

Destitution Domestic Violence Concession (Eligibility): Article 50 Extension

Sarah Wollaston Chair, Health and Social Care Committee, Chair, Liaison Committee (Commons), Chair, Liaison Committee

The Secretary of State will know that this House has rejected the Prime Minister's deal twice by historic margins now it is neither the will of the House nor the will of the public and it has also rejected very resoundingly leaving with no deal. However, we have not yet had in Government time an opportunity to do just what he asks, which is for the House to give an indication of what it would support. Will he support bringing forward the opportunity to give an opinion on indicative votes in the next week, preferably on Saturday?

Stephen Barclay The Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union

I am not sure that Saturday would be the most popular of responses with colleagues across the House, but we have given a commitment, as the hon. Lady knows, to a meaningful vote on Monday and, following that, there will obviously be opportunities for the House to have its say. Let me make some progress.

Any extension is the means, not the end, but any extension of whatever length does not allow this House to escape its responsibilities to decide where it stands: whether to keep its commitment to deliver on the decision it gave to the British people or to walk away from doing so. Nor should an extension mean that a guerrilla campaign can be run to overturn the result of the referendum and frustrate the will of those who voted to leave.

I disagree with the suggestion of the shadow Chancellor, who is not in his place, that any extension should be open ended. I think he said that it should be "as long as necessary". Indeed, he was at odds with other Labour Front Benchers. Emily Thornberry said only the day before that the Labour party would back an extension just to July because

"it would be inappropriate for us to stand for the European Parliament".

An open-ended delay would be likely to mean no Brexit and disregarding the votes of the 17.4 million people who voted to leave.

We now need to use any additional time to ensure that an orderly Brexit is delivered. The Leader of the Opposition has not said to date how long an extension he seeks. I do not know whether Labour Front Benchers wish to use the opportunity of this emergency debate to put on record exactly how long an extension they support.

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