



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

Sir Graham Brady MP
Chairman of the 1922 Committee
House of Commons
Westminster
SW1A 0AA

8 April 2019

Dear Sir Graham,

Enough is enough! If she goes by Wednesday we can Leave on Friday

I am writing to you in a personal capacity, to express my sincere belief that Theresa May should now resign as Prime Minister of the United Kingdom. If she will not do this, then I must ask that you and your colleagues on the Executive of the 1922 Committee establish an informal ‘Indicative Vote’ of confidence in the Prime Minister, immediately prior to this Wednesday’s meeting of the Committee, so that colleagues have an opportunity to demonstrate that they have lost faith in her leadership. My reasons for asking this of you, relate both to the existential future of our Party and the destiny of our Country and they are given below.

In short, we are living in a world gone mad. A Conservative Prime Minister, who voted Remain, egged on by a coterie of neo-Federalist Civil Servants and a powerful Remainiac cabal in the Cabinet, has tried, – and failed three times – to pass a Draft Treaty through the House of Commons which would lock us into a Customs Union forever. Meanwhile, two Tory Privy Councillors, who have now been effectively disowned by their own local Associations, openly connive with two Senior Labour Select Committee Chairmen, to ram a highly contentious Bill, deliberately designed to frustrate Brexit, through the House of Commons in under four hours, by literally one vote. All this flies directly in the face of the democratic decision of 17.4 million UK citizens to leave the European Union. It even resulted in a heroic filibuster in the House of Lords on Thursday by some 50 unelected, but mainly Tory Peers, fighting to preserve our democracy, as undermined by the elected House.

Meanwhile, in a situation where any concept of collective responsibility disintegrated weeks ago, the so called “Eurosceptics” in the Cabinet do absolutely nothing (save consume vast quantities of pizza). Riven by personal ambition, they keep their heads firmly below the parapet, many of them hoping that by “sitting out” this great battle for the destiny of our Country, they will somehow inherit the crown. They won’t. This is because, as a rule of thumb, MPs, let alone our Party Members, do not generally vote for those they no longer respect.

So, Sir Graham, having been totally let down by our own “Officer Class” in the Cabinet, who continue to cower back at the Chateau, it now clearly falls to the “poor bloody infantry” of the Conservative backbenches – and specifically the Executive of the 1922 Committee – to prevent us being forced into a Customs Union with Labour support, which is completely at variance with the Manifesto on which we were all elected to Parliament and which would effectively mean we remain in the EU, utterly contrary to the spirit of the 2016 Referendum and the democratically expressed wish of the British people.



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Jeremy Corbyn, with whom the Prime Minister is now consorting, is a committed Marxist, a lifelong CND supporter and a man who would quite willingly disarm this country of its defences in a very dangerous world. As yesterday's revelations in the Sunday Times made plain as a pikestaff, he has openly tolerated anti-semitism in Labour's ranks. In addition, throughout his career, he has willingly sat down with Sin Feinn/IRA, Hamas, Hezbollah and a whole range of other extremists, who are dedicated to the overthrow of our democratic way of life. I find it literally incredible, that the Prime Minister now invites this man to Downing Street, almost as an equal. I know that I am not alone in this and that a considerable number of colleagues have already written to you requesting an indicative vote of confidence in the Prime Minister as a result. In 36 years as Member of the Conservative Party, I have never known our MPs, Councillors and activists to be as angry and disillusioned as they are today.

The Prime Minister's letter to the European Council and Article 50

The Prime Minister's letter of last Friday to the European Council, demonstrates yet again, that she does not listen. The letter asks for a further extension of Article 50, to allow for the ratification of the so called Withdrawal Agreement, despite the fact that the House of Commons has now decisively rejected it three times. The Speaker has made plain that he is reluctant to allow a fourth vote on what is essentially exactly the same document, not so much as a punctuation mark having changed throughout this whole process. Even if he were to allow a fourth Meaningful Vote, given the talks with Corbyn, opposition to the Withdrawal Agreement is growing again on the Conservative backbenches rather than receding and, therefore, it is extremely unlikely to pass. The talks with Mr Corbyn are ongoing but, at present at least, no agreement has been reached. However, we hear from this morning's media that, in turn, Jeremy Corbyn is now taking advice on the negotiations from Sinn Feinn/IRA.

