



The Centre for
Cross Border Studies

MEDIA WATCH

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UK continuing with EU budget payments may be Brexit requirement - Nick Clegg

Continued payments into the EU budget might have to be one of the requirements of Brexit, Nick Clegg has suggested.

The former deputy prime minister urged Theresa May and Philip Hammond to "pluck up the courage" and "face down" Brexiteer "head bangers" on the Tory backbenches who advocate a clean divorce from Brussels.

Meanwhile, he insisted that if the Government does agree a so-called "hard Brexit" - widely interpreted as the UK leaving the European single market - there should be a second referendum.

Speaking to ITV's Peston On Sunday programme, he said: "There is a way forward for the Government.

"I think the only way forward is for Theresa May and Philip Hammond to pluck up the courage to face down Liam Fox, to face down the Daily Mail, to face down all these sort of head bangers on the backbenches and to say listen ..."

Mr Clegg was then interrupted and asked if he thought it would mean raising the prospect of the UK continuing to pay into the EU budget.

"Yes, I think that might have to be one of the requirements," he said.

"By the way, if we want to do what the Government says which is to remain a full leading member simply of some of the security-related arrangements in the European Union, Europol for instance, the things which keep us safe from cross-border crime, you can't do that just on those narrow terms without paying some money into some kind of institutional EU budget.

"At some point people are going to have to come clean with the fact that there aren't simple either/or choices."

Mr Clegg suggested the country should have another opportunity to "make a judgement on the final package" agreed by the Government.

When asked if he thought there should be a second referendum if the deal secured represents a "hard Brexit", he said: "Well, I think there should be. George Osborne put it rather well - here's an odd consolation - Tony Blair, George Osborne and Nick Clegg all agree that the country voted for Brexit, not for hard Brexit.

"People don't vote for economic self-harm. Yes, they vote on issues like immigration, identity, they don't like fussy bureaucrats in Brussels. I get all of that."

Mr Clegg said to translate that into saying people want the UK to quit the single market "is a woeful misreading of people's intentions and rewriting of history".

Source: The Belfast Telegraph

October 31, 2016

Hero of NI peace deal Mitchell fearful over return of a hard border

The American Senator who brokered the peace deal that ended the Troubles has said border controls between Northern Ireland and the Republic would be a backwards step. George Mitchell said the ability to cross the frontier between north and south unhindered was important.

Prime Minister Theresa May has promised no return to the border of the past following Brexit, but there are concerns of the implications of a hard exit for the movement of people and goods in Ireland.

Following Brexit the UK's only land border with a European Union state would be in Northern Ireland.

Mr Mitchell said: "I believe that the restoration of a militarised border with strict controls limiting traffic back and forth would have an adverse effect on relations within the island of Ireland.

"The ability to move back and forward across the border that has existed for the past several years has been very helpful in increasing commerce and also in reducing stereotypes on both sides.

"I think that would be a step backward for that to occur."

The retired Senator, who was President Bill Clinton's special envoy to Northern Ireland, told the BBC's The World This Weekend he did not want to prejudge any deal that may be done on the border, but hoped "constructive and thoughtful leaders on all sides" could reach an agreement that would "permit open access".

Mr Mitchell helped clinch the 1998 Good Friday Agreement between the British and Irish governments and the parties at Stormont that largely ended decades of conflict.

Asked if Brexit was a breach of the Agreement, he said the deal "plainly contemplates the possibility of a vote under certain circumstances" that change Northern Ireland's constitutional position.

"The Agreement plainly provides that the political status of Northern Ireland can be determined or changed only through a vote - and it's the informed consent through a vote - of the people of Northern Ireland," he said.

He added: "I'll leave those arguments to the people of Northern Ireland and the UK."

Mr Mitchell also said Britain and Ireland's membership of the European Union had helped create the conditions for the peace process.

Source: The Belfast Telegraph

November 1, 2016

Irish Government urged to represent all citizens in Brexit negotiations

Northern Ireland Deputy First Minister Martin McGuinness has called on the Irish Government to represent all Irish citizens when Brexit negotiations kick in. On the eve of a major all-island forum on the issue in Dublin, the Sinn Fein chief urged Taoiseach Enda Kenny to fight for people both north and south of the border.

"This forum is hugely important as it represents an opportunity to have an island-wide discussion on the impact of the recent EU referendum," Mr McGuinness said.

"This is not just an issue for the north; it will impact on the entire island and it is vital we deal with it on that basis.

"The Irish Government will have a central role in the upcoming Brexit negotiations when article 50 is triggered.

"The British Tory party can't be trusted to act in the best interests of the people of Ireland.

"It is crucial that the Irish government represents the national interests of all Irish citizens, of the economies north and south, and safeguards the advances of the Good Friday and other agreements."

The Taoiseach will be hosting the all-island discussions on the fallout from Brexit at a day-long conference at the Royal Hospital Kilmainham in Dublin on Wednesday.

About 300 politicians, business people, community representatives, academics, civil servants and trade unions are to take part. Billed as the All-Island Civic Dialogue, Mr Kenny has said the event aims to hear from those affected by Britain's departure from the European Union and to map out the challenges that poses and their potential impact on different parts of society on an all-island basis.

