUC said:

“This deal would be a disaster for working people. It would hammer the economy, cost jobs and sell workers’ rights down the river. Boris Johnson has negotiated an even worse deal than Theresa May. All MPs should vote against it.”

Those are the words of the TUC. Let me ask this: why has the Leader of the Opposition not yet guaranteed that all Labour MPs will vote with the Scottish National party this afternoon against this deal? It is a deal that would be devastating for Scotland, ripping us out of the EU against our will, terminating our rights of freedom of movement, and threatening jobs, living standards, our public services and the economy. Is the leader of the Labour party really willing to allow any members of his party to write a blank cheque for this Tory Prime Minister to deliver Brexit? Not a single member of the Labour party should be voting for a deal that delivers a

[*Ian Blackford*]

race to the bottom on workers' rights and on environmental standards and that paves the way for dismantling our precious NHS. It would be absolutely staggering that, with a no-deal threat on the table, any Labour MP could even think about voting for this toxic deal. Labour must not be the handmaidens of a Tory Brexit, which we know will cost thousands of jobs and harm people's livelihoods.

Caroline Flint: I thank the right hon. Gentleman for giving way. I wondered whether he had taken sections of his speech from Jon Lansman.

Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that, when it comes to workers' rights, the EU is not God? The fact is that local authorities up and down the UK have to outsource contracts to the European Union to the detriment of workers in their local communities. We have seen a rise in zero-hours contracts and poor conditions, partly because of that outsourcing. Does he agree with me?

Ian Blackford: I thank the right hon. Lady. We were colleagues together in Committee, and, as she knows, I am fond of her—[*Interruption*].

Mr Speaker: I ask the right hon. Gentleman to face the House, so that we can all hear him.

Ian Blackford: I simply say to the right hon. Lady that I would trust the European Union with workers' rights before I would trust this Conservative Government.

The Opposition must stop the excuses and finally act by backing the SNP tonight to reject this damaging deal, secure an extension and call an election, so that we can bring this Tory Government down and stop Brexit.

Meanwhile, Scottish Tory MPs are prepared to vote for a deal that they previously pledged they would not back. That is simple irresponsibility and moral cowardice. I say to the Scottish Tories: you are serving the death knell on the Union by voting for this deal. Independence is coming, and we will take our place as a proud European nation. What a shift in time, Mr Speaker, from what Ruth Davidson said in 2014, which was:

"No means we stay in, we are members of the European Union."

The people of Scotland now know more than ever that they can never, not ever, trust a Tory. We already know that, despite promise after promise—[*Interruption*].

Mr Speaker: Order. We wish to expedite the debate. The right hon. Gentleman must be heard as, I think, he approaches his peroration.

Ian Blackford: Thank you, Mr Speaker. Perhaps if Members settled down, we could get through this and their voices might be heard.

Despite promise after promise made by the Scottish Tories to protect our fishermen, we already know that the backstop loophole in the deal threatens to be devastating for the Scottish fishing sector. Under the proposed deal—[*Interruption*.] It might help if the hon. Member for Aberdeen South (Ross Thomson) listened, rather than trying to shout from the Bar of the House. This is about fishermen's livelihoods, which the Scottish Tories falsely claim to protect. Under the proposed deal, Scottish

fish exports to the European Union face being hit by damaging tariffs. Any move that could see Scottish vessels registered in Northern Ireland land their catch there and then have it moved to the Republic of Ireland for processing to escape those duties would pose a huge danger to Scotland's fishing ports and wider processing industry. That is the reality of what the Tories are threatening to do to our fishing industry. This would directly threaten thousands of jobs, and could make the sector among the hardest hit by Brexit in the whole of Scotland—Scottish fishing sold out by the Conservatives yet again. That is the stark reality, as opposed to the bluster of a UK Tory Government who once again treat Scotland as an afterthought. Well, we in the SNP will not stand for it.

I warn Members who march through the Lobby with the Government this afternoon that selling Scotland out by backing this deal will be the final nail in the coffin for the Union. While the UK drags Scotland out of the EU against our will, and this Tory Government downgrade our devolution settlement and destroy our rights, in Scotland the SNP are looking proudly at our record. We are ambitious for our nation, and not this Prime Minister, not the Leader of the Opposition and not any leader of the Liberal Democrats—not anyone—will stand in our way. The Scottish people are sovereign and they should have the choice to determine their own future.

This year, Scotland is marking the 20th anniversary of devolution—the establishment of our Scottish Parliament. The first speech that was made in the new Scottish Parliament in May 1999 was by my good friend Winifred Ewing. At the time she made that speech, she was of course also the Mother of the European Parliament, having served there since 1979. Winnie expressed the hope that the Scottish Parliament would try to follow the more consensual style of the European Parliament and other European Parliaments, rather than the more confrontational approach that we have witnessed again here today in Westminster. In our actions today, we are trying to stay true to that advice.

Although there remains uncertainty over whether the proposed deal will pass, what is absolutely clear is that it would take us out of the European Union, out of the single market and out of the customs union against the overwhelming democratic will of the people of Scotland. Scotland did not vote for Brexit in any form and, unlike others, the SNP will not vote for Brexit in any form. Scotland has been shafted, sidelined, silenced and ignored by this UK Government, and it cannot be ignored today. I urge Members not to stand by and allow this Prime Minister to drag us into an economic abyss, because I warn the House that it is clearer than ever that the best future for Scotland is one as an equal, independent, European nation. That is a choice that the SNP is determined to ensure is given to the people of Scotland, and those who vote against Scotland's interests this afternoon should be aware that they are ending the Union. Scotland is not for leaving Europe. We will become an independent nation. My message to Europe is: leave a light on for Scotland.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Mr Speaker: Order. A five-minute limit on Back-Bench speeches will have to apply with immediate effect, although I do not anticipate that that limit will last very long.

1.19 pm

Mrs Theresa May (Maidenhead) (Con): When I arrived at the House of Commons this morning, I saw the message, “Good day for May”. I thought that perhaps consensus had come across the whole House and that it had already been decided that this deal would be supported by the House tonight. Unfortunately, my view on that was premature—although I think only premature—because, happily for England, it was a reference to Jonny May having scored the first two tries in our victory against Australia.

I hope the whole House will forgive me if I say that, standing here, I have a distinct sense of *déjà vu*. But today’s vote is an important one—

Simon Hoare: Rebel!

Mrs May: I intend to rebel against all those who do not want to vote to deliver Brexit.

Today’s vote is important. The eyes of the country—no, the eyes of the wider world—are upon us today. Every Member in this House has a responsibility in the decision that they will take to determine whether or not they are going to put the national interest first—not just an ideological, single-issue or party political interest, but the full, wider interests of our constituents.

As we look at this issue, the decision we take tonight will determine not just the future of our country and the future lives of our constituents, but I believe the very future of our politics, because we have today to take a key decision, and it is simple. Do we want to deliver Brexit? Do we want to deliver on the result of the referendum in 2016? *[Interruption.]* We know the views of Scottish National party Members: they reject results of referendums, including the referendum to stay in the UK.

When this House voted overwhelmingly to give the choice of our membership of the EU to the British people, did we really mean it? When we voted to trigger article 50, did we really mean it? When the two main parties represented in this House stood on manifestos in the 2017 general election to deliver Brexit, did we really mean it? I think there can be only one answer to that: yes, we did mean it; yes, we keep faith with the British people; yes, we want to deliver Brexit.

Ms Angela Eagle (Wallasey) (Lab): Will the right hon. Lady give way?

Mrs May: If the hon. Lady will just wait for a minute.

If this Parliament did not mean it, it is guilty of the most egregious con trick on the British people.

There have been many views across this House. I want simply to say something to some of the groups involved. To those who believe that there should be a second referendum—some believe passionately and have for some time; others have come to this more lately—I say simply this: you cannot have a second referendum simply because some people do not agree with the result of the first. I do not like—

Ms Eagle *rose*—

Mrs May: There are many people who want to speak, so I am going to carry on. I have taken many interventions and questions from across the House on this issue over time.

I do not like referendums, but I think that if we have one, we should abide by the result that people have given us.

Then there is the Labour Front Bench. I have heard much from those on the Labour Front Bench over the last three years about the importance of protecting jobs, manufacturing and people’s livelihoods. If they really meant that, they would have voted for the deal earlier this year. Now is their chance to show whether they really care about people by voting for this deal tonight—this afternoon, I hope, Mr Speaker—in the House.

Then let me say something to all those across the House who say they do not want no deal. I have said it before; I have said it many times; I hope this is the last time I have to say it: if you do not want no deal, you have to vote for a deal. Businesses are crying out for certainty, people want certainty in their lives, and our investors want to be able to invest and want the uncertainty to be got rid of. They want to know that this country is moving forward. If you want to deliver Brexit, if you want to keep faith with the British people, if you want this country to move forward, then vote for the deal today.

1.24 pm

Peter Kyle (Hove) (Lab): I say with all respect and humility to the former Prime Minister that a lot of people watching who have listened to her words will feel strongly that the only con trick was a Prime Minister making a solemn promise to the public that under no circumstances would there be a border down the Irish sea, and then traipsing through the Lobby to vote for precisely that. I would have expected a little more humility from her.

All of us who participated in the referendum debate noticed one thing: in the prospectus for Brexit, it was very poorly defined. It was difficult to gauge precisely what Brexit would mean for our country. However, when the former Prime Minister signed the article 50 treaty, she had the legal right to define Brexit. She came to the House with her deal, which had over 500 pages defining Brexit. For almost a year, she and the Government said that the deal respected the will of the people.

Now we have a separate deal, brought back by a separate Government, who say that this fundamentally different deal, with different customs arrangements, different regulatory systems, and a different order for the United Kingdom, represents the will of the people. Both deals cannot represent the will of the people. I say this with all humility: if we want to know what the will of the people is—what they were voting for—we can ask them. Their response will be based not on promises, but on facts, because we have the facts now.

My hon. Friend the Member for Sedgfield (Phil Wilson) and I have been working on a compromise—and it is a compromise, because it means we could become the remainers who open the door to Brexit. Fundamentally, it is about breaking the gridlock in Parliament. It is based around a deal.

Mr Gyimah: I have been listening to the hon. Gentleman with interest. Does he agree that though the referendum settled the question of leaving, it did not settle where we were going? That is why the House has, over the last three and a half years, debated different ways of leaving the EU. Some people believe in the May deal; some

[*Mr Sam Gyimah*]

want a May deal minus backstop; some want a Northern Ireland backstop; some want a customs union; some want no deal; and some want a managed no deal. Does he agree that that is why any deal that the Government put before us should be put to the people for a final say?

Peter Kyle: I am extremely grateful for a thoughtful intervention. Of course I agree with the hon. Gentleman, and I speak as someone who has voted for three separate versions of Brexit. I have not opposed it; I have voted for Brexit in this place more often than most members of the ERG. The key question is: how do we break the gridlock? How do we get past this impasse? The idea of a referendum based on a deal is that it would be a confirmatory referendum. We would put the prospectus to the people and ask, “Is this good enough for you?”, in exactly the same way we did in Northern Ireland with the Good Friday peace agreement.

Mike Wood (Dudley South) (Con): As the hon. Gentleman knows, back in February 2016, before the referendum, that suggestion was put to the then Prime Minister, who said at the Dispatch Box that the very idea was absolutely ridiculous. Nobody in the House disputed that then. Where was the hon. Gentleman?

Peter Kyle: I was here in the House, working constructively with Members from across the House. I voted for three separate versions of Brexit; I have done my bit to try to get it across the line, but because the prospectus for Brexit was defined not at the start, but only at the end, of the process, many people in this House have a different version of it, and that is why we are irreconcilably divided.

We propose a compromise whereby we allow the deal to pass through Parliament in return for inviting the public to have the definitive, final say on whether the deal should pass. The public can decide whether the deal is good enough for them, their family, their community, their job and our country. If they decide that it is, we can leave directly on those terms, without any need to return to the matter in this place. If they do not, we can remain with the deal we have. Those are two propositions, based in international treaty and law, that are implementable straight away.

We gained growing support for this across the House when we pushed it last time. People repeatedly said to us that, if the deal of the Prime Minister at the time was defeated, they would want to come and consider this, but they would not want to consider it before any defeat. The problem was that we did not get the opportunity to press for a vote straight afterwards, but now we do have such an opportunity. Because the Government are pushing two motions tonight—one on their deal, one on no deal—we will have an opportunity to vote after the House has spoken on the main deal.

To all the people who want to support the deal, I say this: focus on the deal and support the deal, but accept one thing. If the deal does not succeed in the first vote tonight, we have to make a choice, and there is a choice on the table that keeps the deal alive and keeps the deal intact. It is the only way, in those circumstances, that the deal can proceed. In those circumstances, I hope that people from across the House will decide that the country needs resolution, and an option remains standing

that will break the gridlock, that will get Brexit out of Westminster and back into our communities for one definitive final say, and we can bring this nightmare to an end.

1.31 pm

Mr Kenneth Clarke (Rushcliffe) (Ind): I hoped I would never be driven, in these long debates on Brexit, finally to deciding what my opinion is on the choice between a no deal and a bad deal. I regret to say that when my right hon. Friend the previous Prime Minister put forward the proposition before, I had considerable doubts about her belief that no deal was better than a bad deal. Those doubts have increased, because what we have before us now is undoubtedly a bad deal. I think it is a very bad deal. It is wholly inferior to the deal that was negotiated by my right hon. Friend the former Prime Minister, for which I, too, voted three times, like the hon. Member for Hove (Peter Kyle). We cannot be accused of taking part in this debate seeking to block Brexit and repudiate the wishes of the British public, and all the rubbish that the more fanatic Brexiteers and their followers frequently hail at us. But now the choice is very real.

This is a very bad deal, for reasons that I will not dilate on, but others have. I actually have considerable sympathy with the Members from Northern Ireland: the independent Unionist, with whom I almost always agree, and the Democratic Unionists. This is a most peculiar constitutional position that they are being put in as members of the United Kingdom. I would very much rather that we did not have this situation of a border down the Irish sea, because there is absolutely no doubt that there is quite a clear customs and regulatory border being envisaged down the Irish sea.

It has to be said that the effect is to save the all-Irish economy from the near calamity that a total no deal would have resulted in. I have no idea how anybody would have operated a no-deal situation across the border, and I thought these weird propositions of a customs border somewhere in Northern Ireland but not on the border had little or no chance of working. Although the Irish at least have the economic consolation that they will sail on through the transition period as they are now, I am extremely worried that the purpose of going to negotiate this convoluted arrangement over Ireland was so that the economy of Britain could be taken out of the customs union and the single market straightaway. If that holds after the transition period, I think it will have the most damaging effects on our economic future, for all the reasons that other people have given in the earlier and lengthy speeches we have heard.

Therefore, it is all to be played for in the transition period. I actually do not believe that a good free trade agreement, a good agreement on security and fighting international crime, and agreements on the licensing of medicines and the possible arrangements with the European Medicines Agency—all the things spelled out—are likely to be achieved by the end of next year. The Canada deal, which a lot of Brexiteers like to hold up as a model, took about nine years to put in place, and I wish that we were prepared to contemplate a more realistic timescale.

