

VOTE LEAVE WATCH

**THE TORIES' PLAN FOR
HARD BREXIT BRITAIN**

FOREWORD

By Chuka Umunna, Labour PPC for Streatham and Chair of Vote Leave Watch

The Prime Minister has not been shy in setting out her reasons for calling a general election. The vote on June 8th, she has said, “will make me stronger” in negotiations with the European Union. It will remove those seeking a Brexit deal that retains our strong links to Europe and to the Single Market – otherwise known as “saboteurs” or, as the Prime Minister put it, those who “treat politics as a game.”

Theresa May clearly has no time for the rights of scrutiny, dissent and conscience that characterise our parliamentary democracy. The Prime Minister seeks absolute power over Brexit – an event which will determine the direction of our country for decades to come. She thinks the more Conservative MPs are elected on June 8th, the greater power the Prime Minister and her hard Brexit allies – who drive so much of the Tories’ agenda – over the Brexit process. As this dossier makes clear, that would be a deeply concerning outcome.

But if the Prime Minister wants absolute power over Brexit for her and her Government, we need to look at what such an unchecked Brexit could look like. Unencumbered by a small majority, the worst instincts of the Conservative Party could be unleashed to turn Britain, and the world, into a meaner, poorer and less equal place. This paper takes into consideration the prior views of the Leave campaigners in the Cabinet, as well as influential pro-Leave Conservatives on the back benches and in the House of Lords, on a range of issues, to show what an unrestrained Tory Hard Brexit could look like. It finds that they want to:

- Reduce the rights at work guaranteed by our membership of the European Union;
- Cut the International Development budget;
- Cut taxes on the rich and slash the public spending on which working people rely;
- Deny the damage climate change is doing to our planet;
- Subject the NHS to cuts, privatisation, and charges;
- Enforce a hardline agenda on social issues such as abortion and LGBT rights.

The Prime Minister talks a good game on issues like workers’ rights. But on almost every Brexit issue – the rights of EU citizens, our place in the Single Market and Customs Union, the possibility of leaving with no deal – she has shown herself to be a prisoner of the hard right of her party. Given the boost a Conservative victory would give to these Leave campaigners in the Government, the public have a right to know what they really want out of Brexit.

Their vision for Britain goes far beyond the nature of our future relationship with the EU; it goes to the heart of the kind of society we want to be.

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The extreme Brexiteers want to turn Britain into a nasty, uncaring, harsh place to live where people are left to sink or swim on their own. The alternative is a caring and compassionate Britain with an inclusive economy, where people are supported, we celebrate our diversity and don't demonise different groups, and a nation that seeks to work closely with other countries that share our values – the kind of Britain all those involved in Vote Leave Watch are fighting for.

WORKERS' RIGHTS

Despite the Prime Minister's pledge to "enhance" rights at work after Brexit, pro-Brexit ministers have a long history of opposing the workers' rights delivered by our membership of the European Union. These rights include:

- Four weeks paid holiday a year.
- Maximum working hours.
- Equal treatment for agency and part-time workers.
- Consultation for workers in the case of redundancies, company bankruptcy or transference to new ownership.
- No discrimination in the workplace on the grounds of race, gender, sexuality, religion, or disability.

Leave campaign ministers are on record supporting the scrapping of many of these rights, with the possibility of halving EU social and employment legislation, and scrapping all rights for employees working in small businesses. They have even spoken of their desire to force trade unions to stop striking.

Priti Patel, Institute of Directors speech, 17 May 2016

"If we could just halve the burdens of the EU social and employment legislation we could deliver a £4.3 billion boost to our economy and 60,000 new jobs."

Liam Fox, Financial Times, 21 February 2012

"Political objections must be overridden. It is too difficult to hire and fire, and too expensive to take on new employees. It is intellectually unsustainable to believe that workplace rights should remain untouchable while output and employment are clearly cyclical."

Chris Grayling, 06 January 2017

"Ultimately I don't have the power to force unions to stop striking. I wish I did - but I don't."

Boris Johnson, The Guardian, 4 December 2012

"Boil it down to the single market. Scrap the social chapter."

Andrea Leadsom, House of Commons, 10 May 2012

"I urge the Government to look carefully at scrapping the entire burden of regulation on micro-businesses with, say, three employees or fewer. I envisage there being absolutely no regulation whatsoever—no minimum wage, no maternity or paternity rights, no unfair dismissal rights, no pension rights—for the smallest companies that are trying to get off the ground."

