

Labour has to make up its mind soon or become another B...

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I am bemused by Labour's policy on Brexit.

The Tories are shredding themselves on the issue, even at Cabinet level, where they cannot agree on a policy to present to the EU knowing that whatever they come up with will be wholly unacceptable to the other 27 member states. If ever there was an example to be had of the folly of arguing about angels on pinheads then the Tories are providing it.

There is then an opportunity for Labour to be the party of credibility. What it has to do is come up with a plan that says it is delivering Brexit but which prevents us falling off a cliff edge, as is widely feared by business and unions alike, whilst at the same time being likely to be acceptable to EU negotiators.

Of all the options readily available right now to achieve that goal staying in the European Economic Area is the most credible. First, it's not even clear that we will be leaving it by leaving the EU. Second, it takes us out of things like the CAP, fisheries policy, freedom of movement and rule of the ECJ, meaning we have very obviously left the EU and 'taken back control', but it leaves us in the single market (and could have the customs union added) and so prevents economic harm whilst preserving Irish accord.

So you would think that if Labour had the chance to prove that they were in the lead on credibility on every front they would grab the chance to back this option, most especially when peers look likely to back it if Labour decide to support a motion on continued EEA membership this week. But, as the Observer reports, Labour is refusing to do so, meaning that the amendment will probably fail in the Lords. Maybe the best option for a soft Brexit and a settlement in Ireland will fail with it.

Of course it is true that the EEA is not the best option for the U.K. That is staying in the EU. But of the options now available it is a good one. It is likely to be acceptable. It solves the Irish issue. It delivers on the Brexit promise to the greatest degree possible. It preserves our economic well-being as much as possible. And it, most of all, shows the

essential ability a potential government must have of finding a route though to a solution on an issue.

So why is Labour saying no? I wish I knew when the reality is that sometime soon it is going to have to stop pretending it can be all things to all people on Brexit. At that point it can either lamely follow the Tories into hard Brexit - which is where they are inexorably taking us - or offer a viable alternative. Right now they're choosing to follow the Tories in offering no alternative to hard Brexit, which has to be their worst option. And that's an abrogation of their responsibility to their electorate, the country and even their membership, who overwhelmingly want a soft Brexit.

No wonder I am bemused. Anyone of any sense would be. Labour has to get its act together and soon, or it like so much else, will be a Brexit casualty.