Meanwhile, the votes today, and the process of the next week or two, must get us through the necessary steps to put in place a withdrawal agreement, so that we

have a transition period in which to hold full negotiations about our ultimate destination. All my votes in this House have been to ensure that the calamity of leaving with no deal on 31 October, or whenever, was never allowed to happen. For that reason, we should support this deal, but I cannot understand the Government's resistance to saying that we should legislate before we abandon the protection of the Benn Act and decide that we do not need an extension.

The Government say that we can take for granted the details and getting the votes, but none of us are sure whether there is a majority for this Government and the present deal at all. If the Government can maintain a majority throughout all the legislation I shall be very reassured, but I would like to wait to see that they can—

Mr Speaker: Order. We are extraordinarily grateful, more grateful than ever before, to the right hon. and learned Gentleman. The five-minute limit still applies, but the right hon. Member for East Antrim (Sammy Wilson) will be the last Member to benefit from it.

1.36 pm

Sammy Wilson (East Antrim) (DUP): The Democratic Unionist party has been supportive throughout the process of delivering on the result of the referendum of the British people, and we have defied and opposed the procedural chicanery and political machinations that have gone on in this place to try to undermine that result. The irony is that today, which should be a day of rejoicing for us because the Prime Minister has come back with a deal, we find that Northern Ireland, and Northern Ireland alone, will be left within the clutches of the European Union, by being a de facto member of a customs union and tied to European regulations.

The Government have put forward two defences for their position. The first is that there will be no border down the Irish sea—there is no border down the Irish sea. But let us look at the facts. As a result of the customs arrangements, every good that is exported from GB to Northern Ireland will be subject to a customs declaration. Movements will be subject to checks. Unless it can be proved that the goods are not going outside Northern Ireland, duty will be paid. Only once it has been proved that the goods are not leaving Northern Ireland will that duty be paid back. On top of that, all the regulations of the European Union will be imposed on Northern Ireland. If anybody tells me that that does not represent an economic customs legal border—a hard border between Northern Ireland and the rest of the United Kingdom—I do not know what a hard border looks like.

During debates in this House, I have heard it said that if an extra camera were to be placed on the border between Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic, or if one additional piece of paper had to be signed, that would be a break in the Good Friday agreement because it would represent a hard border between Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic. On the one hand we can have all those checks between Northern Ireland and GB, and that does not count as a hard border, yet on the other, one camera on the border between Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic does count as a hard border. That shows how false the argument put forward by the Government is that they have not accepted a hard border between Great Britain and Northern Ireland. What are the implications of that? First, it means that

we are cut off from the country to which we belong and, secondly, that our economic relationship with our biggest market will be damaged.

The second argument put forward by the Minister today is that we can get out of this—we can vote against it. But in Northern Ireland there is a mechanism for dealing with sensitive issues. It is enshrined in an internationally binding agreement. That mechanism, because of the sensitive nature of politics in Northern Ireland, states that any controversial issue has to be decided by a cross-community vote. That part of the Belfast agreement, which is so sacrosanct in this House and to those who negotiated it, has now been torn out.

Mr Tobias Ellwood (Bournemouth East) (Con): The right hon. Gentleman is making a powerful argument, which we have heard. In the limited time available, may I ask him to turn his attention to the amendment tabled by my right hon. Friend the Member for West Dorset (Sir Oliver Letwin)? If he is concerned about a hard border, he must recognise that the door may be opening for a hard border and a no-deal Brexit to emerge.

Sammy Wilson: First of all, the hard border is there. I have made the argument. I defy anybody to tell me that if we have to fill in a customs declaration, we have to search lorries and vans coming into Northern Ireland at the ports and we have to pay taxes on goods that come from Great Britain, that is not already a hard border.

Let me return to the issue of consent, because it is important. The Minister dismisses Unionist fears by saying, “You can vote your way out of it.” The mechanism for voting our way out of it is led by an international treaty. Why is it not going to be adhered to? Because the Government, the EU and the Irish Government know that that would be an effective way of Northern Ireland doing the very thing that the Minister said we would be able to do. Remove that and you remove the ability of Northern Ireland to take itself out of this arrangement. And of course we only get the chance after four years! We are put into it without any consent at all.

Emma Little Pengelly (Belfast South) (DUP): Does my right hon. Friend agree that in Northern Ireland, at the moment and for the past 1,000 days when we have had no Government, there has been a majority—not just a simple majority, but a significant majority—of parties and people who want to get back to work? We are being held and blackmailed by a minority party, Sinn Féin, yet this Government have defended that minority veto for over 1,000 days, meaning that there is no Government in Northern Ireland.

Sammy Wilson: That is the irony. We have to avoid having an Assembly because the voting mechanism of the Belfast agreement must be adhered to, but when it comes to getting out of this arrangement, which has severe consequences for Northern Ireland, the Belfast agreement mechanism does not have to be adhered to. Either we avoid a hard border or we have a hard border. Either we adhere to the Belfast agreement or we do not adhere to the Belfast agreement. The agreement the Government have signed turns all those things on their head, and that is why we will oppose it.

I am sure hon. Members across the House who have defended their constituency interests, whether the fishing industry in Scotland and Cornwall or the rights of

[Sammy Wilson]

workers in their own constituencies, will understand why we will not give in to this agreement. We believe it will cause damage to our part of the United Kingdom and lead the focus of attention away from London towards Dublin. Let us not forget that we will be tied in to an arrangement where the laws for Northern Ireland will be made in Brussels. The British Government will have no input. The Stormont Government will have no input. So where will the focus of attention be for industry, lobby groups and politicians in Northern Ireland? Dublin. We will move towards a united Ireland.

I was asked what the DUP would do in relation to the Letwin amendment. All I can say is this: we would be failing in our duty if we do not use every strategy available to try to get guarantees, changes and alterations that will safeguard the interests of the United Kingdom, the interests of our constituents and the interests that we represent.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Mr Speaker: A three-minute limit now applies.

1.44 pm

Chris Grayling (Epsom and Ewell) (Con): I was planning to be brief anyway, Mr Speaker. I campaigned to leave, but at every stage of the campaign, I argued that we should leave on good terms with our friends and neighbours and leave with a deal. I supported the previous Prime Minister in what she sought to achieve, and I pay tribute to this Prime Minister for what he has done in bringing forward a deal. After a year of turbulence in this place, when we have not really come near to finding anything a majority in this House can agree on, it is absolutely clear today that we are much closer than we have been to something that this Parliament is willing to give its support to. I pay tribute to the Prime Minister for achieving that and strongly urge the House to unite behind this agreement.

I want to talk specifically about the amendment from my right hon. Friend the Member for West Dorset (Sir Oliver Letwin), and I want everyone on both sides of the House to think about this. I know him well—he has his reasons for tabling it—but the consequence of it is that this House, at a moment when the nation is watching us to see what decision we will take about the deal that has been brought back from Brussels, may decline to form an opinion. That is the consequence of passing the amendment—that we will not decide today whether we support the deal.

Sir John Hayes (South Holland and The Deepings) (Con): My right hon. Friend and I are Brexiteers of long standing—in my case, going back to my boyhood—but the truth is that the public are saying to us, “Enough is enough. Get on, get out, so we can get ahead.” It is as simple as that.

Chris Grayling: I absolutely agree with my right hon. Friend. To my mind, that is the crux of the issue with this amendment. Are we really going to say to the public today, “We are not going to make up our minds. We are going to yet again defer the decision”? Every Member will have to go back to their constituents and explain why today, at the first Saturday sitting since

1982, we were not able to take the decision about whether we support the principle of the deal or not. I think that would be deeply damaging to our democracy and to the reputation of this House and of every individual in this Parliament. I strongly urge everyone here, whatever their views, whether they are for this deal or against it: let us not put ourselves in a position today where we are simply not taking a decision and saying to the public, “Do you know what? We’ll put it off to another day.” I do not think that we can afford to do that, and I urge everyone in this House not to allow that situation to happen.

1.47 pm

Liz Kendall (Leicester West) (Lab): The decision that we make today will shape the future of our country for years to come. In making that decision, three issues weight most heavily on my mind.

The first is the potential risks that this deal poses to the future of the Union of the United Kingdom. We have heard many times that the deal explicitly separates Northern Ireland from the rest of the UK, with a border down the Irish sea and with Northern Ireland remaining part of the EU’s trading system—something that the Prime Minister promised he would never allow. I fear that these proposals would have knock-on implications for Scotland’s future relationship with the UK, too. I fear that the deal is an open goal for the Scottish National party in its bid for independence. We have heard the argument that Northern Ireland voted to remain and that it is still part of the EU, with frictionless trade, so why should Scotland not have that, too? I have always believed in the importance of unions—that we are stronger and have more power and control when we work together. I do not expect all Government Members to share that most fundamental of Labour beliefs, but, as members of the Conservative and Unionist party, I find it very hard to believe that they would vote for a deal that could put the future of our Union at risk.

The deal would also have potentially profound consequences for the future shape of our economy and public services, paving the way for the Government to take England, Scotland and Wales out of the single market and customs union—the hardest of all hard Brexits, short of no deal, with all the risks that that brings for manufacturing and services. Whatever the Prime Minister claims, there are no legal guarantees for workers’ and consumers’ rights and environmental standards. They can deny it until they are blue in the face, but we remember that it was precisely in order to cut those rights and standards that Brexiteers argued for years that we should leave the EU, so they cannot convince us otherwise now. I wish Government Members would just be honest and say, “We believe that the future of the country is as a low-tax, small-state, deregulated country.” They have a perfect right to think that, but they should have the guts to put that vision of Britain to the British people.

Finally, on the implications for our democracy, I know that colleagues on both sides of the House understand the risks that this deal poses to the Union and to our economy, but believe that the risks to our democracy are even worse. However, the truth is that the deal is not what people were promised during the referendum, nor will it get Brexit done. Far from it: we will have years more of negotiations, with another cliff edge at the end

of the transition. I do not doubt that many people will be angry if the deal is voted down tonight, but we must put it back to the British people so that they can decide whether this is the future for the country that they want.

1.50 pm

Mr Dominic Grieve (Beaconsfield) (Ind): I share the view of my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Rushcliffe (Mr Clarke) that the deal presented to us has many flaws. As a Unionist, I think that one of its principal flaws is that it threatens the Union of the United Kingdom very directly, although I am bound to accept that I also think that Brexit in general threatens the Union of the United Kingdom very directly; I have never really seen an easy way to resolve that issue and deliver Brexit at the same time.

Although I should congratulate my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on the deal—he negotiated it; he was unhappy with the earlier deal; and he now says that he is satisfied with it—I remain of the view that if one looks at its detail in terms of the likely negotiating process that will have to take place next year, one is left in very serious doubt whether it will be possible to achieve a free trade agreement. This House will therefore be confronted in 12 months' time with challenges very similar to those that we face at present, with deep economic consequences if we cannot find a way through them, so I am afraid that I am not enthusiastic about the deal.

I listened to my right hon. Friend the Member for Maidenhead (Mrs May), who has been very consistent in her view on Brexit, which is that for MPs to offer a referendum and then try to thwart or reject it by our own actions is a con trick. I do not disagree with that, but we have the following disagreement: I do not believe that it is in any way a con trick, when one ends up with something so utterly different from what was offered, to go back and ask the electorate whether it is what they really want. I do not see anything wrong with that. I remain of the view that that possibility exists; if the House's majority view were that it should be done, I would support it and seek to have it carried out, because the consequences are so momentous. I also make it clear to the Prime Minister that if that failed, I would not seek to oppose leaving on these terms. We have to resolve this.

That point brings me to the amendment moved by my right hon. Friend the Member for West Dorset (Sir Oliver Letwin). It is frankly extraordinary that a Government who say that they want to follow a sensible process should seek to railroad that process in a way that makes it likely that proper debate will not take place. To that I profoundly object. For that reason, I will support the amendment, and so should any Member of this House who wants an orderly form of Brexit.

1.53 pm

Hilary Benn (Leeds Central) (Lab): I will vote for the amendment moved by the right hon. Member for West Dorset (Sir Oliver Letwin) because it is an insurance policy against no deal, by accident or by design. It is very clear from the debate so far that the deal that the Prime Minister has brought back will give us less good access to the biggest, nearest and most important market that we enjoy today and less good access than the deal negotiated by the former Prime Minister would

have given. I cannot understand why anyone should regard that as something to be celebrated, cheered or recommended.

No wonder the Government do not want to do an economic assessment, because it would show the same thing as their last economic assessment. It was very striking, when my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Holborn and St Pancras (Keir Starmer) told the House, in his typically forensic and eloquent way, what it would mean in practice, to watch the euphoria evident on the Government Benches earlier give way to a cold realisation of what the deal will mean for the businesses and industries that we represent in our constituencies. I simply ask this: why would we want to undermine our future economy, investment, opportunity and potential in that way?

The second point I want to make is about consent. The Prime Minister is right to ask us how we will heal the rift that Brexit has created. If this deal is defeated, it will be the fourth time the House has been unable to agree a way forward. I am the first to admit that we cannot carry on like this. We need to find a way forward, and a way of doing so was offered, in a very prescient intervention a year ago, by my hon. Friends the Members for Hove (Peter Kyle) and for Sedgefield (Phil Wilson) with their compromise proposal—and it is a compromise. There is in politics a division between those who advocate leaving with no deal if we cannot get a deal and those who say, “Let’s just cancel the result of the referendum and pretend it never happened.” I do not subscribe to either of those views.

There is compromise: we can get this done and make a decision by asking the British people. At the heart of that question is this: do the British people have the right to change their minds? I fear that some who reject a referendum would cry, “No, they don’t. We had the one vote, and that’s it.” I disagree with that view because it is fundamental to our democracy that, when the facts change, events change or time passes, we should have an opportunity to change our minds if we wish. I do not know the answer to that question. The only people who know are the British people, which is why I will vote for my hon. Friends’ amendment. We should ask the people what they now want.

1.56 pm

Sir William Cash (Stone) (Con): For me, this has been quite a long journey. I want to say straightaway and very simply, having given a great deal of consideration to the issues discussed in the past few weeks and having had the opportunity to discuss them with Ministers, in No. 10, in our groups and in various other places, that I have come to the conclusion that we must support this deal.

I would go further, though I say this with great concern and respect for the DUP, because I know that elements of the deal do fall short—I still regard article 4 as a serious problem. I am glad that the Prime Minister responded as he did today with a personal assurance that he would ensure that parliamentary sovereignty was recognised in the Bill, notwithstanding the provisions that otherwise apply under the withdrawal agreement and article 4. Furthermore, he guaranteed that, where the vital interests of this country were affected, the European Scrutiny Committee would have the opportunity to ensure that the House could consider and vote on questions

[*Sir William Cash*]

that so arise. I will not enlarge on that now because it has not been entirely finalised—the Bill has not been published—but there are signs of very great progress in that regard. This is about the principle of sovereignty and consent.

