

February 2017

Documentary Part One Second Reading Brexit Bill – opposition parties

February 1st 2017

Seema Malhotra Labour MP for Felton and Heston votes for Brexit Bill but puts down amendments

Seema Malhotra, the Labour MP for Felton and Heston lives in a constituency that voted narrowly to leave the EU. She voted with the government for the two line Brexit Bill on its Second Reading in the House today but put down three amendments and says she may well vote against the Bill in the future.

Malhotra, a member of the Brexit Select Committee, called for the government to proceed with an “evidence based” Brexit and her amendments cover a timely way to proceed in the Commons, and also for the need to reform the freedom of movement rules and keep our membership of the single market and thirdly to secure a strong future for young people, so there is an exemption so they can maintain their rights to work and study. We also need a national convention and ensure people are involved in this debate and brings together all of society in the regions and nations and we have a collective conversation as we go forward.

She explained: “I am supporting the Second Reading, but there is a huge responsibility now that you can’t take anybody’s vote for granted and we need to have a meaningful way of going forward...I am going to find it really difficult to walk through the voting lobby tonight but if we are going to abide by the result of the referendum this is only the start of the process and we have a long way to go to get the right result for Britain. A lot of what we do depends on how the government takes forward the negotiations and how they take forward the engagement with parliament and the country.”

She ended: “The convention is about stimulating and engaging in proper evidence based conversation and I think it is a vital part of keeping the British people informed and onside as we go forward.”

January 31st 2017

Eilidh Whiteford SNP MP votes against the Alice in Wonderland Brexit Bill

Eilidh Whiteford the SNP MP for Banff and Buchan will be voting with her party to oppose the government’s two line Bill to Brexit the EU. 62 per cent of Scottish voters wanted to Remain in the EU and Whiteford says she agrees with the Tory former Minister Ken Clarke when he movingly addressed the Commons to ask MPs to vote with their conscience in the best interests of their constituents. He got a standing ovation with clapping from the SNP MPs and some Labour ones too.

Whiteford also discusses the latest developments on her Istanbul Council of Europe Convention Private Members’ Bill on violence against women as it reaches its Committee stage but says BREXIT will not affect it although she is concerned more generally about the possible erosion of women’s rights, such as equal pay and maternity rights when the UK does leave the EU: “There could be a rolling back of rights based legislation in the UK or cuts to public services if our economy is slowing down and that has a knock on impact to services to all citizens and women would be disproportionately affected by that.”

Whiteford said she agreed with Clarke when he said in the Commons that the UK was heading towards an “Alice in Wonderland Brexit”. She said: “The former Chancellor of the Exchequer compared people within his own party of having gone down the rabbit hole, and living in a delusional fantasy World. I do think there are very, very, serious questions to be asked and that is where I think my caution comes from.”

She continued: “I don’t think people are asking seriously what the outcome of this will be. It is like a child jumping into the swimming pool for the first time at the deep end and you don’t know what it is going to be like. That is not fine when you are trying to do international negotiations on important issues that have real consequence for people’s livelihoods and jobs.”

Whiteford elaborated: “Brexit has been a very divisive issue but as MPs we are called to make the hard choices and act with integrity even if they don’t make us popular. MPs need to act in the interests of their constituents as they determine them to be and not for what they think is the easy option. People thought they were voting for different things with Brexit and some of the things people were told they would get. In Scotland they were told that there would be: 1.5 billion more to spend on public services and that was a falsehood. We were told there would be 20000 new jobs that was just a falsehood. We were told there would be more cash for Scottish higher education instead our Universities are having to step back. There are not going to be new powers for the Scottish parliament on fishing or agriculture or social policy. The government is trying to play down expectations of the benefits of Brexit.

“Most famously we were told that there would be £350 million extra for the NHS but there will be less money to spend on the NHS. The gains of Brexit will be wiped out by the losses of Brexit. What is the reality down the tunnel of Brexit now? We need to meet the needs of all our citizens. Almost half voted the other way to Remain. It is very hard to argue against finding some kind of compromise position and to find a positive way to stay in the single market and to keep as many of the benefits that accrue to us as possible.

" I will be voting against. I won't give the government a blank cheque when they haven't even had the courtesy to put a White Paper before the House of Commons. They haven't even told us what it is. "

January 26th 2017

Brexit White Paper, Trade, Torture and #Humanrights

Julian Huppert the LD candidate for Cambridge in the next General Election

Julian Huppert, the Liberal Democrat MP for Cambridge until the 2015 General election has been selected to fight the seat again for his party at the next General Election, whenever that is.

With the LD fortunes now improving nationally as they continue to campaign for a pro EU stance following the vote to BREXIT, Cambridge looks set to become a bell weather seat in any future Election, given that recent boundary changes have given the constituency two new LD wards and Huppert only lost by 599 votes to Labour.

Boni Sones, Executive Producer of www.parliamentaryradio.com asked Huppert his views on the announcement by the PM Theresa May in yesterday's PMQs in the House of Commons that the government will now be publishing a White Paper on Brexit following the Supreme Court ruling by 8 to 3 that parliament must have a say on triggering Article 50.

As Theresa May flew out to meet Donald Trump the newly sworn in President of the USA, hoping to secure a commitment to a trade deal when Britain withdraws from the EU, Trump had just told reporters that he was in favour of torture and water boarding, which had recently been outlawed in the States.

Huppert key quote: “Yes we can get a deal but it will be an atrocious deal bad for this country. It will be bad for Cambridge economically but also bad for our rights. Trump is not persuaded about the environmental issues – his claims that climate change was invented by China to weaken the US - and a weakening in workforce rights, these are the sort of things I would be worried about.

