

ANDREW MARR SHOW

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YVETTE COOPER

AM: Yvette Cooper, a lot of your own constituents – you're in a 'leave' constituency, 69 per cent I think voted leave – feel that you are somehow betraying Brexit with this.

YC: I think we've got to get a workable deal. For me that includes a customs union. But I don't want to see a No Deal hit my constituents, and particularly the manufacturing jobs that we've got, in Haribo, in Burberry, we've got Yorkshire Macs that are sold all over the world, and they would be hit. Those manufacturers are coming to me and saying, 'look, we want a good Brexit deal, but we're really worried about no deal.' And that's what I am trying to avoid. I'm trying to get the government to take some responsibility and sort this out.

AM: So what do you say to those people who say we're right at the moment of crunch here, the EU are blinking, the EU are changing their position and right at this moment you're making things easier for them by delaying things?

YC: Well, the prime minister's got until the end of February to sort this out under this plan. So in the end she's got to sort this, she's got to have the plan to do it. You know, she's had two years, she's had more than that, and the reason we're in this situation is because we've had continued delays from the prime minister continually kicking the can down the road. And the problem is we're still not really seeing any progress. So I hope that this does put pressure on the prime minister to sort things out by the end of February. But if we get to that point, she should be ruling out no deal. She should be recognising that she cannot put families across the country into a situation where there are tariffs on food, so food prices go up; where there are delays to medicines, so that people worry about their medicines and so the NHS is putting money into fridges rather than into patient care.

AM: Alright. Now you've talked to Jeremy Corbyn this week about it. Your chances of getting your amendment through depend upon his support. Have you got his support?

YC: Well, I hope that he will support it. He obviously needs to make his decision in the normal way. But I think, I suppose what I would say to him, to the prime minister, to government ministers, who I think also want to make sure that we don't have no deal, is in the end we can't – and the prime minister can't do this – we can't keep waiting for other people to sort this out. We can't just carry on with a kind of game of chicken that you described, where that's not a way to make sensible decisions. You need common sense. Actually, in the end, someone has to take some responsibility and say if the prime minister runs out of time she may need some more time, and that is not about blocking Brexit, that is about being responsible and making sure you can try and get a Brexit deal.

AM: And as ever in the House of Commons it comes down to numbers. You mentioned Tory ministers just now. It's been a sort of open secret that some Tory ministers would like to vote for your amendment and are even thinking about resigning to do so. Have you had conversations with Tory ministers in that position?

YC: I haven't, but I do know that there are a lot of Conservative ministers who are deeply concerned about the risk of no deal. And they'll be seeing it, they'll be seeing the impact on public services, and listening to the counter-terror chief, Neil Basu, who's a hugely practical man, but he says we will be less safe because we won't have the information that we need at the border to stop wanted criminals, terror suspects, entering the country.

AM: Now, let me ask you about one aspect of your proposed change to the law which worries some people, which is this, to delay it for nine months, nine months means that we have to legally take part in EU elections, send British MEPs to a parliament

we have actually left and pay quite a lot of money to the EU in the interim. Are you absolutely wedded to nine months or might the delay be shorter?

YC: No, the way that the Bill works is that it gives parliament the option to decide how long it should be. So it's deliberately amendable. When the motion comes forward at the end of February if the government hasn't sorted it out by then, then it will be up for parliament to decide how long is needed, how long is necessary. I think that should be for parliament to decide. It's far too early now to say what that length of time should be.

AM: Can I come back to something you talked about earlier on. As an MP yourself, what is the outcome that you would like from Brexit? Do you accept that we must leave the EU?

YC: I want us to get a workable deal that for me should include a customs union. I think there's also stronger security agreements that are needed and we've pursued that a lot in the Home Affairs Select Committee. But particular for me it's about getting a customs union because I think that when you've got manufacturing industry, I've got a lot of northern midlands manufacturers, you've got to get a good customs deal. That is what I want to see.

AM: And what do you say to people, finally, who say, 'Yvette Cooper, this has gone on and on and on, I'm weary, I'm exhausted, you're just kicking the can further down the road, please stop, please get it all done'?

YC: Aren't we all weary of this? I think the problem is that the prime minister delayed this repeatedly. We had, of the 24 months left for Article 50, she used up about four for a general election. We didn't even get the Chequers proposals for about 16 months, we didn't even get the plan put to parliament until 22 out of the 24 months had gone. So I think the government has repeatedly delayed this. The prime minister shouldn't have done that. She shouldn't have done and she should take responsibility. I think

she knows the mess that she's in, but she's not solving it and, you know, my call to her is that she should solve this, but she can't just put families' livelihoods, she can't put manufacturing jobs, she can't put NHS services at risk. And some of the richest people in the country who are calling for no deal and saying that it's a good idea, they're not the ones who are going to suffer if food prices go up and if medicines are delayed.

AM: Yvette Cooper, thanks very much for coming and talking to us.

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