It will focus on the fallout from Brexit and the potential impact on economy and trade, the peace process, the UK-Ireland common travel area, the border and the future of the EU.

A report and recommendations are to be drawn up following the meeting to advise the Government on issues related to the UK's negotiations with Brussels.

All of Northern Ireland's main unionist parties snubbed an invitation to the event.

Stormont First Minister and Democratic Unionist leader Arlene Foster said she had better things to do than listen to a lot of "grandstanding remoaners" and she described the forum as a talking shop.

Relations further soured after Ms Foster, who campaigned for Brexit, also accused Irish officials of poaching investment from Northern Ireland.

A majority of voters in Northern Ireland sought to remain in the EU.

Source: The Belfast Telegraph

4 November, 2016

Massive rise in shoppers coming from the Republic

Traffic heading from the Republic into Northern Ireland has soared by almost 30% on Saturday mornings since the Brexit vote.

New research by Goodbody Stockbrokers showed a link between the value of sterling and traffic crossing the border from the south.

The largest increase is seen on Saturday mornings, between 10am and 11am, with traffic surging 29% year-on-year, compared with a rise of just 3% before the vote.

Sterling surged to a four-week high yesterday after the High Court ruled that the Government needed parliamentary approval to trigger Brexit, and the Bank of England scrapped plans to cut interest rates.

But Taoiseach Enda Kenny told the Newry Junior Chamber that he was expecting shoppers to continue to head north as Christmas draws near, with the pound still relatively weak.

"This is a phenomenon that we have seen before, and obviously that you will see probably increase in the run-up to Christmas," Mr Kenny said.

"I'm conscious that while this is good news for retailers here in Newry, on the other side of the border the fluctuation in sterling provides a real challenge."

Meanwhile, a surge in cross-border shopping sparked by the tumbling pound will make Christmas a bumper season for retailers, it's been claimed.

Barclays Northern Ireland relationship director Graeme McLaughlin said confidence in retail in the province was strong, despite the economic shock caused by the Brexit vote.

"The fall in the value of the pound is proving to be very useful for Northern Ireland retailers and we expect Belfast retailers in particular to have a bumper Christmas," he added.

Source: The Belfast Telegraph

4 November, 2016

Decision adds more haze to an already cloudy Brexit picture

WRAPPING up the all-island Brexit forum this week, Minister Charlie Flanagan said the Government was working to prepare for the "softest of soft Brexits, to the hardest of hard Brexits".

He was highlighting just how little clarity we have, four months since the Brexit vote. There has been much talk about the end game when Article 50 is triggered, but at this point we are still pretty hazy on what the reality will look like.

The decision by the High Court in London yesterday doesn't change that one bit.

What it does do is make those preparations a little more difficult, adding as it does another level of haze to the landscape.

Because it seems likely that Article 50 will still end up being triggered, despite yesterday's decision.

The Government here was working on the assumption that Theresa May would be formally kicking off the divorce process before the end of March, possibly even as early as next month, as the Taoiseach pointed out at the Kilmainham Brexit forum on Wednesday.

London's High Court has ruled she can't do that without the approval of the British parliament. The UK government has said it would be appealing the decision to the Supreme Court.

It is expected that the Supreme Court will consider the case early next month.

If the Government loses that appeal and is forced to put a vote to parliament, it throws up the possibility that there could be a delay in formally starting the negotiation process beyond Ms May's end-of-March deadline, amid suggestions that legislation might even be needed.

There's even speculation of another general election. So a delay is possible.

And parliament could, in theory, block Brexit as most MPs supported staying in the EU in a referendum in June.

But will those same MPs now potentially risk the wrath of their voters by going against the popular vote, the will of the electorate, especially those who hail from constituencies that voted in favour of a Brexit? Don't count on it.

Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn, who took a lukewarm approach to the referendum campaign to begin with and was heavily criticised, has already said his party respects the referendum result.

And in Northern Ireland the Ulster Unionist Party, which favoured a Remain vote, has said that its two MPs would vote in favour of the UK-wide result and back the triggering of Article 50.

It all depends on the actual question that will be asked, of course.

If it's a straight yes or no to triggering Article 50, the answer will probably be 'off you go Theresa'.

But if it's more than this, for example a broader debate that could provide a say on the negotiating stance which the prime minister has been under pressure to allow, that might give those same MPs a little cover to influence whether the exit is hard or soft.

This could be good for Ireland if the latter position is pursued. Corbyn has already seized on the need for increased scrutiny.

As one commentator noted yesterday, UK voters opted for a departure, but not for a destination.

For the Government here, there remains little clarity, and the machinations across the water changes things very little for now.

And Taoiseach Enda Kenny made that clear yesterday.

This is a matter for the prime minister, he said, ahead of a meeting of party leaders in Stormont. "Irrespective of the decision that they [UK Government] make, we have to concentrate on what our priorities are, and work together in the interests of the common benefits of the economies of the people North and South," he said.

Source: The Irish Independent