In addition, the PM again requests an extension to 30th June 2019, despite the fact that the Council specifically refused this date last time. The PM's request, is designed to allow ratification of the Withdrawal Agreement, via a complex technical Bill, which we have not yet seen (because the Government are loathe to release it) but which I understand privately is over half an inch thick and would therefore take many weeks to debate in Parliament.

Under the PM's plan, while this lengthy and complex ratification was taking place, the United Kingdom would participate in the European Elections on the 23rd May, at an estimated cost of some £100m. Once the Bill has achieved Royal Assent, we would then effectively withdraw our MEPs on the eve of the new European Parliament convening on the 1st July (hence 30th June). Therefore, not only would we have asked our people to have voted in the 2016 European Referendum for nothing, we would, in effect, be asking them to vote in the European elections for nothing as well. This is absolutely ridiculous!

Moreover, Nigel Farage and his nascent Brexit Party are clearly licking their lips at the prospect of fighting European Elections, during which, in the current climate, our MEP candidates would likely be slaughtered. Indeed, I know many Conservatives who would refuse point blank to so much as deliver a leaflet in such a campaign that should never have occurred in the first place.



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The European Project

As I learned during my tour as our Shadow Europe Minister (2007-2010) for many in the European Union, “The European Project”, is an act almost of religious faith. Nothing can be allowed to get in its way – including the people in the United Kingdom and their democratically expressed wishes. For those in the EU who are utterly wedded to this so called ideal, the prospect of 73 UK MEPs (the vast bulk of whom are likely to be extremely Eurosceptic in the current climate), is an anathema. The 12th April is the “drop dead date” on which returning officers would have to begin the process of holding European elections in the United Kingdom. That is why the Council deliberately chose that date last time around. The legal default position at the time this letter is written, is that we leave the European Union at 11:00pm on Friday 12th April, and there is nothing to stop us doing exactly that if we so wish. It is important to recognise that the European Union cannot extend Article 50 unless we consent.

I continue to hope and believe, that if they are faced with the acid choice of accepting large numbers of massively Eurosceptic British MEPS – or kicking us out of the EU – they will choose the latter. This is not least because the Council have consistently asked for a clear plan on a way forward, based on the Prime Minister remaining in office. I understand that over 170 colleagues, including numerous Ministers, have recently written to the Prime Minister, expressing our desire to leave the European Union as soon as possible, including with No Deal. 72% of our Party Members also now support this course of action.

If, therefore, my colleagues were to demonstrate prior to Wednesday evening, in an indicative ballot say at 3:00pm, prior to the meeting of the 1922 Committee, that they have lost confidence in the Prime Minister I believe that under those circumstances it is extremely unlikely that the European Council would grant an extension and we would, therefore, leave the European Union on Friday night, as so many Tory MPs so obviously want. Our future is therefore literally in the hands of 313 Tory MPs.

Summary

We simply cannot go on like this, with a weak leader, a riven Cabinet and a Party in despair. I believe Theresa May has been a failure as Leader of our Party, which she now threatens to destroy. Hers is a classic example of hubris – and after hubris, comes nemesis. After the disastrous 2017 General Election, which she embarked upon, as ever, as the behest of a very small number of advisers (cutting out the entire Cabinet in the process), she subsequently told us at the 1922 Committee “I got you into this mess – and I’m the best person to get you out of it”. How hollow those words ring now. In addition, she said “I will continue to serve for as long as you wish me to”, it is now time to test that wish.

In view of the extremely tight timescales now involved, I am copying this letter electronically to the officers and members of the 1922 Committee Executive, as a courtesy.

Yours ever,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Mark Francois'.

Rt Hon Mark Francois MP

Member of Parliament for Rayleigh and Wickford (Shadow Europe Minister 2007-2010)