I also believe that Northern Ireland will benefit if the Select Committee procedures are followed along the lines I am proposing. Northern Ireland Members could give evidence to the Committee about how this is operating for them, and then, assuming all goes well with the Bill, there could be an opportunity for a vote on the Floor of the House. I wanted to make that point clear now because this is an historic moment, and a moment we have to seize. Let us get out on 31 October—no second referendum, no revocation of article 50. Let us get Brexit done, have a general election and sort this out once and for all.

1.59 pm

Alison McGovern (Wirral South) (Lab): I want to say some words about the nature of the deal before us. This is all a question of trust: whether we should support the deal depends on trust. We have heard that from their representatives today that the people of Northern Ireland cannot trust this deal. This could take us backwards, not forwards, in Northern Ireland.

We are learning that, before long, the Conservative and Unionist party will be the party only of England. They are putting our Union at risk. The people on the Great Britain-Northern Ireland border, whether that is in Birkenhead, Holyhead or Stranraer, cannot trust this deal. The Conservative party is becoming the party only of the south of England. As has been said by my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Holborn and St Pancras (Keir Starmer) and by Frances O’Grady of the Trades Union Congress, we know the damage that this deal will do to the people of our manufacturing towns. The Conservative party is becoming the party only of the south-east home counties. As for the Conservatives who want a soft Brexit, the right hon. Member for Rayleigh and Wickford (Mr Francois) gave it away: the ERG has decided. The Conservative party is becoming the party of only the ERG, and this is the ERG’s deal.

The next generation cannot trust this deal when it comes to environmental protections. We have seen the protests about climate change, but those voices are not heard. When it comes to freedom of movement and our rights at work, generations of trade unionists cannot trust this deal. We on the Labour Benches are representatives, not delegates, but I challenge any Labour MP to disagree with the delegates of any trade union branch in the country. We cannot trust this deal.

The Conservative party is making itself untrustworthy. Instead of advancing rational policies, it has made itself into a historical re-enactment society, seeking to undo 40 years of progress in which it played a part. However, the Conservatives’ interpretation of our country’s history is untrustworthy. Let me mention one lesson from our history: at the time of the fall of France, the Polish pilots who came to Britain to fight alongside us called Britain “last hope island”. Then as now, solidarity in Europe, not a Britain that stands alone, should be the source of our hope. That was true then, and it is true now. This deal is bad for Britain, and we should vote it down.

2.2 pm

Dr Liam Fox (North Somerset) (Con): Let me first say a word about the amendment. Those who are thinking of voting for it should not be under the illusion that it will take no deal off the table. No deal cannot be taken off the table. We can ask the EU for an extension, but the EU does not need to grant an extension. The only way to take no deal off the table is to accept the only deal between the United Kingdom and the European Union that is on offer.

There are three reasons why I think we should vote in favour of this deal today. The first is that it delivers on the referendum result. Let us go back to first principles. We made a contract with the people of the United Kingdom, using the two elements of our constitution: direct democracy, which meant saying to them, “We will not, or cannot, make a decision. Therefore, you must make the decision,” and representative democracy, which meant saying, “We, the House of Commons, will determine how to implement that decision.” That is what we are being asked to do today. It is our duty to deliver on what we have promised the British people if we want to maintain faith in our electoral and political system.

Some 80% of us—those of us who sit on the Conservative and Labour Benches—stood on a manifesto that specifically said that we would honour the result of the referendum. It is not good enough for us to say that we favour a deal, and then want to vote down every single detail of every single deal that is ever made. The public will regard that as at best disingenuous. There are those who say to us, “Let us have another referendum.” Why would any citizen of this country, looking at their Parliament, which had said, “We have been asked to hold a referendum,” vote in a second referendum if we failed to deliver on what we had promised in the first one? This is a question of faith in our electoral system itself.

The second reason why we should deliver on this deal is that it gets us on to the territory of our future relationship. We have spent three and a half years taking about the divorce, and almost no time talking about the future relationship. There will be a great debate to be had about the level of alignment that we have sector by sector with the European economy. That is why there is such a strong case for having a general election. Let us actually get out and make the case for what we believe in about the future relationship. This deal also gives us the chance to help shape global trade policy—an independent trade policy, at a time when global trade is slowing down.

The final reason is that the deal allows us to get on to other issues. So much of our political bandwidth has been taken up by Brexit that the public feel that we no longer talk about the issues that matter to them.

Of course there is no such thing as the perfect deal—I voted for the previous deal three times, with strong reservations, and I have strong reservations today—but it has come to the point where we have to deliver on the contract that we made with the people of Britain. It is time for us to put differences aside, put aside the sort of stupid party political games we have had and do what we promised.

2.5 pm

Tom Brake (Carshalton and Wallington) (LD): We have reached the fork in the road. We must now choose. Do we choose the route that leads us to an outward-looking,

confident nation, punching above its weight in a European Union battling for liberal values in a world that is increasingly illiberal, isolationist and belligerent? That course guarantees that EU citizens, many of whom have lived here since the 1960s and '70s, will not have to worry about proving they are entitled to healthcare and provides for their UK counterparts in the EU, who will not need to fret over what action to take should the time-limited six months of healthcare guaranteed by our Government expire. Or do we let ourselves be led by a colourful pied piper who chose his path and this deal not out of any conviction that his path was just, rational or economically beneficial for our nation, but because he believed it was the most secure way to achieve his own ambition?

Do we meekly follow a man whose “excellent” deal, according to such Government analysis as they have been willing to make available, will leave each household at least £2,000 worse off and hit British jobs and living standards with the ferocity of the austerity triggered by the 2008 crash? This deal, as the Prime Minister confirmed in his rather rambling and dissembling contribution, may not survive the transition period and could still lead to a no-deal crash-out.

Do we follow in the footsteps of a man who, just a month ago, claimed to a rapturous DUP gathering that the “precious Union” was “in good shape”, but a month later dealt the Union a hammer blow that could shatter it within just a couple of years? Are we so afraid of our own shadow and so lacking in confidence in our capacity to work the EU system to our advantage, as we have successfully done for decades, that we have to fall back on a nostalgic vision of empire and a buccaneering Britain?

That is the choice in front of us today. I hope that we choose the former path. It would require one further step—a people’s vote—to give the people the final say. That would be the democratic way—a way supported by the hundreds of thousands of people over there in Parliament Square as we speak. That is the only way to stop the Brexit rot in its tracks and put this issue to bed. I urge all Members to follow that path, vote for the amendment and reject this calamitous deal.

2.7 pm

Antoinette Sandbach (Eddisbury) (Ind): I have always set out wanting to agree a deal with the EU that delivers the outcome of the referendum within the terms of the 2017 manifesto that I stood on. I have fought against an undemocratic no deal and always voted for a deal. In fact, I have voted for a deal more times than the Prime Minister. I have even voted for a deal more times than the Home Secretary, the Foreign Secretary, the Transport Secretary and the Environment Secretary—combined. Despite this, I have had the Whip removed, and those who voted down deal after deal have been rewarded with jobs in the Cabinet.

I would like to support this deal as well, but the Government have been sending mixed messages. While Ministers at the Dispatch Box say they want a deal, anonymous No. 10 sources insist that they will break the law and deliver no deal. Owing to this and the Government’s Janus-like ability to face in both directions, I cannot support the Government without assurances. Those assurances come in the form of the amendment tabled by my right hon. Friend the Member for West Dorset (Sir Oliver Letwin). This would ensure that the

Government and the members of my former party stuck to their promises. It would also ensure that there was enough time to scrutinise the withdrawal agreement Bill, which is likely to be a mammoth piece of legislation.

The House might notice that I am saying little about the content of the deal. I was always taught, “If you have nothing nice to say, say nothing.” Suffice it to say that it is substantially worse than the deal negotiated by the right hon. Member for Maidenhead (Mrs May). Perhaps this deal’s sole merit is to cast her redoubtable negotiating efforts in a more positive light. It is a great shame that Opposition Members did not vote for that deal.

The Foreign Secretary let the cat out of the bag yesterday when he said that it was a “cracking deal” for Northern Ireland because it will keep “frictionless access to the single market.”

My residents and businesses in Cheshire would like that frictionless access to the single market. If it is such a great deal for Northern Ireland, why cannot my constituents have it, too?

I will back the deal, subject to the reassurance of the amendment, but I do not like the deal. Given the choice between a dodgy deal and remain, I suspect many constituents would opt for the latter. As such, if I get an opportunity to vote on an amendment in respect of a people’s vote, I will vote for that, too.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Mr Speaker: I call Liz Saville Roberts. The right hon. Lady is not in her place. I beg her pardon; I did not intend her any discourtesy.

2.10 pm

Anna Soubry (Broxtowe) (IGC): On 26 June 2016, we had a referendum, which in effect was a snapshot on a single day. A distorted photograph was obtained. It was distorted by false images. It was distorted by fibs on a bus and by fake promises of getting an easy, quick deal that would convey all the benefits of free trade that our country has enjoyed for so many years as a member of the European Union. It was created by preying on people’s fears and fuelling their prejudices at the same time.

Three and a half years later, we now at least have some clarity. On two occasions, the Government have negotiated a deal with the European Union. Like the hon. Member for Eddisbury (Antoinette Sandbach), I think this a bad deal for all the good reasons given by so many right hon. and hon. Members.

This place remains divided. The answer is not yet another general election. The last one did not help us by solving anything, because it could not. The only way to solve this matter is to get it back to where, in effect, it began: to the people. We should put the deal to a confirmatory referendum. People are entitled to change their minds as the evidence changes, and they now see with clarity what Brexit is all about. Surely our young people who were not able to vote in 2016 must have the right to play a part and determine their own futures, given that so many of them will be affected by Brexit.

Sir Patrick McLoughlin: Will the right hon. Lady give way?

Anna Soubry: I will not, because we have not got time.

[Anna Soubry]

We now know what the deal looks like—and my goodness, it is such a bad deal. It is bad for the Union and bad for jobs, and it opens a back door to the no deal that certain Conservative Members undoubtedly want. I gently say to right hon. and hon. Members on the Conservative Benches that it defies belief that they can sit there claiming to be Unionists and vote for the deal.

We need a people's vote, and that is why more than a million people have come to London today. Let us get it back to the British people. Let us get Brexit done but by way of taking it back for that confirmatory referendum.

2.13 pm

Rebecca Long Bailey (Salford and Eccles) (Lab): I thank all Members of this House for their passionate contributions. I thank the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster for sharing his mints with the shadow Front-Bench team earlier. However, that is where my joviality ends.

Today is a historic day. It is a day on which the fewer than 650 people sat here now will agonise over whether they are about to make the right choice for their communities, industries and future generations. Today, they ask themselves, "Is what is before us today truly a deal that protects and enhances our communities?" Sadly, the simple and irreconcilable truth is that it does not. As the shadow Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, I want to make it clear to the House that this deal, if agreed to, would be a disaster for this country. We must reject it.

On workers' rights, we simply cannot trust what the Prime Minister is saying. The Government say that this deal protects workers, but instead of strengthening protections they have specifically changed the legally binding withdrawal agreement to remove any commitments on workers' rights. It tells us something that no trade union in this country—not a single one—backs this deal. The TUC says that the deal "would be a disaster for working people".

Unison says that

"it would risk every workplace right and leave public services exposed and vulnerable."

Unite says that

"by further diluting the legal protections for labour and environmental standards, the prime minister has made the laws that underpin workers' rights and public safety extremely vulnerable in future trade deals."

I could go on, but we should also look at the business case.

Gloria De Piero (Ashfield) (Lab): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Rebecca Long Bailey: Please forgive me for not giving way; we are extremely pushed for time.

What does this deal mean for business? I will put it simply; for business, for our industries and for our manufacturing, it reduces access to the market of our biggest trading partner, threatening jobs up and down our country at a time when more investment is needed, not less. There is no economic impact assessment and no accompanying legal advice—funny that; I wonder

why. According to *The Guardian*, Britain is on course to sacrifice as much as £130 billion in lost GDP growth over the next 15 years if the Brexit deal goes ahead.

Industry has been clear that it needs market access. It needs a customs union to keep vital supply chains flowing, but this deal sells them out. With no barrier-free access and no customs union, it puts the fantasy of chasing damaging trade deals with Donald Trump over the needs of our country. Again, the House does not have to take my word for it. Make UK, which represents British manufacturing, is clear that

"commitments to the closest possible trading relationship in goods have gone"

and that the deal

"will add cost and bureaucracy and our companies will face a lack of clarity inhibiting investment and planning."

Even the CBI added that the

"deal remains inadequate on services"

and that it has

"serious concerns about the direction of the future UK-EU relationship."

This is a bad deal for industry, a bad deal for manufacturing and, more importantly, a bad deal for jobs.

Let us look at what the deal will mean for the environment. Let us see what green groups are saying about it. Greener UK, for example, has raised—[*Interruption.*]

Mr Speaker: Order. There is excessive noise in the Chamber. It is very unfair on the hon. Lady, who is developing her contribution. Let us listen to each other courteously.

Rebecca Long Bailey: Greener UK has raised huge concerns, saying that

"environmental safeguards are absent from the new withdrawal agreement"

and that the Government's toothless Environment Bill

"provides neither an enforcement body with independence... nor a commitment to non-regression in domestic law."

All this is coming at a time when we face a climate crisis across the world, and it is simply unacceptable.

The Government are asking us to trust them on all these issues without, quite tellingly, setting out any detail or legislation today. The Prime Minister says that nobody in his Government wants to reduce rights or standards, but that is a remarkable statement, especially when looking at their track record. How can we trust them?—[*Interruption.*] Government Members can cheer all they like, but how can we trust a Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy who made it clear that, for small businesses, she envisages

"no regulation whatsoever—no minimum wage, no maternity or paternity rights, no unfair dismissal rights, no pension rights"?—[*Official Report*, 10 May 2012; Vol. 545, c. 209.]

How can we trust a Foreign Secretary who wrote a pamphlet called "Escaping the Straitjacket" that outlined his plans to cut workers' rights and regulations? How can we trust a Prime Minister who said the UK should scrap the social chapter and claimed that the current "weight of employment regulation is... backbreaking"?

The answer is that we cannot trust them. If their intentions were to maintain current standards, why have they slashed every level playing field commitment in the withdrawal agreement?

We are about to make history and, in the final moments before we enter the Lobbies, MPs will consider the weight placed upon their shoulders. Is this deal right for their communities, industries and future generations? No, it is not. Agreeing this deal will not get Brexit done; instead, it will sell out our country and sell out our communities, leaving us open to an onslaught of deregulation and a reduction of rights that will put jobs at risk. That is something no Labour MP, nor any other MP worried about protecting their community, could ever support.

2.19 pm

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (Michael Gove): Our democracy is a precious thing, and this Parliament is a special place. Our democracy depends on respect for difference, and this Parliament thrives on respecting the sincerity and the commitment to public service of every Member.

That is why I know that deciding how to vote today will have been difficult for many Members, and it is important we all recognise that those who argued to remain, and who still argue that that is the best outcome, do so as patriots, but they take a different view from some of us. And we should all recognise that those who argued to leave, who have consistently argued that we should leave and who have argued for a better deal, are arguing for what they believe is best for our country.

I respect those who have argued for both positions, but I respect most of all the many Members of this House who argued that we should remain, and who during the course of that campaign believed it was the best course for the country, but who now recognise that, the people having spoken, the verdict must be respected.

