

ANDREW MARR SHOW

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CRISPIN BLUNT

Andrew Marr: As we were discussing a little earlier the cross party foreign affairs committee of MP's warns this morning for the Government to fail to plan for there being no deal at the end of the European negotiations would be and I quote "a dereliction of duty", so why are they so worked up. The appropriately named committee Chairman Crispin Blunt is here, thanks for coming in.

Andrew Marr: What is the essence of your problem with what the government are doing?

Crispin Blunt: Is that there is a real possibility of no deal. You can try and put probabilities on it. Lord Kerr, who used to be our Ambassador to the EU, said it was more than 30 per cent. The committee itself said it was probably more likely than not in the report we did in April before the referendum and tried to look at what Britain's role in the world would be after the referendum. And this is a cross-party committee that has reported unanimously. It reflects the country in terms of Brexit, a very narrow majority for Brexit on the committee. And if there is going to be no deal that is going to have serious implications for businesses and individuals and the government needs to make sure we have planned for it.

Andrew Marr: So let's talk a little bit about the implications of a no deal would be as far as your committee's concerned. British business, first of all, has a kind of, what's been called a cliff edge. Is that right?

Crispin Blunt: Yes, and you've got both tariff and non-tariff implications from trying to do trade with the European Union and obviously these things are very complex. And if people want to

get into the detail, we've produced it in the report and we've put two appendices to the report, both that we commissioned advice from the Bar Council and we also commissioned advice from one of the leading professors in European Law at Cambridge University. So if people want to get into the detail and see what the actual implications are they're there.

Andrew Marr: And what about the status of EU nationals in this country and our people over there, as it were?

Crispin Blunt: Of course that's one of the uncertainties, and that's been highlighted elsewhere with other – both on the floor of the House of Lords and in the House of Commons. And there is detail about exactly how citizens would be affected depending on how long they've been in the UK if they're European Union citizens. But of course there's the point about UK citizens in the EU.

Andrew Marr: The Northern Irish border as well, and all of that. Now, you are, as a committee, outraged the government hasn't been doing any planning. David Davis says he's been planning away. There was a Cabinet meeting recently where they discussed little else but what would happen if there wasn't a deal.

Crispin Blunt: Well, the point about the Mail on Sunday with its cheerful headline about dereliction of duty, we're saying that's what would happen if they didn't plan properly for this.

Andrew Marr: Are you saying they're not planning?

Crispin Blunt: Well, it now begins to become clear from the briefing that came out of the Cabinet – a meeting that you've just referred to – that this planning appears to be starting. And of course the implications of no deal will kind of inform the negotiating position completely. So one would anticipate this

happening internally and now it seems that it's happening, and if our report and the headlines today put a bit of oomph behind that planning that's a really good thing.

Andrew Marr: Do you think people should actually see what the government's plans for no deal are? Do you think it should be published?

Crispin Blunt: Yes. And one of the reasons we've into this space is, as parliamentarians, we think we've got a responsibility to help businesses and individuals prepare for the consequences of a probably outcome or a possible outcome which is that there's no deal at the end of two years.

Andrew Marr: What's the effect of that on the negotiating position of the government, do you think?

Crispin Blunt: Well, my view is it strengthens it, because you then have a clear sense, you can cope with no deal, and if you actually look at the implications on both sides, in absolute terms it's my view that the impact on the 27 is greater in a negative sense in absolute terms than it is on the UK, because that's where the balance of trade sits and that's where the money flows sit and at the minute is where of course most people are. But of course the expression we've used is 'mutually assured damage on both sides.'

Andrew Marr: Strong language. Do you think MPs, if there isn't a deal, should have a vote anyway?

Crispin Blunt: I think we're going to get a vote. I'd say we're going to get a vote.

Andrew Marr: Even if there isn't a deal?

Crispin Blunt: Well, if there isn't a deal, there is no deal. So in that sense there's nothing to vote on.

Andrew Marr: It sounds to me as if you disagree with the Prime Minister when she said that no deal is better than a bad deal.

Crispin Blunt: No, in the report it made clear that there you can logically envisage that not deal would be better than a bad deal. For example, if you get just a huge up-front bill to pay for the divorce and then there is no route to a future free trade agreement, that would look like a pretty bad deal for the UK and be worse than no deal, because the implications of there being no route to a free trade deal is well, you're dealing with us anyway, at the end of the negotiation if there's no agreement.
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