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David Davis, 'David Davis comments on the resignation of the British Chamber of Commerce director general over Brexit', 2012

“The last thing we want to see is a witch-hunt against business leaders brave and astute enough to make the argument that Britain would be better off economically if it regained the power to strike its own trade deals and was freed of the crippling burden of red tape, costing many billions a year, imposed by Brussels.”

Britannia Unchained, 2012

A book co-written by Priti Patel and four other Conservative MPs called the British people “among the worst idlers in the world.”

Iain Duncan Smith, Daily Telegraph, 28 March 2017

“Let us leave and then the Conservative Party at the next election needs to say, ‘we can reduce the cost on business and on individuals by reducing regulations which will improve our competitiveness, our productivity and therefore ultimately our economy.’”

Nigel Lawson, Daily Telegraph 28 March 2017

Lord Lawson said the Thatcher government’s wide-ranging programme of deregulation in the 1980s “transformed the performance of the British economy”. He added: “Once out of the EU, we have the opportunity to do this on an even larger scale with the massive corpus of EU regulation. We must lose no time in seizing that opportunity.”

Conservative Home, 12 August 2007

John Redwood wrote a report endorsing the scrapping of working time regulations, all data protection laws, much financial services regulation, fewer health and safety rules in care homes, and making it easier for employers to make people redundant.

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Pro-Leave ministers have a long history of supporting the reduction of UK international development spending. Indeed, the current International Development Secretary, Priti Patel, even once supported scrapping the department. There is increasing speculation that the Government will drop its target of spending at least 0.7 per cent of GDP on international development in the election manifesto, under pressure from its own right-wing and much of the Brexit-supporting press.

David Davis, 11 June 2016

“I’m all in favour of helping people in an emergency, but making a law that sets an arbitrary target is putting public relations above real generosity. There should not be a set target.”

Liam Fox, 17 May 2011

“I have considered the issue carefully, and discussed it with [International Development Secretary] Andrew [Mitchell] and [Foreign Secretary] William Hague, but I cannot support the proposal in its current form. In 2009 the proportion of national income spent on ODA [official development assistance] was only 0.52%. The bill could limit HMG’s [Her Majesty’s Government] ability to change its mind about the pace at which it reaches the target in order to direct more resources toward other activities or programmes rather than aid...I believe that creating a statutory requirement to spend 0.7% ODA carries more risk in terms of potential future legal challenges than, as we have for the covenant, putting into statute recognition of the target and a commitment to an annual report against it. The latter would be my preferred way to proceed.”

Boris Johnson, 7 January 2014

“I am still slightly perplexed why we contribute aid money to some of these countries that are on the path to prosperity. I sometimes wonder about all the programmes.”

Priti Patel, 2013

“A long-term strategic assessment is required, including the consideration to replace DfID with a Department for International Trade and Development in order to enable the UK to focus on enhancing trade with the developing world and seek out new investment opportunities in the global race. It is possible to bring more prosperity to the developing world and enable greater wealth transfers to be made from the UK by fostering greater trade and private sector investment opportunities.”

Daily Express, 7 February 2015

Nigel Lawson opposed the bill enshrining the 0.7% international aid target in law, saying: “It is a thoroughly bad Bill. It represents the triumph of gesture politics over good government.”

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Iain Duncan Smith, Conservative Home, 25 April 2017

“I am no fan of the cash target for overseas aid.”

Daily Telegraph, 08 December 2015

Steve Baker called for money from the International Development budget to be shifted to areas of domestic spending like flood defence.

John Redwood, John Redwood's Diary, 8 December 2012

“The UK could have a couple of years off from meeting the 0.7% target for Overseas Aid whilst we are sorting out our large budget imbalance. There are still items in the Overseas Aid budget that do not represent value for money, or further the noble aims of relieving poverty and disease in the poorest countries.”

TAX AND SPEND

Leave campaign ministers have a very clear vision for Britain's economy – that of a “European Hong Kong” with lower taxes for the rich, paid for by cuts to the public services that will hit ordinary people. Worryingly, this is an approach that has been endorsed by the current Government, which threatens an “alternative economic model” if Britain ends up leaving the European Union with no deal.

Ideas supported by pro-Leave ministers include cutting taxes on large multinationals, and setting a flat rate of tax where both the rich and the poor would pay 20 per cent income tax.

