

Unite Reps Briefing: Opposing Blindfold Brexit

Unite the Union is calling on MPs to reject the Government's Withdrawal Deal if it is put before Parliament.

"Be in no doubt, limited in aim and vague in detail, this deal fails our tests. It is not in the interests of working people, it is only in the interest of Theresa May's survival in front of a divided party.

"Unite utterly opposes the false choice of a bad deal versus no deal. We have an alternative which would respect the 2016 referendum, offer permanent security for jobs and working rights, and command the support of a Parliamentary majority.

"Rather than setting out a real vision for what the future EU-UK relationship should be, the Tory deal seeks to rush us out of the door with no agreement in place. The government are asking us to don the blindfold and take a leap of faith. That is unacceptable.

"We must not be blackmailed into supporting a bad deal. We must hold our nerve. This vote raises the prospect of the general election our country desperately needs. To that end Unite calls on Labour MPs to vote this deal down."

Len McCluskey, Unite General Secretary

Summary:

Unite is calling on all MPs to **oppose** the Withdrawal Deal, which is in two parts.

The Withdrawal Agreement:

- Fails to meet the **red lines set by Unite**, the Labour Party and the TUC.
- Fails to deliver a **permanent customs union, vital for investment and job security**.
- Fails to guarantee **no hard border in Ireland on a permanent basis**

The future framework:

- Is a **vague, non-binding** declaration. It is not a framework for a future trade deal.
- It utterly omits **protections for workers' rights** and **barrier-free access to the Single Market** two of the fundamental tests any deal must be judged against. (See Unite's test below)
- This **blindfold Brexit** is a leap into the unknown. It prolongs the job-threatening uncertainty about the UK's future relationship with Europe.

The **false choice** of a harmful Tory deal and no deal is a political trap. If the Government cannot table a deal which meets the tests our movement has adopted a General Election becomes a real prospect.

The Withdrawal Agreement:

- Having failed to negotiate both a withdrawal agreement and the framework for the future UK-EU trading relationship, this Government's 'deal' **only covers the divorce proceedings**, namely the so-called £39 billion divorce bill, citizens' rights, the Northern Irish backstop and the transitional period.
- A UK-wide backstop **does not amount to the permanent customs union** needed to defend thousands of jobs in industry and agriculture and prevent a hard border in Ireland.
- Theresa May has said: "*The point about the backstop is it may never be used. It only comes in if, for technical reasons, the agreed end-state customs arrangement has not been possible to put in place.*"
- A backstop which may never be used and **fails to match the offer made by Jeremy Corbyn** in the Leader's speech at Labour Conference to support a deal which includes a full customs union.

What is Blindfold Brexit?

- Rather than a full framework setting out the terms to be implemented the deal will be accompanied by a non-binding political declaration.
- This is intended to buy May's government time and defer the political decision about the future trade deal until after the UK has left the EU in March.
- The withdrawal agreement and political declaration, taken together as the 'deal,' provides no answer to the issues raised by the 2016 referendum

The Unite Tests:

In line with the principles supported by our 2018 policy conference Unite is clear that any Brexit deal must:

- Deliver **barrier-free access to the Single Market** to ensure ongoing exchange of the goods and services which thousands of our members' jobs rely on.
- **Secure a customs union** with the European Union
- Enshrine and **enhance working rights**, social and environmental protections which are currently based in EU law. These must be transferred into UK law through primary legislation, open and democratically.
- Not undermine the Good Friday Agreement or the economic integrity of the island of Ireland. There must be **no hard border between the Republic and the north**.
- Grant the immediate and guaranteed **right to remain** for European citizens in the UK and their dependents and secure the rights of UK citizens working in other EU countries.
- Retain membership of beneficial European-level institutions or regulatory bodies which are vital to our industrial sectors such as the European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA), ECHA (REACH) and Euratom
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