

Labour won't keep its support based on this stupidity

Published: January 14, 2026, 6:14 am

Barry Gardiner, Labour's shadow trade secretary, has [written in the Guardian that](#):

Most trade agreements arise from a desire to liberalise trade — making it easier to sell goods and services into one another's markets. Brexit will not. Brexit arose from key political, rather than trade, objectives: to have control over our borders, to have sovereignty over our laws, not to submit to the European court of justice (ECJ), and not to pay money into the European budget. When negotiations start it will be the first time countries seek a trade agreement with the clear understanding that they are increasing barriers between them.

I campaigned to stay in the EU, but as a democratic politician, I have to recognise that these objectives provide the benchmarks by which leave voters will judge the future trade relations we negotiate with the EU. Unless the new agreement delivers these objectives in substantial measure, we will find it difficult to justify the final result to the 52% who voted leave.

As a consequence he argues the the UK must leave the Single Market and Customs Union, whatever the price.

I confess I find such stupidity (forgive me, but I can't think of a better word) hard to comprehend.

I thought Labour was a party of principle.

I thought it was willing to argue its case against all comers.

I thought it was uncompromising in the pursuit of what it thought to be right.

I thought Labour was internationalist.

I thought it was committed to peace.

I thought it was opposed to was opposed to constraining people on the basis of

nationality.

I thought it was cooperative in principle and practice.

I thought it was in favour of redistribution both nationally and internationally.

I obviously thought wrong. What Barry Gardiner reveals are six things.

First, he reveals that Labour will not challenge a Tory policy.

Second, he reveals that Labour will follow the lead of the Daily Mail rather than the will of the people of this country who were not asked whether they wished to leave the Single Market and Customs Union and did not vote for it.

Third, Labour is showing that it will pursue a policy that will harm the prospects of the working people and young of this country, who are its natural supporters, even when it knows that policy is wrong.

Fourth, he reveals that Labour believes it is wrong to argue against a decision made on the basis of deceptions and falsehoods.

Fifth, Labour is showing it will support petty nationalism instead of principles.

Sixth, Labour is showing it will fail its international partners and that it cannot be trusted in this arena.

Or, in summary, Labour is showing it is willing to sell out on its principles rather than argue for what is right.

It's as if they'd said that because most people don't join unions they won't support them any more.

Or that because inheritance tax is undoubtedly unpopular with the Daily Express Labour will never tax wealth.

Or that green policies aren't worth pursuing because some in business are willing to campaign against them and climate change denial always gets a voice on the BBC.

I expect politicians on the left to be principled.

I expect them to argue against the odds, and to say when they think people (especially those motivated by greed and self interest) are wrong.

I expect them to show courage.

I expect them to talk sense, and not make up the sorts of excuses for nonsense that Gardiner does.

And I am reasonably confident that a lot of people agree with me. More than enough, I suspect, to cost a Labour Party pursuing this line a lot of votes.

After all, why would the young vote for a party saying this?

Why will those with international concern have common ground with such a party's cause?

And why will those who lose pay or their jobs thank them for capitulating to the Tories?

What I would like in this country is a genuine left of centre opposition.

I am still waiting for it.