Ian C. Lucas (Wrexham) (Lab): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Michael Gove: Not yet.

In a debate characterised by many brilliant and passionate speeches, the speech that stood out for me was that of my right hon. Friend the Member for Maidenhead (Mrs May). She argued for remain, but she also recognises that, when the people have spoken, their verdict has to be respected. We have seen that not only from Conservative Members but from Members of all parties, such as the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Melanie Onn) and the right hon. Members for Don Valley (Caroline Flint) and for Rother Valley (Sir Kevin Barron). They all argued that we should remain, but now they recognise that there is something more precious than being a leaver or a remainer: being a democrat.

What unites us in this House is that we are democrats, and we voted in this House of Commons to have a referendum. We voted in this House of Commons to say that we would respect the verdict of the people. We voted overwhelmingly for article 50, which honoured that referendum result and said that we would leave. How will it look to those who sent us here if we say to them now, “We made those sacred promises, but now we choose to dishonour them”?

Ian C. Lucas: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Michael Gove: No.

There will be individuals on both sides of the House who have specific qualms and concerns about this deal, but the time has come for us to decide. None of us in a

country that voted 52:48, none of us in a House of 650 Members and none of us in a country of 65 million people can ensure that we have our own perfect Brexit.

Ian C. Lucas: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Michael Gove: No.

What we can do is be prepared to put aside our perfect for the sake of the common good, and that is what the public want us to do.

The right hon. and learned Member for Holborn and St Pancras (Keir Starmer) laid out some of his concerns about the political declaration, but he knows and we know that if we vote today for the deal—if we vote for this withdrawal agreement—we can then move on to ensure that the future economic partnership we all want can be framed in the best interests of the British people.

Ian C. Lucas: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Michael Gove: I will not give way, but I am grateful for the hon. Gentleman’s persistence. [*Interruption.*]

Mr Speaker: Order. The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster is not currently giving way.

Michael Gove: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker.

Every party and every voice in this House will have equal weight and equal value in the discussion on our future economic partnership, making sure that we can deliver a Brexit deal that delivers for the 52% and for the 48%. That is our intention.

Ian C. Lucas: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Stewart Malcolm McDonald (Glasgow South) (SNP): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Michael Gove: No I shall not, and no I will not—however tempting it might be, I will decline on this occasion.

The truth is that, because no deal could ever satisfy everyone, we could spend all our time searching for that elusive perfect deal, but what would that position look like to the country? What would it look like to all those who have sent us here? What would it look like to the constituents of the hon. Member for Salford and Eccles (Rebecca Long Bailey), who voted to leave and expected that vote to be honoured? They voted to put trust in this place; to put trust in Parliament to make a vital decision. If we duck that decision, if we dither and delay, I am afraid that people will feel a sense of depression, dismay and demoralisation because the Parliament that they hoped would keep its promises had chosen once again to duck its responsibilities.

I am also clear that everyone who has spoken in this debate has done so with the best of motives, including my right hon. Friend the Member for West Dorset (Sir Oliver Letwin), a dear and old friend of mine, but one of the things that I would say to him, and to others—

Steve Brine (Winchester) (Ind): Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Michael Gove: On that point, I will give way.

Steve Brine: Everybody has their beliefs, and everybody does what they believe to be right, including our right hon. Friend the Member for West Dorset (Sir Oliver Letwin). Were the Bill that follows the meaningful vote to fail, how would the Government avoid no deal before the end of October?

Michael Gove: The Government are absolutely committed to ensuring that we have a deal, to ensuring that we obey the law, and to ensuring that we respect the voices of all those in this House. Let me say firmly from this Dispatch Box that this Government are committed to ensuring that we have a deal, and the best way of getting that deal, leaving on 31 October and being able to move on to the other issues, that the people of this country want us to discuss, is by accepting the honourable motives of my right hon. Friend the Member for West Dorset but recognising that, were we to accept his amendment, we would not have a meaningful vote today. That would not unlock the door to a deal being passed. We would have voted, I am afraid, in the terms of the motion, for more delay.

Ian C. Lucas: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Michael Gove: No.

On that basis, I urge everyone who wants us to honour the referendum mandate to recognise that the amendment, however sincerely it has been put forward, is unnecessary.

What is necessary now is for us to reach a moment of decision. Lord Judge, the leader of the Cross-Bench peers—in some respects, the voice of moderation in the other place—has said that the time has passed for people to quibble and question the precise terms of this deal. He, a former Lord Chief Justice, has said that Parliament needs to “get on with it”, because otherwise there will be “profound damage” to public confidence in this place.

That is the question that every Member of this House must ask. How will our constituents feel if we vote to support the deal without the amendment? They will feel that a cloud has been lifted; that Parliament has listened to them with respect; and that the vote in 2016, which we promised to honour, has, after three and half years of deadlock and division, been honoured by a House that at last is ready to unite. That is the choice that faces us all.

If we do not vote for the deal without the amendment, I am afraid that all those who sent us here, who are watching our deliberations, will say that Parliament has failed to meet the moment; that Parliament has failed to rise to the occasion; that Parliament has failed to ensure that an important democratic vote takes place; and that the most important vote, with the greatest number of votes cast for any proposition in our history, will be delayed and dishonoured, and will not be delivered. *[Interruption.]* That is why I urge everyone in this House to recognise that our first duty—*[Interruption]*—is to the principle that underpins this place—

Ian C. Lucas: On a point of order, Mr Speaker.

Mr Speaker: Order. I said no! The right hon. Gentleman is responding to the debate, and he will do so to a conclusion.

Michael Gove: Our first duty to our constituents and our country is to keep our promises. This House said that we would honour that referendum mandate. The time

has come. The question that all of us must answer when we return to our constituencies is: did you vote to end the deadlock? Did you vote to end the division of these days? Did you vote to bring the country together? I know that Members across the House will support the Government this afternoon, to do just that.

Mr Nicholas Brown (Newcastle upon Tyne East) (Lab): I beg to move that the Question now be put.

Mr Speaker: I am indeed putting the Question. I am extremely grateful.

Question put, That the amendment be made.

The House divided: Ayes 322, Noes 306.

Division No. 3]

[2.30 pm

AYES

Abbott, rh Ms Diane	Cooper, Julie
Abrahams, Debbie	Cooper, rh Yvette
Ali, Rushanara	Corbyn, rh Jeremy
Allen, Heidi	Cowan, Ronnie
Allin-Khan, Dr Rosena	Coyle, Neil
Amesbury, Mike	Crausby, Sir David
Antoniazzi, Tonia	Crawley, Angela
Ashworth, Jonathan	Creagh, Mary
Bailey, Mr Adrian	Creasy, Stella
Bardell, Hannah	Cruddas, Jon
Bebb, Guto	Cryer, John
Beckett, rh Margaret	Cummins, Judith
Benn, rh Hilary	Cunningham, Alex
Berger, Luciana	Cunningham, Mr Jim
Betts, Mr Clive	Daby, Janet
Black, Mhairi	Dakin, Nic
Blackford, rh Ian	Davey, rh Sir Edward
Blackman, Kirsty	David, Wayne
Blackman-Woods, Dr Roberta	Davies, Geraint
Blomfield, Paul	Day, Martyn
Boles, Nick	De Cordova, Marsha
Brabin, Tracy	De Piero, Gloria
Bradshaw, rh Mr Ben	Dent Coad, Emma
Brake, rh Tom	Dhesi, Mr Tanmanjeet Singh
Brennan, Kevin	Docherty-Hughes, Martin
Brock, Deidre	Dodds, Anneliese
Brown, Alan	Dodds, Jane
Brown, Lyn	Dodds, rh Nigel
Brown, rh Mr Nicholas	Donaldson, rh Sir Jeffrey M.
Bryant, Chris	Doughty, Stephen
Buck, Ms Karen	Dowd, Peter
Burden, Richard	Drew, Dr David
Burgon, Richard	Dromey, Jack
Butler, Dawn	Duffield, Rosie
Byrne, rh Liam	Eagle, Ms Angela
Cable, rh Sir Vince	Eagle, Maria
Cadbury, Ruth	Edwards, Jonathan
Cameron, Dr Lisa	Efford, Clive
Campbell, rh Sir Alan	Elliott, Julie
Campbell, Mr Gregory	Ellman, Dame Louise
Carden, Dan	Elmore, Chris
Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair	Esterson, Bill
Chapman, Douglas	Evans, Chris (<i>Proxy vote cast by Mark Tami</i>)
Chapman, Jenny	Farrelly, Paul
Charalambous, Bambos	Farron, Tim
Cherry, Joanna	Fellows, Marion
Clarke, rh Mr Kenneth	Fletcher, Colleen
Clwyd, rh Ann	Forbes, Lisa
Coaker, Vernon	Fovargue, Yvonne
Coffey, Ann	Foxcroft, Vicky
	Frith, James

Furniss, Gill
 Gaffney, Hugh
 Gapes, Mike
 Gardiner, Barry
 Gauke, rh Mr David
 George, Ruth
 Gethins, Stephen
 Gibson, Patricia
 Gill, Preet Kaur
 Girvan, Paul
 Glindon, Mary
 Godsiff, Mr Roger
 Goodman, Helen
 Grady, Patrick
 Grant, Peter
 Gray, Neil (*Proxy vote cast by Patrick Grady*)
 Green, Kate
 Greening, rh Justine
 Greenwood, Lillian
 Greenwood, Margaret
 Grieve, rh Mr Dominic
 Griffith, Nia
 Grogan, John
 Gwynne, Andrew
 Gyimah, Mr Sam
 Haigh, Louise
 Hamilton, Fabian
 Hammond, rh Mr Philip
 Hanson, rh David
 Hardy, Emma
 Harman, rh Ms Harriet
 Harris, Carolyn
 Hayes, Helen
 Hayman, Sue
 Healey, rh John
 Hendrick, Sir Mark
 Hendry, Drew
 Hepburn, Mr Stephen
 Hermon, Lady
 Hill, Mike
 Hillier, Meg
 Hobhouse, Wera
 Hodge, rh Dame Margaret
 Hodgson, Mrs Sharon
 Hollern, Kate
 Hosie, Stewart
 Howarth, rh Sir George
 Huq, Dr Rupa
 Hussain, Imran
 Jardine, Christine
 Jarvis, Dan
 Johnson, Diana
 Jones, Darren
 Jones, Gerald
 Jones, Graham P.
 Jones, Helen
 Jones, rh Mr Kevan
 Jones, Ruth
 Jones, Sarah
 Jones, Susan Elan
 Kane, Mike
 Keeley, Barbara
 Kendall, Liz
 Khan, Afzal
 Killen, Ged
 Kinnock, Stephen
 Kyle, Peter
 Laird, Lesley
 Lake, Ben
 Lamb, rh Norman
 Lammy, rh Mr David

Lavery, Ian
 Law, Chris
 Lee, Karen
 Lee, Dr Phillip
 Leslie, Mr Chris
 Letwin, rh Sir Oliver
 Lewell-Buck, Mrs Emma
 Lewis, Clive
 Linden, David
 Little Pengelly, Emma
 Lloyd, Stephen
 Lloyd, Tony
 Long Bailey, Rebecca
 Lucas, Caroline
 Lucas, Ian C.
 Lynch, Holly
 MacNeil, Angus Brendan
 Madders, Justin
 Mahmood, Mr Khalid
 Mahmood, Shabana
 Malhotra, Seema
 Marsden, Gordon
 Martin, Sandy
 Maskell, Rachael
 Matheson, Christian
 Mc Nally, John
 McCabe, Steve
 McCarthy, Kerry
 McDonagh, Siobhain
 McDonald, Andy
 McDonald, Stewart Malcolm
 McDonald, Stuart C.
 McDonnell, rh John
 McFadden, rh Mr Pat
 McGinn, Conor
 McGovern, Alison
 McInnes, Liz
 McKinnell, Catherine
 McMahan, Jim
 McMorrin, Anna
 Mearns, Ian
 Miliband, rh Edward
 Monaghan, Carol
 Moon, Mrs Madeleine
 Moran, Layla
 Morden, Jessica
 Morgan, Stephen
 Morris, Grahame
 Murray, Ian
 Nandy, Lisa
 Newlands, Gavin
 Norris, Alex
 O'Hara, Brendan
 O'Mara, Jared
 Onwurah, Chi
 Osamor, Kate
 Owen, Albert
 Paisley, Ian
 Peacock, Stephanie
 Pearce, Teresa
 Pennycook, Matthew
 Perkins, Toby
 Phillips, Jess
 Phillipson, Bridget
 Pidcock, Laura
 Platt, Jo
 Pollard, Luke
 Pound, Stephen
 Powell, Lucy
 Qureshi, Yasmin
 Rashid, Faisal
 Rayner, Angela

Reed, Mr Steve
 Rees, Christina
 Reeves, Ellie
 Reeves, Rachel
 Reynolds, Emma (*Proxy vote cast by Mr Pat McFadden*)
 Reynolds, Jonathan
 Rimmer, Ms Marie
 Robinson, Gavin
 Robinson, Mr Geoffrey
 Rodda, Matt
 Rowley, Danielle
 Ruane, Chris
 Rudd, rh Amber
 Russell-Moyle, Lloyd
 Ryan, rh Joan
 Sandbach, Antoinette
 Saville Roberts, rh Liz
 Shah, Naz
 Shannon, Jim
 Sharma, Mr Virendra
 Sheerman, Mr Barry
 Sheppard, Tommy
 Sherriff, Paula
 Shuker, Mr Gavin
 Siddiq, Tulip
 Simpson, David
 Skinner, Mr Dennis
 Slaughtier, Andy
 Smeeth, Ruth
 Smith, Angela
 Smith, Cat
 Smith, Eleanor
 Smith, Jeff
 Smith, Laura
 Smith, Nick
 Smith, Owen
 Smyth, Karin
 Snell, Gareth
 Sobel, Alex
 Soubry, rh Anna
 Spellar, rh John

Adams, Nigel
 Afolami, Bim
 Afriyie, Adam
 Aldous, Peter
 Allan, Lucy
 Amess, Sir David
 Argar, Edward
 Atkins, Victoria
 Austin, Ian
 Bacon, Mr Richard
 Badenoch, Mrs Kemi (*Proxy vote cast by Leo Docherty*)
 Baker, Mr Steve
 Baldwin, Harriett
 Barclay, rh Stephen
 Baron, Mr John
 Barron, rh Sir Kevin
 Bellingham, Sir Henry
 Benyon, rh Richard
 Beresford, Sir Paul
 Berry, rh Jake
 Blackman, Bob
 Blunt, Crispin
 Bone, Mr Peter
 Bottomley, Sir Peter
 Bowie, Andrew
 Bradley, Ben