Liam Fox, Financial Times, 21 February 2012

“Although the coalition agreement may require the chancellor to raise personal tax allowances, he should use the proceeds of spending reductions to cut employers’ national insurance contributions across the board.”

David Davis, ‘Europe: It’s time to decide’, 2012

“It would allow us to maximise our trading advantages, and in conjunction with a strong low tax and deregulatory strategy at home, would liberate our nation’s ingenuity and skills to create jobs, wealth and growth in a way that is currently beyond our grasp. It is this sort of option that offers Britain the ‘European Hong Kong’ strategy.”

Andrea Leadsom, House of Commons, 10 May 2012

“If we could wipe out such regulation for the very smallest businesses, set a flat-rate personal allowance and 20% flat-rate tax, including capital gains—with a turnover restriction, of course—that would get our economy going again and provide a direct incentive for those who are looking for work, particularly young people, to do something for themselves.”

Priti Patel, Daily Telegraph, 03 March 2013

“Money, which would otherwise be spent on growth, job creation and helping families with the costs of living, is being squandered in the public sector...If the Chancellor wants a big idea for the Budget, it’s actually a simple one. Two words: cut taxes.”

Nigel Lawson, Daily Telegraph, 15 November 2016

“When I was Chancellor I cut stamp duty substantially - and, as it happened, the revenue from the tax actually rose. But it would not be sensible to announce this in the Autumn Statement. It should be done in the 2017 Budget, as part of a package which will need to include increases in some other taxes, given the size of the budget deficit. One obvious candidate is a rise in the tax on diesel fuel to at least the level of the tax on petrol, if not higher.”

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Daily Telegraph, 28 June 2015

Steve Baker and Liam Fox have supported reducing the top rate of income tax to 40%

John Redwood, John Redwood's Diary, 4 December 2012

“If the government wants to stop people avoiding tax there is an easy answer. They should legislate for simple flat taxes, and abolish all allowances and tax breaks. Out should go the exemptions for charity, for pensions saving, for prime residences, for certain kinds of investment, for National Savings and all the rest.”

CLIMATE CHANGE

Leave campaign ministers in the current Government have shown a worrying lack of concern for the threat of climate change. Indeed, both David Davis and Boris Johnson have written in support of unscientific theories that the planet is cooling rather than warming. Environment Secretary Andrea Leadsom had to ask “is climate change real” on her first day as Energy Minister. The Government has used the beginning of this election campaign to bury bad environmental news – such as by selling off the Green Investment Bank.

David Davis, The Independent, 2 December 2009

“The row about whether global warming exists gets even more virulent. The case is not helped by the fact that the planet appears to have been cooling, not warming, in the last decade. Last week, the row was fuelled after a hacker revealed emails between the world’s leading climate scientists that seemed to show them conspiring to rig the figures to support their theories. So it is unsurprising that more than half the public no longer believe in global warming...The fixation of the green movement with setting ever tougher targets is a policy destined to collapse.”

Boris Johnson, The Daily Telegraph, 20 January 2013

Boris Johnson wrote a column casting doubt on the existence of global warming, and supporting the theory that unusual solar activity is in fact cooling the Earth.

The Independent, 27 October 2015

When appointed to be Energy Minister in David Cameron’s Government, Andrea Leadsom admitted she had to ask officials “is climate change real?”

theyworkforyou.com

Analysis of Parliamentary votes shows that Liam Fox “generally voted against measures to prevent climate change.”

The Independent on Sunday, 11 May 2014 (Daily Telegraph, 28 September 2013)

Nigel Lawson is the chair of the Global Warming Policy Foundation, which promotes climate change denial and was accused of publishing “inaccurate and misleading” information about climate science in a formal complaint to the Charity Commission. In a Telegraph op-ed in 2013, Lord Lawson said of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change’s conclusions on global warming: “this is not science: it is mumbo-jumbo.”

John Redwood’s Diary, 27 September 2013

John Redwood referred to man-made climate change as an “assertion.”

NATIONAL HEALTH SERVICE

Leave campaigners spent the referendum promising that Brexit would save the NHS – that by leaving and no longer paying into the EU budget, the UK Government would have £350 million more per week to spend on our National Health Service. The current Government has refused to commit to this promise, despite the presence of numerous members of Vote Leave in it. In reality, pro-Brexit cabinet ministers have a long history of calling for cuts to the NHS budget, charges, the elimination of certain services from the NHS, such as hysterectomy, and privatisation.

