



North Herts for Europe

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18 October 2019

Open Letter to Bim Afolami MP and Sir Oliver Heald MP

Dear Bim and Sir Oliver,

I am writing to you both on behalf of North Herts for Europe – a branch of the European Movement which has the support of senior members from all major parties and thousands of people who have no affiliation to any party.

As I am sure you will agree, parliament is now facing the most crucial decision that it has been required to make since the Second World War. The outcome of this decision will determine the future of the country for decades, indeed for generations, to come. It will shape its standing in the world, and certainly its rôle in our own continent, as no other decision in peacetime. Yet, unlike in earlier decisions, this country is not facing some external, existential, threat against which all are united. This time, the country is internally divided as perhaps never before; all the result of a self-created problem not imposed on us by any external force.

You may well believe that the decision point is now in the past. “The people” made their decision in the Referendum in June 2016 when a small majority of those who voted, some 37% of the electorate, were persuaded that it would be a good idea if we left the European Union. This majority only existed in England and Wales; Scotland and Northern Ireland voted to remain in the EU. We now know the extent to which the Leave campaign was based on false promises and deceptions - lies in simple English – which nevertheless many people believed. Some of these are set out in a summary note ("[Brexit dream hits reality](#)") which I hope you will take a few minutes to read.

We are privileged to live in a parliamentary, representative democracy. All referenda are advisory, to provide guidance to members of parliament on how they might exercise their judgement, not to over-rule or suspend their fundamental responsibility to act in the nation’s best interest. If it had not been advisory, it would be expected that a supermajority, or confirmation in all four constituent parts of the nation, would have been required for such a fundamental and irrevocable change to the status of this country.

No personal statement David Cameron made to respect the outcome of the Referendum can overturn the fundamental position that sovereignty resides in parliament. The duty is surely for all MPs to exercise their judgement so that the best interests of this country are served, before any consideration of party loyalty or personal ambition.

The “deal” which Boris Johnson now claims to have secured in Brussels is without doubt going to be worse for this country than what we have now as a full, participating member of the EU. Nobody can seriously argue that the much-quoted 17.4m people who voted for Leave actually had in mind a deal of the complexity that is now being proposed, with customs controls between Britain and Northern Ireland, as well as so many other disadvantages compared with what we now have. It is no wonder that most opinion polls now show a consistent and well-established majority for Remain, as being the preferred way forward for the British people*.

No doubt if the Conservative party succeeds in taking Britain out of the EU on 31 October, Mr Johnson will be hailed as a conquering hero by his party. But can he be trusted? He has already shown contempt for constitutional norms and considers himself to be above Parliament and the Rule of Law. When he asked the Queen to pro-rogate parliament, one of his arguments was that Parliament would have ample time to scrutinise his new Withdrawal Deal. Now Parliament is being railroaded to get his supposed Deal “over the line” in a single Saturday sitting (unprecedented in peacetime) while much ink on the paper has not even been applied, let alone dry.

In the longer term, once people, and especially younger people, realise how much they have lost, it is difficult to see the Conservatives ever being forgiven for what they have done. Even more so, the risks to the on-going integrity of the United Kingdom are clear and present. If the UK disintegrates, or if the fragile peace in Northern Ireland is shattered, that too will be for ever laid at the door of the Conservative party.

On behalf of North Herts for Europe, and I believe your constituents who voted Remain in 2016 by a substantial majority, I urge you to consider again your responsibility to use your vote in parliament to put the interests of the country ahead of party loyalty. The Deal which is now being proposed may be better than No Deal, but by any objective test it is much worse for the country than what we have now.

If you cannot bring yourself to protect the future interests of our country in that way, then I would at least ask you to support holding a confirmatory referendum to ensure that whatever deal Mr Johnson secures has the support of the people. Once the facts of any Withdrawal Agreement are fully known, people can give it their informed consent in a way that was not possible in 2016, or alternatively choose for the UK to remain a member state of the European Union with all the benefits that brings.

Yours sincerely,

John White

Chairman, North Herts for Europe

* Of course, no-one should rely on opinion polls, but this is just one more argument for putting the question back to the British People in a properly conducted second referendum. The world is a very different place now than it was in 2016. It would be a mistake and a deception of historic magnitude to claim that the referendum result still represents the “will of the people” now.