Starmer, rh Keir
 Stephens, Chris
 Stevens, Jo
 Stone, Jamie
 Streeting, Wes
 Stringer, Graham
 Sweeney, Mr Paul
 Swinson, Jo
 Tami, rh Mark
 Thewliss, Alison
 Thomas, Gareth
 Thomas-Symonds, Nick
 Thornberry, rh Emily
 Timms, rh Stephen
 Trickett, Jon
 Turley, Anna
 Turner, Karl
 Twigg, Stephen
 Twist, Liz
 Umunna, Chuka
 Vaz, rh Keith
 Vaz, rh Valerie
 Walker, Thelma
 Watson, Tom
 West, Catherine
 Whitehead, Dr Alan
 Whitfield, Martin
 Whitford, Dr Philippa
 Williams, Hywel
 Williams, Dr Paul
 Williamson, Chris
 Wilson, Phil
 Wilson, rh Sammy
 Wishart, Pete
 Wollaston, Dr Sarah
 Yasin, Mohammad
 Zeichner, Daniel

Tellers for the Ayes:
Thangam Debbonaire and
Matt Western

NOES

Bradley, rh Karen
 Brady, Sir Graham
 Braverman, Suella (*Proxy vote cast by Mr Steve Baker*)
 Brereton, Jack
 Bridgen, Andrew
 Brine, Steve
 Brokenshire, rh James
 Bruce, Fiona
 Buckland, rh Robert
 Burghart, Alex
 Burns, rh Conor
 Burt, rh Alistair
 Cairns, rh Alun
 Campbell, Mr Ronnie
 Cartledge, James
 Cash, Sir William
 Caulfield, Maria
 Chalk, Alex
 Chishty, Rehman
 Chope, Sir Christopher
 Churchill, Jo
 Clark, Colin
 Clark, rh Greg
 Clarke, Mr Simon
 Cleverly, rh James

Clifton-Brown, Sir Geoffrey
 Coffey, rh Dr Thérèse
 Collins, Damian
 Costa, Alberto
 Courts, Robert
 Cox, rh Mr Geoffrey
 Crabb, rh Stephen
 Crouch, Tracey
 Davies, David T. C.
 Davies, Glyn
 Davies, Mims
 Davies, Philip
 Davis, rh Mr David
 Dinenage, Caroline
 Djanogly, Mr Jonathan
 Docherty, Leo
 Donelan, Michelle
 Dorries, Ms Nadine
 Double, Steve
 Dowden, rh Oliver
 Doyle-Price, Jackie
 Drax, Richard
 Duddridge, James
 Duguid, David
 Duncan, rh Sir Alan
 Duncan Smith, rh Mr Iain
 Dunne, rh Mr Philip
 Ellis, rh Michael
 Ellwood, rh Mr Tobias
 Elphicke, Charlie
 Eustice, George
 Evans, Mr Nigel
 Evennett, rh Sir David
 Fabricant, Michael
 Fallon, rh Sir Michael
 Field, rh Frank
 Field, rh Mark
 Fitzpatrick, Jim
 Flint, rh Caroline
 Ford, Vicky
 Foster, Kevin
 Fox, rh Dr Liam
 Francois, rh Mr Mark
 Frazer, Lucy
 Freeman, George
 Freer, Mike
 Fysh, Mr Marcus
 Gale, rh Sir Roger
 Garnier, Mark
 Ghani, Ms Nusrat
 Gibb, rh Nick
 Gillan, rh Dame Cheryl
 Glen, John
 Goldsmith, rh Zac
 Goodwill, rh Mr Robert
 Gove, rh Michael
 Graham, Luke
 Graham, Richard
 Grant, Bill
 Grant, Mrs Helen
 Gray, James
 Grayling, rh Chris
 Green, Chris
 Green, rh Damian
 Griffiths, Andrew
 Hair, Kirstene
 Halfon, rh Robert
 Hall, Luke
 Hammond, Stephen
 Hancock, rh Matt
 Hands, rh Greg
 Harper, rh Mr Mark
 Harrington, Richard
 Harris, Rebecca
 Harrison, Trudy
 Hart, Simon
 Hayes, rh Sir John
 Heald, rh Sir Oliver
 Heapey, James
 Heaton-Harris, Chris
 Heaton-Jones, Peter
 Henderson, Gordon
 Herbert, rh Nick
 Hinds, rh Damian
 Hoare, Simon
 Hoey, Kate
 Hollingbery, Sir George
 Hollinrake, Kevin
 Hollobone, Mr Philip
 Holloway, Adam
 Hopkins, Kelvin
 Howell, John
 Huddleston, Nigel
 Hughes, Eddie
 Hunt, rh Mr Jeremy
 Hurd, rh Mr Nick
 Jack, rh Mr Alister
 James, Margot
 Javid, rh Sajid
 Jayawardena, Mr Ranil
 Jenkin, Sir Bernard
 Jenkyns, Andrea
 Jenrick, rh Robert
 Johnson, rh Boris
 Johnson, Dr Caroline
 Johnson, Gareth
 Johnson, rh Joseph
 Jones, Andrew
 Jones, rh Mr David
 Jones, Mr Marcus
 Kawczynski, Daniel
 Keegan, Gillian
 Kennedy, Seema
 Kerr, Stephen
 Knight, rh Sir Greg
 Knight, Julian
 Kwarteng, rh Kwasi
 Lamont, John
 Lancaster, rh Mark
 Latham, Mrs Pauline
 Leadsom, rh Andrea
 Lefroy, Jeremy
 Lewer, Andrew
 Lewis, rh Brandon
 Lewis, Mr Ivan
 Lewis, rh Dr Julian
 Liddell-Grainger, Mr Ian
 Lidington, rh Sir David
 Lopez, Julia (*Proxy vote cast
 by Lee Rowley*)
 Lopresti, Jack
 Lord, Mr Jonathan
 Loughton, Tim
 Mackinlay, Craig
 Maclean, Rachel
 Main, Mrs Anne
 Mak, Alan
 Malthouse, Kit
 Mann, John
 Mann, Scott
 Masterton, Paul
 May, rh Mrs Theresa
 Maynard, Paul
 McLoughlin, rh Sir Patrick

McPartland, Stephen
 McVey, rh Ms Esther
 Menzies, Mark
 Mercer, Johnny
 Merriman, Huw
 Metcalfe, Stephen
 Miller, rh Mrs Maria
 Milling, Amanda
 Mills, Nigel
 Mitchell, rh Mr Andrew
 Moore, Damien
 Mordaunt, rh Penny
 Morgan, rh Nicky
 Morris, Anne Marie
 Morris, David
 Morris, James
 Morton, Wendy
 Mundell, rh David
 Murray, Mrs Sheryll
 Murrison, rh Dr Andrew
 Neill, Robert
 Newton, Sarah
 Nokes, rh Caroline
 Norman, Jesse
 O'Brien, Neil (*Proxy vote cast
 by Bim Afolami*)
 Offord, Dr Matthew
 Opperman, Guy
 Jenkin, Neil
 Patel, rh Priti
 Paterson, rh Mr Owen
 Pawsey, Mark
 Penning, rh Sir Mike
 Penrose, John
 Percy, Andrew
 Perry, rh Claire
 Philp, Chris
 Pincher, rh Christopher
 Poulter, Dr Dan
 Pow, Rebecca
 Prentis, Victoria
 Prisk, Mr Mark
 Pritchard, Mark
 Pursglove, Tom
 Quin, Jeremy
 Quince, Will
 Raab, rh Dominic
 Redwood, rh John
 Rees-Mogg, rh Mr Jacob
 Robertson, Mr Laurence
 Robinson, Mary
 Rosindell, Andrew
 Ross, Douglas
 Rowley, Lee
 Rutley, David
 Scully, Paul
 Seely, Mr Bob
 Selous, Andrew
 Shapps, rh Grant

Sharma, rh Alok
 Shelbrooke, rh Alec
 Simpson, rh Mr Keith
 Skidmore, rh Chris
 Smith, Chloe
 Smith, Henry
 Smith, rh Julian
 Smith, Royston
 Soames, rh Sir Nicholas
 Spencer, rh Mark
 Stephenson, Andrew
 Stevenson, John
 Stewart, Bob
 Stewart, rh Rory
 Streeter, Sir Gary
 Stride, rh Mel
 Stuart, Graham
 Sturdy, Julian
 Sunak, rh Rishi
 Swayne, rh Sir Desmond
 Swire, rh Sir Hugo
 Syms, Sir Robert
 Thomas, Derek
 Thomson, Ross
 Throup, Maggie
 Tolhurst, Kelly
 Tomlinson, Justin
 Tomlinson, Michael
 Tracey, Craig
 Tredinnick, David
 Trevelyan, Anne-Marie
 Truss, rh Elizabeth
 Tugendhat, Tom
 Vaizey, rh Mr Edward
 Vara, Mr Shailesh
 Vickers, Martin
 Villiers, rh Theresa
 Walker, Sir Charles
 Walker, Mr Robin
 Wallace, rh Mr Ben
 Warburton, David
 Warman, Matt
 Watling, Giles
 Whately, Helen
 Wheeler, Mrs Heather
 Whittaker, Craig
 Whittingdale, rh Mr John
 Wiggin, Bill
 Williamson, rh Gavin
 Wood, Mike
 Woodcock, John
 Wragg, Mr William
 Wright, rh Jeremy
 Zahawi, Nadhim

Tellers for the Noes:
Stuart Andrew and
Iain Stewart

Question accordingly agreed to.

Amendment (a) agreed to.

Main Question, as amended, put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That, in light of the new deal agreed with the European Union, which enables the United Kingdom to respect the result of the referendum on its membership of the European Union and to leave the European Union on 31 October with a deal, this House has considered the matter but withholds approval unless and until implementing legislation is passed.

Mr Speaker: We now come to motion 2 on Section 1(2)(a) of the European Union (Withdrawal) (No. 2) Act 2019. I remind the House that I have selected the manuscript amendment. Minister or Whip to move. It is not being moved.

The Prime Minister: On a point of order, Mr Speaker. I am very grateful to you, the House of Commons staff, and everybody who has put themselves out and given up their time for the debate today. It has been a very important debate, and an exceptional moment for our country and our Parliament. Alas, the opportunity for a meaningful vote has effectively been passed up, because the meaningful vote has been voided of meaning, but I wish the House to know that I am not daunted or dismayed by this result. It became likely once it was obvious that the amendment from my right hon. Friend the Member for West Dorset (Sir Oliver Letwin) was going to remain on the Order Paper. I continue in the very strong belief that the best thing for the UK and the whole of Europe is for us to leave with this new deal on 31 October.

To anticipate the questions that will come from the Opposition, I will not negotiate a delay with the EU; neither does the law compel me to. I will tell our friends and colleagues in the EU exactly what I have told everyone in the 88 days in which I have served as Prime Minister: further delay would be bad for this country, bad for our European Union, and bad for democracy. Next week, the Government will introduce the legislation needed for us to leave the EU with our new deal on 31 October, and I hope that our European Union colleagues and friends will not be attracted, as those on the Opposition Benches—or rather, I should say, the Opposition Front Bench—are, by delay; I do not think that they will be. Then, I hope that hon. Members, faced with a choice on our new deal for the UK and the European Union, will change their mind—because it was pretty close today—and support this deal in overwhelming numbers.

Since I became Prime Minister, I have said that we must get on, and get Brexit done on 31 October, so that this country can move on. That policy remains unchanged. No delays! I will continue to do all I can to get Brexit done on 31 October, and I continue to commend this excellent deal to the House.

Jeremy Corbyn (Islington North) (Lab): Further to that point of order, Mr Speaker. I welcome today's vote. Parliament has clearly spoken. [*Interruption.*]

Mr Speaker: Order. The Prime Minister was heard. [*Interruption.*] Yes, he was; do not argue the toss with the Chair. I am telling you what the situation is, and everybody can detect that the Prime Minister was heard. The Leader of the Opposition will be heard, too. It is as simple and unarguable as that.

Jeremy Corbyn: I welcome today's vote. It is an emphatic decision by this House, which has declined to back the Prime Minister's deal today and clearly voted to stop a no-deal crash-out from the European Union. The Prime Minister must now comply with the law. He can no longer use the threat of a no-deal crash-out to blackmail Members to support his sell-out deal. Labour is not prepared to sell out the communities that we represent. We are not prepared to sell out their future,

and we believe that ultimately the people must have the final say on Brexit, which actually only the Labour party is offering.

Today is an historic day for Parliament, because it has said that it will not be blackmailed by a Prime Minister who is apparently prepared, once again, to defy a law passed by this Parliament. I invite him to think very carefully about the remarks he just made about refusing, apparently, to apply for the extension that the European Union (Withdrawal) (No. 2) Act requires him to do.

Ian Blackford: Further to that point of order, Mr Speaker. I think all of us in this House are aware of the responsibilities that we have. This is a crisis that we are in. I am thankful that the House has voted the way it has done on the amendment this afternoon. There is a clear expression from this House that we cannot crash out on 31 October.

Mr Speaker, I want to ask you what we can do to make sure that the Prime Minister respects the law of the land, that the Prime Minister respects the Benn Act and sends a letter to the European Council seeking that extension. I wonder what we can do to make sure that the Government do not bring forward a Bill until that extension, as they have been instructed, is delivered on. If there is any failure on the part of a Prime Minister who thinks he is above the law, well, Prime Minister, you will find yourself in court.

Mr Speaker: I do not mean it in any spirit of discourtesy to the right hon. Gentleman, but I think his contribution was rhetorical in the sense that I do not think he was particularly inviting my immediate response. If he was doing so, I would say to him that I think judicious consideration of these matters is always beneficial to colleagues across the House. Everybody, of course, must abide by the law. The right hon. Gentleman is versatile, dextrous and experienced in the use of the parliamentary weaponry to try to ensure that his point of view prevails, so we will leave it there for now.

Jo Swinson (East Dunbartonshire) (LD): Further to that point of order, Mr Speaker. The Prime Minister's deal was a bad deal, and the public deserve to have the final say—not just the hundreds of thousands who are marching outside, but the millions of people across our country. [*Interruption.*]

Mr Speaker: Order. I recognise that there are very strongly held views on both sides of the House and on both sides of this debate, but the leader of the Liberal Democrats must be heard. It is unconscionable if there is an attempt to stop someone being heard.

Jo Swinson: And the people who are outside this building right now will be heard, and they deserve the final say, along with millions across the country. The most urgent thing right now is that the Prime Minister complies with the law, and I ask your guidance. Would it be possible to suspend the sitting for a short time to allow the Prime Minister to go and send his letter, and come back and make a statement to the House to confirm that he has done so?

Mr Speaker: I am grateful to the hon. Lady. It is not my intention to suspend the sitting. The point will have been heard by the Prime Minister. I say to the hon. Lady that all sorts of things are possible, but as to what

[*Mr Speaker*]

is judged appropriate at this time, I think the puckish grin on the contours of the hon. Lady's face suggests that she was making a point, but not expecting such a decision. I am grateful to her.

Sir Oliver Letwin *rose*—

Sir William Cash *rose*—

Mr Speaker: Of course I will come to the hon. Member for Stone (Sir William Cash) momentarily. I call Sir Oliver Letwin.