Liam Fox, 2 January 2014

“Ring-fencing anything, any budget, within a diminishing total leads to bigger and bigger distortions. They become, by definition, bigger and bigger proportions of the spending total...It also has a restricting ability inside Government to move money around when there is a particular problem. Anybody who has worked with or around the NHS knows there is still a huge amount of waste associated with it. It is very easy to be generous with other people’s money. The trouble is, there’s a finite amount of it.”

The Future of Conservatism: Values Revisited, Chapter 13, 22 September 2011

A book edited by David Davis endorsed a McKinsey report on the NHS, which called for a 10 per cent cut in the NHS workforce, amounting to 30,800 posts. It said: “We need to get the NHS budget under control...McKinsey’s report raised many valid points. However, I would add three or more areas where the unsustainable NHS budget could be brought under control...We should consider decommissioning some treatments...such as hysterectomy, orthodontics and tonsillectomy procedures.”

Boris Johnson, The Essential Boris Johnson, 2003

“If NHS services continue to be free in this way, they will continue to be abused like any free service,” he said in 2003. If people have to pay for them, they will value them more. Above all, there is an economic point. In a very modest way, this extension of private funds into the NHS would help the Chancellor’s straitened circumstances”.

Boris Johnson, House of Commons, 17 April 2002

“People are being driven to use private medicine in despair at the NHS...It is wrong of the Chancellor to set his face against the experience of other countries that have a far better record of health care provision, a far better life expectancy, and a far better record of dealing with cancer and coronary heart disease. Those countries do so not just because they spend more money on health but because they do not rely exclusively on a top-down monopolistic health service of the kind that we have in this country.”

SOCIAL ISSUES

Positions taken by Brexiteer cabinet ministers include supporting greater restrictions on abortion, if not banning it outright; opposing gay marriage; believing that business owners should have the right to deny service to gay customers; and have been caught out making sexist and racist comments. They have also failed to guarantee the rights of the three million EU citizens resident in the UK, and have described them as “one of our main cards”, despite Vote Leave promising that they would have nothing to fear from Brexit.

Liam Fox, Conservative Christian Fellowship, 24 January 2001

“He has asked us to pray that there would be a huge restriction, if not abolition, of our pro-abortion laws.”

Liam Fox, 4 September 2011

“I would certainly want to support any amendments that saw the number of abortions fall in the UK. I think the level is far too high. I would certainly welcome any restrictions which enable people to think twice and get objective advice. I would actually want to see what the amendments specifically are but I’m in favour of something that sees the high level of abortions in the UK reduced.”

Hansard, 5 February 2013

David Davis, Liam Fox, and Priti Patel all voted against equal marriage. Andrea Leadsom abstained.

Chris Grayling, The Guardian, 4 April 2010

“I think we need to allow people to have their own consciences. I personally always took the view that, if you look at the case of should a Christian hotel owner have the right to exclude a gay couple from a hotel, I took the view that if it’s a question of somebody who’s doing a B&B in their own home, that individual should have the right to decide who does and who doesn’t come into their own home.”

Evening Standard, 2 April 2008 (The Telegraph, 10 January 2002)

Boris Johnson referred to black Africans as “picanninies” with “watermelon smiles” in an article in the Telegraph, and allowed an article to be written in the Spectator when he was editor which said that black people have lower IQs.

Liam Fox, Conservative Party Conference, 04 October 2016

“[The Government would] like to be able to give a reassurance to EU nationals in the UK, but that depends on reciprocation by other countries.” Any other strategy “would be to hand over one of our main cards in the negotiations and doesn’t necessarily make sense at this point”.

Mail on Sunday, 12 February 2017

David Davis has been caught in controversy over sexist texts referring to Labour MP and Shadow Home Secretary Diane Abbott.

The Independent, 15 July 2016

Andrea Leadsom has said she would not employ men to work with children as they are more likely to be paedophiles.

Daily Telegraph, 9 February 2013

Nigel Lawson opposed the introduction of gay marriage, saying “what we have now is a question of the redefinition of marriage. I do not believe the case for that has been mad.”

stevebaker.info, 5 February 2013

Steve Baker opposed the introduction of gay marriage.

John Redwood's Diary, 5 February 2013

John Redwood voted against the introduction of gay marriage.