“Women’s rights are crucial and when we see people like Trump rolling back on abortion support in quite astonishing ways and to do that surrounded by a bunch of men, it is terrifying. He is pretty atrocious for anybody unless you are a rich white man. “

Huppert goes on to say: “We need to insist on standards. Within the EU we do have environmental standards we have workforce standards. We also have human rights standards and we are able to stick to them as a block of 500 million people. We are much more able to stand up for that than if we break up and go away.

“The LDs are a pro-European and pro rights party and human rights we will continue to make that argument at the next general election.”

Huppert accused the Labour party of being weak on triggering Article 50: "MPs are being weak and pusillanimous. If Labour was being strong we could win the vote with Labour being so atrocious in a number of ways and struggling to work out a position to hold together that lets all of us down."

He said he was hopeful of winning Cambridge back for the LDs at the next General Election, whenever that was, even if May calls an early one after triggering article 50 in March this year.

"It's feeling very good very positive."

Huppert ends by warning against revoking the Human Rights Act:

"I fear massively for what the costs of rushing into trade deals will be for our rights – pulling out of the human rights act is utterly terrifying - the rights listed there are the right to life, the right not to be tortured, the right to fair process - what's not to love?"

Documentary Part Two

Conservative women Equalities & World Poverty & Human Trafficking

January 25th 2017

Maria Miller MP Chair of the Equalities Select Committee

Boni Sones Executive Producer of www.parliamentaryradio.com talks to Maria Miller the Conservative MP for Basingstoke about the work her Equalities Select Committee will be doing in 2017 to promote better Sex and Relationship Education in Schools and to prevent online abuse. Maria begins by discussing the Committees new report on gender discrimination in office wear and the type of shoes & dress codes for women at work. This follows complaints by women who used the Equalities Act 2010 to challenge their employers' dictates.

She then talks about an earlier report that spoke of the need for better Sex and Relationship Education in Schools and the huge impact of online abuse on school children today, including sex-texting and images. She says there is an argument that SRE should start in primary schools as children often get given mobile phones at an early age before they move onto secondary schools.

Maria ends by telling Boni that she tries to ignore online abuse but that a new survey from BBC 5 Live is right to highlight the online bullying of MPs and that she fears this may prevent more women coming forward to stand for parliamentary seats.

Maria says that she is concerned that Britain BREXITING the EU could hamper the introduction of new SRE into schools: "These things haven't been looked at for 16 years. Brexit clearly is taking up a lot of band width for Ministers but I sense that despite that distraction there is still going on in the Department of Education I want to ensure it happens quickly. "

Maria ends by saying: "" I think the abuse is putting people off standing for election. We now have 30 per cent of women in this place but it is not enough we still have far more men coming forward for election than women. I have been elected 3 times to represent my constituents and a few grumpy, mostly men, messaging me won't put me off. In 2017 we have to get even more MPs realising the huge importance of getting better support for children."

January 25th 2017

Tearfund launches Bridging the Gap for the World's poorest through advocacy

The role local churches play in fostering local level social accountability and governance in countries like Uganda and Bolivia was highlighted in Westminster this week with the launch of its new Bridging the Gap report.

Dame Caroline Spelman the Conservative MP for Meriden who is a Second Church Estates Commissioner in Westminster helped launch the report and spoke of how empowering communities to work with their own local and national governments lead to change. She said: “At a time when there is a cold wind blowing against giving the World’s poorest getting some of our resources, Tearfund, which is the 5th largest aid agency can ensure that the money given to it gets to the people who need it most.”

In this podcast Boni Sones, Executive Producer of www.parliamentaryradio.com spoke to Dame Caroline Spelman MP, Joanna Watson the lead in the Tearfund partner advocacy team and Paul Cook its advocacy director.

January 2017

Heidi Allen MP -Helping the victims of Modern Day Slavery get more help

Heidi Allen the Conservative MP for South Cambridgeshire and a member of the Select Committee on Work and Pensions discusses her recent question to the Prime Minister Theresa May on helping the victims of modern day slavery to be fast tracked through the benefit system to enable them to access help more easily.

Heidi says that in 2017 proposed changes to the Benefit System will allow dedicated staff at job centres to deal with vulnerable people on a one to one basis and guide them through the system more easily.

Heidi Allen MP hopes that the "sausage machine" mentality of job centres will change, and that more generally people who go to Job Centres will get more personalised help. She says she would love to be put in charge of them. She admits that Britain leaving the EU could result in more people turning to Job Centres for help as the economy slows up.

She also discusses her Conservative values, her work in the year ahead and her bid to become the Mayor of Cambridge as well as an MP. Since the death of Jo Cox, Heidi now has a member of staff accompanying her around her constituency where Boni Sones, Executive Producer of www.parliamentaryradio.com caught up with her at one of her surgeries.

Key Quote Heidi: “There is a real determination to make the way we deliver benefits more efficient and to deliver them in a better way. Less sausage machine, more good progress, trained work coaches and more compassion in individual treatment....Do I think it is possible to turn the brand and the culture of the job centres round? “Yes” I do, and I wish I was the one delivering it. I would love that job... It’s not the government, it’s not the system that gets it wrong, it is human beings. It is somebody saying “No” on a computer screen... We need a cultural change. ..We may well see higher volume (in job centres as a result of Brexit), if we do, we must not return to the sausage machine days of old. We have to look after people as individuals, it is possible but it is going to be a huge cultural challenge.”