Sir Oliver Letwin: Further to that point of order, Mr Speaker. First, let me say to the Prime Minister that I agreed with what he said at the end of his remarks, and I am absolutely certain that he will comply with the law. I say to friends and colleagues across the House who helped us to achieve this amendment, which I believe to be profoundly in the national interest, that I am grateful for that co-operation, but that our ways are now going to part. Many Conservative Members who co-operated in preventing a no-deal exit by helping to put in place the Benn Act and keeping it in place as an insurance policy today, will, when the Prime Minister brings forward a Bill to implement our withdrawal from the European Union to the House of Commons, now be voting for it. We will continue to vote for it and seek to ensure that it becomes law before 31 October. If it does become law, this country will leave on 31 October—a hope that I share with the Prime Minister—but it will do so on the basis of knowing that should anything go wrong, we will not crash out without a deal on that date.

Mr Speaker: I am most grateful to the right hon. Gentleman, as many Members of the House will be, for the clarity of his exposition. [*Interruption.*] People can take their own view of it, but it was certainly clear and very pithy, and I am grateful to him.

Nigel Dodds: Further to that point of order, Mr Speaker. This decision will give further time for detailed consideration of the Bill when it comes forward, as well as an opportunity to consider whatever amendments come forward in detail. It has the effect of not approving the deal today, and we will examine all the details of the Bill, and all amendments, in light of our overriding concern about the constitutional and economic integrity of the Union. That is our priority. It will remain our priority in the days ahead, and that is the basis on which we will now proceed in a timely and sensible manner.

Mr Speaker: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman.

Sir William Cash *rose*—

Mr Speaker: I hope the hon. Gentleman will take it in the right spirit if I say that, having known him for more than 20 years, I feel that our proceedings would not be complete without a point of order from the Chair of the European Scrutiny Committee. [*Interruption.*] Somebody is suggesting a Division, but I will not allow one on that matter.

Sir William Cash: Further to that point of order, Mr Speaker. There is much talk about the law of the land, but the law of the land as it stands at this moment in

time is quite simple. Section 1 of the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018 categorically states:

“The European Communities Act 1972 is repealed on exit day.”

That is 31 October—just in case anyone cannot read.

Mr Speaker: I am always grateful, and I am sure the House will be indebted to the hon. Gentleman for his legal exegesis. There are other views on that matter, but he has registered his with his customary force.

Joanna Cherry (Edinburgh South West) (SNP): Further to that point of order, Mr Speaker—[*Interruption.*]

Mr Speaker: Order. If Members are leaving the Chamber—I understand the disappointment of the hon. and learned Lady, but I cannot compel Members to remain. I cannot, to coin a phrase, take anybody hostage. I do not have the power to incarcerate. I am trying to be helpful to her—I am playing for time. If those Members who, quite unaccountably, do not wish to listen to the hon. and learned Lady would leave the Chamber quickly and quietly, the rest of us—including, assuredly, the Chair—who wish to hear her, can do so. People are gradually beetling out of the Chamber, and if the Chair of the Education Committee, the right hon. Member for Harlow (Robert Halfon), feels that he could beetle out and conduct his conversation outside, that would be greatly appreciated by the Chair.

Joanna Cherry: Further to that point of order, Mr Speaker. I thank you for your indulgence. Viewers in Scotland are accustomed to the sight of the Tory Benches emptying when Members of Parliament who represent Scottish seats get up, and I very much look forward to seeing that in the SNP's party political broadcasts in the soon-to-come general election.

My point is an important one. The Prime Minister has failed to secure approval of the withdrawal agreement today under the terms of the Benn Act. Under the law of the land he should be retreating to No.10 to pen a letter to the European Union, under both that Act and the undertakings—as so described by the Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union—that he gave to the Scottish Court. Fortunately, we are back in court on Monday morning. It will be possible then to secure the Court's assistance if the Prime Minister has flouted the law and the promises he gave to the Court.

Mr Speaker, may I ask you this? Should Scotland's supreme Court mandate you to sign the letter required by the Act on behalf of this Parliament, will you do so?

Mr Speaker: I am grateful to the hon. and learned Lady. I have no expectation of being so asked. Moreover, I have no aspirations to the exalted status that would have been attained by a person so requested or directed by the court. The short answer to her is that if I were instructed by this House I would do as instructed, and if I were directed or instructed by a court I would do as directed. That is my instinctive reaction. I would, of course, seek further and better particulars. I would take advice, but I repeat that I have not been asked. I am not expecting to be asked and I am not looking to be asked, but I would do as I was required to do and I would have no hesitation in so doing.

Caroline Lucas: Further to that point of order, Mr Speaker. I welcome the vote on the amendment, because it shows that a majority of Members have stood up for more democracy, not less. They have stood up for more scrutiny, not less. They have also voted to rule out a disastrous no deal. I believe it will also give us a chance to let the people have a final say. Over 1 million of them are, right now, demanding that right outside this place. The Prime Minister has changed his own mind more times than we can possibly count, most recently on the border in the Irish sea. It cannot be right that the British people are the only ones who are not allowed to change their minds. I look forward to the opportunity that this vote affords us to come back to put whatever deal is in front of us to that confirmatory ballot.

Mr Speaker: I thank the hon. Lady for her point of order. I say to her publicly what I said to her privately, which is that I am sorry that, on account of constraints of time and a desire to bring matters to a conclusion, I was not able to call her today in the debate, but she has at least had a mini speech in the form of her point of order. I know that no power on earth would or should stop her contributing frequently on future occasions. I certainly look forward to that.

Vernon Coaker (Gedling) (Lab): Further to that point of order, Mr Speaker. Is there any power that you have to enable this House and the public to properly understand what the Prime Minister has just said to us? According to the law passed by this House, if a deal or no deal is not agreed, the Prime Minister is required to send a letter under the Benn Act today, 19 October. It may be my misunderstanding, Mr Speaker, but I have no idea, from what the Prime Minister said, whether he is actually going to write and sign that letter, or whether he is not going to do that. If he is not going to do it, that means he is not complying with the law that has been passed by the House of Commons. Any of our constituents who do not comply with the law face the consequences. Is there anything we can do to properly understand whether the Prime Minister intends to comply with the legislation and send the letter, or whether he is simply going to ignore it?

Mr Speaker: I am not a lawyer—I say that as a matter of some very considerable pride—but my understanding is that the legal position is clear. I do not dissent from what the hon. Gentleman has just said about the legal position. Ministers have made—I say this quite neutrally—a number of statements about adherence to, or compliance with, the so-called Benn Act. Those statements have not always been immediately and obviously compatible with each other. I think we have to await the development of events. In general terms, it is of course true to say that Ministers have emphasised their commitment to observe the law, including the Prime Minister, who has said that on a number of occasions. It is also true that the Prime Minister has indicated that he is not willing to seek an extension.

My understanding of the legal position is the same as that of the hon. Gentleman. We must await the development of events. The hon. and learned Member for Edinburgh South West (Joanna Cherry), from the SNP, raised a similar concern about this matter, which has now been echoed by the hon. Gentleman. Further enlightenment may follow when the Leader of the House uncoils and addresses us from the Dispatch Box—I do not know. I am not psychic; we shall see.

I think that matters are coming to a conclusion today, but the House will sit on Monday and I confidently anticipate that the hon. Member for Gedling (Vernon Coaker) will be in his place and ready to leap to his feet with alacrity to advance his point of view and that of others. *[Interruption.]* The Comptroller of Her Majesty's Household, the hon. Member for Horsham (Jeremy Quin), is shaking his head in a mildly eccentric manner. *[Interruption.]* Not at me—indeed. We are deeply grateful. I was not looking to call him, but if he particularly wanted to raise a point of order, especially as he used to be my constituent, far be it from me to deny him. *[Interruption.]* He says “Not today”—okay, fair enough.

The Leader of the House of Commons (Mr Jacob Rees-Mogg): Further to that point of order, Mr Speaker. In the light of today's decision, I should like to inform the House that Monday's business will now be a debate on a motion relating to section 13(1)(b) of the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018, and I shall make a further business statement on Monday.

Mr Speaker: I note what the Leader of the House has said. We will hear what others have to say—that has been done by him on a point of order.

Valerie Vaz (Walsall South) (Lab): Further to that point of order, Mr Speaker. I thank the Leader of the House for making it, and in response I would like to ask him, through you, Mr Speaker, why we are having a rerun of the vote. If that is not the case, could the Bill be published and debated in an orderly way? And how discourteous this is to Her Majesty the Queen, when we are still debating the Queen's Speech. When are we likely to have the remaining days of the Queen's Speech debate?

Mr Speaker: I note what the right hon. Lady has said.

Pete Wishart (Perth and North Perthshire) (SNP): Further to that point of order, Mr Speaker. I too am grateful to the Leader of the House for announcing that additional piece of business on Monday. I share deeply the concerns of the right hon. Member for Walsall South (Valerie Vaz) on these issues. What is happening to the Queen's Speech? What will now happen to the debates and votes that were supposed to happen? We were supposed to conclude the Queen's Speech debate by Wednesday.

This is a huge discourtesy to the House. If the Leader of the House wanted a vote on this Government's deal, he could have had it 20 minutes ago. That was the right time to do it. We deserve some sort of explanation as to why this is being brought back on Monday so quickly without any conversation or discussions across the usual channels and no discussions or debate with other parties in this House. He has to get back to his feet and explain a bit more about what he is intending and why he never took advantage of the opportunity to have a vote on this 20 minutes ago.

Kevin Brennan: Further to that point of order, Mr Speaker. Should the Leader of the House not have sought to make an emergency business statement, if that was what his intention was, so that we could do what the hon. Member for Perth and North Perthshire (Pete Wishart) and my right hon. Friend the Member for Walsall South (Valerie Vaz) have just done and

[Kevin Brennan]

asked questions of the right hon. Gentleman about his intentions regarding what happens to the rest of the important business that we have before us?

Mr Speaker: The short answer to that is yes. I intend no discourtesy to the Leader of the House, but it had been intimated to me—albeit not by him—that in the event of the Government being defeated on amendment (a), it would be the Executive’s intention to bring forward an emergency business statement. Although an emergency business statement is often narrow in its terms, because it flows from a particular event on a given subject, it is susceptible to questioning, whereas doing this on a point of order is most unusual and does not readily lend itself to questioning. It is, to be frank, unsatisfactory, but I do not intend any discourtesy to the Leader of the House and I am quite certain that he thought that he was doing the right thing. He would not knowingly do the wrong thing, but it is less than helpful to the exchanges. I will have to take advice and reflect on these matters further, because I did not receive advance notification, of any length, of the intention—still less of the intention to do it in this way.

Helen Goodman (Bishop Auckland) (Lab): Further to that point of order, Mr Speaker. In light of the Leader of the House’s very brief remarks, I wonder whether it has been made clear to you when the Second Reading of the Bill that the Prime Minister said would be introduced will take place, and which days next week we will have as the two days to complete our debates, and vote, on the Queen’s Speech.

Mr Speaker: It would, of course, be most useful to have clarification on that matter. [Interruption.] The Clerk at the Table is waving in front of me—most helpfully, I hasten to add; it is a helpful wave, as opposed to an unhelpful wave—notice of the presentation of the European Union (Withdrawal Agreement) Bill in the name of the Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union.

Like the hon. Lady, I heard the Prime Minister refer to the Government’s intention to introduce the withdrawal and implementation Bill. It is perfectly open to the Government to do that—indeed, it is perfectly open to them to do it next week—and I had anticipated or surmised that that might be the likely course of action for them to follow. It would be an entirely reasonable course of action, but at this stage I am not receiving any explicit indication that that is what they intend to do on Monday. This does not altogether assist the House, but colleagues can reflect further on these matters.

Mr McFadden: Further to that point of order, Mr Speaker. This is a slightly odd situation. My question is really for the Leader of the House, but because he made a point of order rather than a business statement, I find myself having to put it to you—although of course he is very welcome to get to his feet and help us to clarify matters if he wants to. What a lot of us want to know about Monday is whether it is your understanding, as I have to phrase it, that the Government intend to bring back a motion to approve the agreement struck with the European Union under section 13(1)(b) of the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018, or whether your understanding is that they intend to bring back the legislation implementing that agreement.

Mr Speaker: As things now stand, at 3.17 pm on Saturday afternoon, I have heard what the right hon. Gentleman has heard: that the Government seem to be planning to bring forward a vote under the relevant section of existing legislation, rather than bringing forward the withdrawal and implementation Bill. It is not for me to make the Government’s argument for them, nor has such an argument been advanced. It may be that they are thinking that the vote would be a different vote from that which has taken place today, and they may find reinforcement in that view—from the right hon. Member for West Dorset (Sir Oliver Letwin), to give but one example. However, I repeat that an emergency business statement, with greater clarity and the opportunity for interrogation, would have been very considerably more helpful to the House.

Dr Philippa Whitford (Central Ayrshire) (SNP): Further to that point of order, Mr Speaker. As the Member who is meant to lead for the Scottish National party in the supposed Queen’s Speech debate on the NHS and trade deals, I simply need to know—like many hon. Members across the House—whether to prepare a speech. Work is planned for Monday and Tuesday, and I think it incredibly disrespectful that we simply do not know what we are doing on Monday.

Mr Speaker: I do not want to repeat the position over and over again; I have already indicated that the situation is obviously less than satisfactory. However, I have enormous regard for the number and quality of the hon. Lady’s grey cells. It seems to me that if she is required to shift from the penning of one type of speech to the construction of another, it will be the equivalent for her of swatting a hornet: it will cause her no trouble at all.

Mary Creagh (Wakefield) (Lab): Further to that point of order, Mr Speaker. Is it in order for the Government to put a motion before the House that is effectively defeated and then to re-table the exact same motion hoping for a different result, perhaps in anticipation of certain conversations happening over the weekend between the Prime Minister and people who voted one way, and perhaps on the basis of what appears in the Sunday papers? Is it in order to bring the same motion twice on consecutive days? Do we not have a duty to our constituents and to the country to let this matter rest?

Mr Speaker: I am alert to the argument the hon. Lady has made. I think the fairest thing to say is that, as I have been advised by the Clerk, a ruling on Monday on this matter would be sensible. I must say to colleagues that the Chair seeks to be as dextrous and versatile as possible in attending to colleagues’ various points of view and in responding to questions put to the Chair. It cannot always be expected that the Chair will do so immediately when something is raised that had not previously been put to the Chair, of which there was therefore no advance notice, and which has not therefore been discussed with expert advisers. It is perfectly reasonable to seek that expert advice, to discuss it with those so advising, to reflect upon the matter in the cold light of day and then to come back to the House with an informed, as opposed to a speculative, conclusion.

Martin Whitfield (East Lothian) (Lab): Further to that point of order, Mr Speaker. I am cognisant of your recent comments, but it seems to me that we had a

business statement setting out what was going to happen next week in the normal way. That has now been altered on a point of order. I am not convinced that that was an appropriate point of order. If it was not, we have not received notice in this House of what will happen on Monday. Can the Government alter the business on Monday using a point of order, or should an invite not be made for an emergency motion that we could listen and respond to?

Mr Speaker: The Government can put things on the Order Paper, but I repeat that this was not an emergency business statement. It could have been, but it was not, and that is a deeply relevant matter. Although the Government can table that which they wish—they can go to the Table Office and seek to table propositions—this is not an emergency business statement. There are precedents for most things in this House—although not for everything—but I cannot recall readily an example of a business statement being made purely on a point of order. It probably happens from time to time, but in any case this is not an emergency business statement as such. It is an indication of intent, but it is not an emergency business statement as such.

Hugh Gaffney (Coatbridge, Chryston and Bellshill) (Lab): Further to that point of order, Mr Speaker. Can you clarify whether the Queen's Speech amendments—I have one on free TV licences—will still be considered on Monday? Will there be space in the timetable to hear those amendments?

Mr Speaker: I certainly expect the Queen's Speech debate to be conducted. It is to be expected that it will be continued. After all, the Leader of the House, who must have contemplated the possible scenarios, informed the House in all solemnity on Thursday of the business for Monday and Tuesday. He has not disavowed it.

Mr Rees-Mogg *indicated assent.*

Mr Speaker: The nod of the head from the right hon. Gentleman confirms that he is not disavowing the intention to continue with the Queen's Speech. I hope that the hon. Gentleman derives some succour from that fact. It is necessary for him not only to listen to me but to observe the head movements of the right hon. Member for North East Somerset.

David Linden (Glasgow East) (SNP): Further to that point of order, Mr Speaker. I seek your clarification on a procedural point. Quite clearly, the Leader of the House is not going to bring forward a business statement, and it is clear from these proceedings that Members wish to question him. Is there provision in the Standing Orders to suspend the House or otherwise give you an opportunity to consider a request for an urgent question to the Leader of the House this afternoon in order that we might question him?

Mr Speaker: Urgent questions are not taken at this time, and I am not sure that it would greatly advance matters. I will hear remaining points of order and will reflect on the other point the hon. Gentleman has made.

Kirsty Blackman (Aberdeen North) (SNP): Further to that point of order, Mr Speaker. I have not been to the Table Office, but I understand that the Orders of the Day for Monday have been tabled and that they do not,

in fact, include the Queen's Speech debate for Monday. I am not sure whether the Leader of the House's nod meant that we would be having a Queen's Speech debate on Monday or that we would not be having a Queen's Speech debate on Monday, because the Orders apparently include only debate on the withdrawal Act. Obviously, most of us have not had a chance to go to the Table Office and see the Order Paper. It would be very useful if you could somehow compel the Leader of the House to stand up and tell us whether that nod meant that we are having the Queen's Speech debate on Monday or that we are not having the Queen's Speech debate on Monday, because the details that have been placed in the Table Office appear to suggest that we are not.

Mr Speaker: It would certainly be helpful if the Leader of the House would elaborate, because at the moment there is extreme ambiguity about intention, and that—if I may very politely say this to the Leader of the House—cannot be right.

Mr Rees-Mogg: Further to that point of order, Mr Speaker. I think that you worry unduly. There will be a full emergency business statement on Monday—that is part of what I was saying—so that people can have a full appreciation of what business there will be. I made my announcement on a point of order because the situation had arisen urgently, and it was important to make clear to the House straightaway what would happen. However, as Members will know, statements are made very early in the day, and there will therefore be an opportunity for full understanding of how business will develop.

The Queen's Speech debate will continue, but Monday will be as I set out in the point of order that I raised a few moments ago.

Mr Speaker: It will be if it is orderly, and I will reflect upon that matter. The Government are not the arbiter of what is orderly, as the right hon. Gentleman knows, and as I indicated to him during the exchanges on the business question on Thursday. That is a matter that brooks no contradiction whatsoever. Even if people feel that they are immensely knowledgeable about procedure or have a right to have their own way, or both, they can do so only within the rules.

Mr Chris Leslie (Nottingham East) (IGC): Further to that point of order, Mr Speaker. Further to what appeared to be a quasi-business statement from the Leader of the House, which was or was not about matters that the House may be discussing on Monday but of which we have not had proper notice—and there is no intervening day for a motion tabled today for discussion on Monday, which is the normal course of events—the suggestion that we should repeat the same debate on essentially the same matter, section 13(1)(b), is surely contrary to all our normal practices, whereby the Government of the day, if a matter has been disposed of, cannot repetitiously and vexatiously keep asking the same question until they receive the answer that they prefer.

I do not ask you to rule on this matter now, Mr Speaker, but I strongly urge you to take account of the fact that many of us would feel that it would be an abuse of the power of the Executive to come back on Monday and ask the same question again just because they did not get the answer that they wanted today.

Mr Speaker: I concur with the sound advice from the Clerk at the Table. The hon. Gentleman has made a good case which should be duly considered. If I heard him correctly, he said that he was not looking for me to make a definite ruling from the Chair now, and I am most grateful to him for that, because I am not minded to do so. However, I say to him again, in all seriousness and candour, that he has made a good case. I have heard his point, it has been amplified by many other colleagues, and I will reflect upon it and give what I hope will be a fully considered ruling on this matter on Monday. I will do so, of course, having taken advice in appropriate quarters. I hope that that is helpful to the hon. Gentleman and, indeed, to the House.

Hilary Benn: Further to that point of order, Mr Speaker. Further to your response to the hon. Member for Nottingham East (Mr Leslie) and your statement that you will make a ruling on Monday, I am anxious that, if a section 13(1)(b) motion were to be tabled for the House to consider on Monday—which seems to me to be what we have just chosen to amend today—there should be an opportunity for an amendment, or amendments, to be tabled to it. Depending on whether the Government may table such a motion, could you indicate whether you would be willing to accept a manuscript amendment once we know what your ruling is on Monday?

Mr Speaker: I think I can assure the right hon. Gentleman on that point. My instinctive and unfailing approach, to the best of my limited ability, is to try to facilitate the House. It flows from that that I do not want the House to be disadvantaged.

In the ordinary course of events, one would hope that there was adequate notice of a motion and therefore an opportunity for amendments to be submitted on an earlier day. If there is no reasonable opportunity in this case, but there is—and I say “but there is”; it remains to be seen whether there is—an orderly motion before the House, tabled at rather short notice, it must be right that there should be an opportunity for manuscript amendments to be tabled, so that alternative propositions can be put before the House. I think I can say without fear of contradiction that that would be the case. It would be, I think, desirable in processing these matters for any such amendments to be down by midday on Monday. The Government’s motion has gone down today; a simple nod of the head would suffice.

Mr Rees-Mogg *indicated assent.*

Mr Speaker: I am grateful. However, I am happy to hear other views about that, although that would be my instinct—by midday would be helpful. Yes, there would be an opportunity for manuscript amendments.

Sir Oliver Letwin: Further to that point of order, Mr Speaker. There are two points that I want to put on record that may be worth considering when you are making your decision about whether this is an orderly proposal.

First, contrary to what one might assume, it is not the case—even if the Prime Minister has written his letter tonight, as I believe he now will and must—that this motion, which the Government have now put down, is in a substantially different context or would have a substantially different effect from the one which they

tried today, but which the House rejected. The reason for that is that, in the Benn Act, we provided very specifically that if there is a validation by the House through an approval of the withdrawal agreement subsequent to the depositing of the letter with the EU, that letter can then automatically and immediately be withdrawn. So, what the Government are attempting in this motion to do is nothing more and nothing less than to repeat what would have been the effect of today, on Monday.

Secondly, I think it is important that the decision of the House today when it passed the amendment and subsequently passed the motion as amended was specifically that the House was withholding approval “unless and until” the legislative stages of implementation had occurred. This very clearly flies in the face of that, because it seeks the approval of the House without the legislative stages having been approved.

I understand entirely why the Government are trying to do this, because of course it would negate the whole effect of the amendment today, rather than moving us on to the Second Reading of the withdrawal implementation Bill, as I had hoped and expected, but I wanted to point those things out to you, Mr Speaker, because I think they are material when deciding whether it is orderly.

Mr Speaker: That is an extremely helpful series of points from the right hon. Gentleman. In responding, I merely repeat what others will have heard—namely, that the Prime Minister himself talked about introducing the legislation. I cannot recall off the top of my head whether he referred to when that would happen. I do not know whether he said that it would be next week, but he certainly did indicate that that was the intention, so one would deduce from that that that was indeed what the Government were proposing to do, rather than to introduce a motion under an earlier Act.

That, too, is, in a sense, grist to the mill of the concern expressed by the hon. Member for Gedling (Vernon Coaker) and by others. It is most helpful of the right hon. Member for West Dorset (Sir Oliver Letwin) to offer me his expert view in this public forum, the better to assist me in deliberating on this matter in the next couple of days—in fact, less than a couple of days.

Patrick Grady (Glasgow North) (SNP): Further to that point of order, Mr Speaker. The orders in the Table Office—[*Interruption.*] I am now not really sure whether I have a point of order to make, Mr Speaker. The orders in the Table Office make no mention of the Queen’s Speech whatsoever, so I assume that the Leader of the House meant that the Queen’s Speech debate will take place on other days. However, they do provide for a motion under the terms of the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018 for up to 90 minutes. Therefore, if there are no urgent questions or statements on Monday, we will all be going home at 5 o’clock. Is there any way in which the Government can provide more time for a debate, given how heavily subscribed and how much interest there was today, and, for understandable reasons, how many Members were not able to be called? What provision is there for the Government to make more time available than just the statutory 90 minutes, if we are to have a meaningful vote on Monday?

Mr Speaker: People are bound by the Standing Order. It is possible to put a business of the House motion down, but it would have to be done before the close of business today.

I am very sorry that the Leader of the House has left; I know that some colleagues are complaining about that. This is not a business statement or a business question. [*Interruption.*] Indeed, I know colleagues are indicating from a sedentary position that they think it should be a business statement. I had anticipated that it would be an emergency business statement, but it has not been. If it were a business statement or an emergency business statement, the Leader of the House would obviously stay throughout the exchanges, but it was not and he has not. Colleagues must form their own view of that.

Stephen Doughty (Cardiff South and Penarth) (Lab/Co-op): Further to that point of order, Mr Speaker. I apologise for not being in the Chamber earlier; I was watching on the television screens and heard what you said about the need to consider this matter carefully. I only became aware of it when I popped into the Table Office and saw that something had been thrown down by the Government, in a quite odd move. If the Government were in effect trying to put the same question again, is it not the case that they would be trying to avoid tabling the withdrawal Bill, which the Prime Minister indicated he would do? Of course, many Members of this House from all parts and with all views on Brexit wish to see that Bill so that they can adequately consider it, appropriate impact assessments can be undertaken, Committees such as the Exiting the European Union Committee, chaired by my right hon. Friend the Member for Leeds Central (Hilary Benn), can consider it, and amendments to it can be tabled. Does it not strike you, Mr Speaker, that this is an odd way to be proceeding, given the clear will of the House expressed today on a very clear question?

Mr Speaker: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman and I do not dissent from what he said. Whether the particular question that the Government would be minded to table, or indeed have attempted to table, is exactly the same as that which was put today is less clear. The same question rule on which I gave a ruling to the House on 18 March this year holds, but whether this is the same question is not so clear, because the Government would be wanting to put a proposition that was separate from the amendment in the name of the right hon. Member for West Dorset (Sir Oliver Letwin). However, the apparent purpose of the said motion, which Ministers are attempting to table, is to invalidate or obviate the effect of the decision that the House has reached today. That does seem most curious and irregular.

It is certainly to be expected that the Government might seek to bring forward legislation, as the Prime Minister himself indicated to the House he intended to do. Quite at what point—as people will know, I have been in the Chair without interruption since 9.30 am, and I have not had conversations outside—it occurred to somebody to suggest that a motion, this motion, would be tabled rather than legislation be brought forward, I have no way of knowing, because I have not been able to penetrate the inner recesses of ministerial minds. I can only say that when I have reflected on this matter, I will give a full ruling.

I very, very, very politely reiterate that the Government are not the arbiter of what is orderly. That cannot be so, and it is not so, and it will not be so. There can be no argument about that.

Jonathan Ashworth (Leicester South) (Lab/Co-op): Further to that point of order, Mr Speaker. You will be aware that, hitherto, a motion of regret in relation to the Gracious Speech had been tabled in the name of Leader of the Opposition and me about the future of the national health service that sought to exempt the national health service from a trade deal with the United States. The motion has provoked considerable support in the country among NHS staff and patient groups, many of whom were going to go to a lot of trouble to come to the House on Monday to lobby Members of Parliament ahead of that debate. Out of courtesy, can you tell the House what we should be saying to NHS campaigners about whether they should come here on Monday, because it looks like the Government are running scared of a debate on the NHS?

Mr Speaker: It is not for me to advise people on their travel plans, but I take seriously what the shadow Secretary of State for Health and Social Care has just said on that extremely important matter, about which not merely thousands or tens of thousands, but hundreds of thousands or, indeed, millions of people feel very strongly. If people who may not have regular interaction with or cause to pay visits to the House intend to visit the House, it would be most unfortunate if they were inconvenienced and disadvantaged with very little notice and without explanation, let alone apology. I cannot think that that conduces to the better reputation of the House. People will have to make their own judgment about whether to come, and the hon. Gentleman will doubtless offer them his advice, but I think I have given colleagues an indication of my unhappiness with the procedure that has been adopted by representatives of the Executive branch. I will bear colleagues' concerns in mind in ruling on this matter on Monday.

Sir Christopher Chope (Christchurch) (Con): Further to that point of order, Mr Speaker. Do you think that this issue should be referred to the Procedure Committee? It always used to be a convention that we had decent notice of business. That convention has been in a sense undermined by, for example, the recent practice of debates following applications under Standing Order No. 24 taking place immediately after the application has been granted, rather than on the following day, which gives people notice. We have some dangerous precedents for business being changed at short notice to the detriment of Members of this House and to members of the public who might want to attend our proceedings. If the matter was referred to the Procedure Committee, it may be able to recommend some tightening of Standing Orders so that this sort of situation did not arise again.

While I am on my feet, it looks as though, from what the Leader of the House said in his point of order, a motion has been put down for Monday under section 13(1)(b) of the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018, but it will not fall under section 1(1)(a) of the European Union (Withdrawal) (No. 2) Act 2019. The motions we debated today covered two different Acts and two different provisions, but I understand that the motion down for debate on Monday relates only to the 2018 Act, so it seems—I hope that you will be able to consider this over the weekend—that it cannot be regarded as the same issue that we dealt with today. I hope that you will be able to take such matters into account.

Mr Speaker: I certainly will reflect on that point and the other points that the hon. Gentleman has made, and I take his points in the constructive spirit in which he has made them. He speaks as someone who has of course been a distinguished ornament of the Procedure Committee over a period. Is the hon. Gentleman currently gracing the Committee with his presence?

Sir Christopher Chope: Yes. If you can put it that way, I am, and I can say that I first had the privilege of joining the Procedure Committee back in 1984, when it was graced with the presence of the right hon. Enoch Powell and many other distinguished Members of this place.

Mr Speaker: I know quite a lot of things about the hon. Gentleman, but I did not know that. I am now better informed, so I recognise that his service on that Committee dates back a long way.

I take very seriously what the hon. Gentleman says, and I accept the point he makes about the unpredictability spawned by the, in my view, justified decisions in relation to Standing Order No. 24 applications for debates. Nevertheless, it is a fact that that has inevitably produced a degree of unpredictability in the business.

The only point I would make, and which I think is fair to make in this context, is that when we are dealing with applications under Standing Order No. 24, there is an established process provided for by the Standing Orders, and it is understood by colleagues that an application can be heard only if the Speaker agrees to hear it, and can therefore proceed, if the Speaker hears and approves it, only if the requisite threshold of support has been attained in the House.

By contrast, in this particular case, a representative of the Executive is seeking to change the business not on the basis of a voted-for proposition but on the basis of what some people might regard as an act of Executive fiat. That does seem to me to put it in a somewhat different and perhaps inferior category.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Mr Speaker: The appetite of colleagues is insatiable.

Before I call the right hon. Member for Carshalton and Wallington (Tom Brake), I must say that the very best behaved person here present is a very, very tiny person who seems blissfully unperturbed by our deliberations, and I wish that splendid little person all the best.

Tom Brake: Further to that point of order, Mr Speaker. I apologise if you have already made this clear, but is it your intention, perhaps as the first piece of business on Monday, to make a very clear statement on the process we have just heard, particularly if you consider it to be of a vexatious and repetitive nature? If it is appropriate, would you look kindly on an urgent question on this subject? Members have clearly expressed some very strong views about what the Government have just done.

Mr Speaker: It would certainly be my intention to make a statement on the matter after Question Time—in other words, at or very close to 3.30 pm. It seems to me to be a matter of genuine urgency, and therefore it would be right to have a decision on the matter

communicated to the House before it might treat of other questions or statements, and certainly before the commencement of public business.

Marion Fellows (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP): Further to that point of order, Mr Speaker. I will be brief. Can you give me some guidance on how best I could register my disgust and disapproval of the behaviour of the Leader of the House in walking out as my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow North (Patrick Grady) tried to respond to his point of order? This continues on from the behaviour of Conservative Members who, at every opportunity, barrack and shout down my group leader, my right hon. Friend the Member for Ross, Skye and Lochaber (Ian Blackford). This should not be allowed to continue, and I would like to know what I can do to help it stop.

Mr Speaker: The hon. Lady is invariably a helpful member of our flock in relation to these matters, because she is a model of good behaviour. If her example were emulated across the House, our proceedings would be altogether more seemly. Her stock is high.

So far as the right hon. Member for Ross, Skye and Lochaber (Ian Blackford) is concerned, colleagues have said what they have said and I have said what I have said. It is very important that we respect each other, and part of respecting each other must be hearing each other. I intervened on a number of occasions to indicate that the right hon. Gentleman must be heard. I do not say this in any pejorative spirit, but my only caveat is that he is well able to look after himself.

Moreover, there are colleagues who feel that the right hon. Gentleman has a rumbustious style that is sometimes almost calculated to inflame colleagues who disagree with him—[*Interruption*]*—*even if inadvertently, as the Minister says from a sedentary position, and that therefore to some extent he has to cope with that which his style invites, but only to some extent, and it is important that he be heard. I hope that the hon. Lady is happy to trust the Chair to protect him, if he needs to be protected.

Catherine West (Hornsey and Wood Green) (Lab): Further to that point of order, Mr Speaker. Could you clarify whether it would be in order for the Leader of the House to apologise to Back-Bench Members who were expecting some sort of explanation following today's proceedings, and indeed to those who had been preparing to speak in Monday's Queen's Speech debate, and looking forward to it—they might be polishing their speeches as we speak—but who will now be unable to do so?

Mr Speaker: It would be open to the Leader of the House to do that if he so chose, but he is no longer in the Chamber and therefore, even if he was minded to do so—he might not feel so inclined—he could not do so at this moment. The right hon. Gentleman will doubtless be back in his place on Monday, as I am sure the hon. Lady will be in hers, when further exchanges on that matter and others can take place.

Susan Elan Jones (Clwyd South) (Lab): Further to that point of order, Mr Speaker. When the Leader of the House was not making his business statement earlier, we had no suggestion of the timings of anything that might happen in Monday's sitting. We presume that our

proceedings will commence at 2.30 pm, but we have no idea as we are sitting today on Saturday. We are having to presume a lot of things. We are being left in the dark by a Government whose Leader of the House, frankly, is not sufficiently courteous to make a business statement. Could you please clarify the expected timings for Monday?

Mr Speaker: I can assure the hon. Lady that we will be meeting at 2.30 on Monday afternoon. We have had a business statement on the business for next week. That business statement—I say this as much for the people attending to our proceedings, to whom they should be intelligible, as for Members of the House—is the status quo; it is the given position. We will meet on Monday afternoon at 2.30. That is governed by Standing Order No. 9. The Government may well plan to make an emergency business statement on Monday, but they cannot change the start time, and I must say to the House, and to the people observing our proceedings, that there are very good reasons why there cannot be an arbitrary change in the timetable: it is really for the protection of the House. If it were possible for the sitting times to be arbitrarily changed at the whim of the Executive, that would be deeply injurious to the rights of individual Members and of the House as an institution. That cannot happen and, believe me, it will not happen.

Justine Greening (Putney) (Ind): Further to that point of order, Mr Speaker. I want to register my concern about, effectively, the debate that we are now having, when most Members felt that business would have already finished and who, on a Saturday, had arranged to get back to their families and to other commitments. It is very clear to me that the Government knew that today's vote could have only two outcomes: it was either going to succeed or it was going to fail. There was therefore no reason for the Government not to be transparent about their intentions for the following sitting day and how they will proceed following the outcome of today's debate.

I really do feel that we have now spent a year with the previous Government and now this Government, unfortunately, seeking to override votes here. Only today the Prime Minister said that

“Parliament should be at the heart of decision making... I acknowledge that in the past we have perhaps not always acted in that spirit.”

I simply want to reflect that this has got to stop. This House cannot do its job if we have plans and debates sprung on us at the last minute. All that we are seeking to do is to scrutinise on behalf of our constituents, represent their concerns and play our role in trying to help make any Brexit deal the best possible deal that it can become. This is simply not the way for the House to be run. I hope that you can reflect on Members' concerns as you reach a ruling.

Mr Speaker: I certainly will reflect on Members' concerns.

Colleagues will understand that the Speaker regularly meets the Leader of the House, the shadow Leader of the House, the Government Chief Whip, the Opposition Chief Whip and a number of others who occupy influential positions in the House, and that is absolutely right; it facilitates the efficient, orderly and fair conduct of business. It is also important that, of course, many of those discussions—not necessarily all of them, but many

of them—are private in character, so I would not make a habit of divulging the detail of what has been discussed.

It is, however, fair to say that I did see the Leader of the House earlier this week, and we had a perfectly good and constructive meeting in which we discussed a number of matters, I hope in our usual fashion—that is to say, with great respect for and courtesy towards each other. It was perfectly possible to anticipate, as the right hon. Lady said, a number of scenarios that might flow later in the week, with the upcoming European Council and the deadline for the passage of a deal, but in that meeting earlier this week the Leader of the House gave me no indication of any, what might be called, reserve plans in the event that things did not proceed as he hoped. I just want the House to know that I have been blindsided on this matter, as others have been, and I would that it had not been so. I express myself, I hope, in quite an understated fashion: I would that it had not been so.

Rather than pronounce with sound and fury now, which I do not think would be the right thing to do, I will reflect on the matter, absorbing what colleagues say and consulting others for their advice, and I will report to the House on Monday. I am extremely grateful to the right hon. Lady, who is an immensely dedicated parliamentarian and who has served, if you will, on both sides of the fence—both as a senior Minister and as a Back-Bench Member.

Kevin Brennan: Further to that point of order, Mr Speaker. Further to the point I made in my earlier point of order, in respect of which you kindly ruled that this matter should have been dealt with through an emergency business statement, I think we all, if we have been in the House long enough, recognise low-rent jiggery-pokery from the Government, which is what this actually amounts to. I understand that that is not something you could say, Mr Speaker—I notice your head movements, but it is not my duty to comment on people's head movements in the House.

If the right hon. Member for West Dorset (Sir Oliver Letwin) were seeking to table what we might call an insurance amendment ahead of Monday's proceedings, just in case a ruling should occur that allowed the Government to proceed as they suggested through the rather irregular point of order from the Leader of the House earlier, and that insurance amendment was not tabled by the time we finished these points of order, would you be minded overall to accept such an amendment as a manuscript amendment, prior to our proceedings on Monday?

Mr Speaker: By noon on Monday, any manuscript amendments would be eligible for consideration. I would have to see the amendment before deciding whether to select it, but such an amendment—I hope this reassures the hon. Gentleman—would be in no different or lesser category to the other manuscript amendments to which one of his colleagues referred earlier. It would be perfectly possible for those to be decided on and therefore, if appropriate, selected by the Chair. I hope that is helpful to the hon. Gentleman.

Kirsty Blackman: Further to that point of order, Mr Speaker. Have you had any indication from the Government about whether or not they intend to undertake

[Kirsty Blackman]

and publish an economic impact analysis on the Brexit deal, in advance of bringing it before us again on Monday?

Mr Speaker: Forgive me, I heard the hon. Lady refer to an economic impact analysis, but I did not quite hear her question.

Kirsty Blackman: The Brexit Secretary, this morning, confirmed that the Government have not undertaken an economic impact analysis on the Prime Minister's deal and have therefore not published it. Have you had any notice, Mr Speaker, about whether they intend to undertake and publish that analysis in advance of Monday, as they now have a few extra days before they bring it back to us?

Mr Speaker: I have had no such indication at all. Hope springs eternal, as far as the hon. Lady is concerned. It is possible that grey cells are being applied to this matter and that there are hot wet towels over the heads of departmental officials as they beaver away and burn the midnight oil tonight and tomorrow night in the construction of such an analysis. Concerned as I am for the wellbeing of the hon. Lady, I say to her that, on the evidence so far, I would not advise her to hold her breath for any length of time.

Stephen Doughty: Further to that point of order, Mr Speaker. I welcome the remarks that you have made already in response to the other points of order. Can you tell us how we will know whether or not the Government have sent the letter to the European Council to comply with the terms of the European Union (Withdrawal) (No. 2) Act 2019 by 11 o'clock tonight? Have they indicated whether they will lay it in the Library or put a copy on the gov.uk website? Because otherwise we could be in the dark until Monday on whether this has even happened, and given the jiggery pokery, as has been described, that is going on, no doubt they would seek to hide from us whether this letter has, in fact, been sent, as required by the law.

Mr Speaker: There is no requirement for the letter to be laid. From memory of the legislation, I do not think that there is any legal requirement for it to be laid, or for it to appear in the Library, so I cannot offer the hon. Gentleman any great comfort on that point. Knowing his indefatigability, I rather imagine that he will be pursuing this matter with considerable intensity over the next 24 hours or so, and possibly for most of those

24 hours, allowing himself, perhaps, a couple of hours here and there for sleep. I am sure that he will be making his own inquiries to try to ascertain whether the letter has been delivered, and I dare say that representatives of the fourth estate may be making such inquiries as well. I imagine that enlightenment will descend upon us at some point. I am quite sure that, by the time we sit on Monday, we will know the answer to his question, and I expect him at that point to be in his place.

Pete Wishart (Perth and North Perthshire) (SNP): Further to that point of order, Mr Speaker. As there is just so much distrust of the Prime Minister and the signing of this letter, may I suggest, through your good offices, that this is done as publicly as possible? Now, the popular TV programme "Strictly Come Dancing" is on tonight, and I am pretty certain that Tess and Claudia would welcome the Prime Minister to the show and order that that letter be signed so that the whole nation could observe it.

Mr Speaker: It is not for me to advise the Prime Minister on either his viewing habits or his attendance at popular television programmes. I am certainly not aware that the Prime Minister has any plans to take part in that particular programme in a dancing capacity—I am not conscious of that. It is not something that he and I have ever discussed, but I note the point that the hon. Gentleman has made. The wider point is about transparency, and I agree that it is absolutely right and proper that we should know what action has been taken on this matter, but I do feel that colleagues will take their own steps to try to ascertain what happens over the next 24 hours or so.

I do not seek to constrain colleagues in any way, but I have a sense that some may wish to bring our proceedings to a conclusion. [Interruption.] Oh, it is very good to see the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland in the Chamber, albeit sitting in the second row, which is becomingly modest of him. He could perfectly well bestride the Treasury Bench if he were so minded. He is an understated fellow.

If there are no further points of order, we have to leave matters there for now. I suggest that we come now to the Adjournment.

ADJOURNMENT

Resolved, That this House do now adjourn.—(James Morris.)

4.4 pm

House adjourned.

Written Statement

Saturday 19 October 2019

PRIME MINISTER

Brexit Deal

The Prime Minister (Boris Johnson): This is a statement, for the purposes of Section 1 of the European Union (Withdrawal) Act (No. 2) 2019, that the United Kingdom has concluded an agreement with the European Union under Article 50(2) of the Treaty on European Union, and for the purposes of Section 13(1)(a) of the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018, that political agreement has been reached.

With regard to Section 13(1)(a) of the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018, I am of the opinion that an agreement in principle has been reached in negotiations under Article 50(2) of the Treaty on European Union on the substance of:

- a. the arrangements for the United Kingdom's withdrawal from the European Union, and
- b. the framework for the future relationship between the European Union and the United Kingdom after withdrawal.

A copy of the negotiated withdrawal agreement which, in my opinion, reflects the agreement in principle so far as relating to the arrangements for withdrawal, including provisions for the implementation period, has been laid before each House of Parliament on Saturday 19 October with the title "Agreement on the withdrawal of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland from the European Union and the European Atomic Energy Community".

An additional document relating to the withdrawal agreement, which is a unilateral declaration by the United Kingdom, is also being laid alongside this statement

with the title "Declaration by Her Majesty's Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland concerning the operation of the 'Democratic consent in Northern Ireland' provision of the Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland".^[1]

A copy of the framework for the future relationship which, in my opinion, reflects the agreement in principle so far as relating to the framework for the future relationship between the EU and the United Kingdom has been laid before each House of Parliament on Saturday 19 October with the title "Political Declaration setting out the framework for the future relationship between the European Union and the United Kingdom".

These documents have been laid before each House of Parliament ahead of the parliamentary debates required under Section 1 of the European Union (Withdrawal) Act (No. 2) 2019 and Section 13 of the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018.

At this stage, the withdrawal agreement represents a version of the text which has been agreed, but has not yet been formally signed. Before this formal signature takes place, the agreement must complete the European Union's jurist-linguist translation process. During that time, minor technical corrections will be made to the text, though these changes will not affect the substance of the agreement. The laying of the withdrawal agreement before Parliament at this stage does not therefore trigger any procedures under the Constitutional Reform and Governance Act 2010.

In relation to the section 20 procedure for ratification under the Constitutional Reform and Governance Act 2010, the Government will make provision in the Withdrawal Agreement Bill to ensure that the withdrawal agreement can be ratified before exit day.

^[1]The declaration was submitted by the United Kingdom Government to the European Union on 17 October with the title "Declaration of 17 October 2019 by Her Majesty's Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland concerning the operation of the 'Democratic consent in Northern Ireland' provision of the Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland".

WRITTEN STATEMENT

Saturday 19 October 2019

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