

When Liz Truss says Brexit cannot work it's a si...

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Liz Truss was my MP for some time. I'm not sure she ever represented my views, but in South West Norfolk anyone with a blue rosette gets elected. The aim is not to rock the boat. Which is why her new found objections to Brexit, of which she has been such an advocate, are interesting.

As the [Guardian](#) notes this morning:

An extraordinary cabinet row has erupted over Brexit with Liz Truss warning that Boris Johnson's border plans risk smuggling, damage to the UK's international reputation and could face a legal challenge from the World Trade Organization.

The international trade secretary wrote to the chancellor, Rishi Sunak, and Michael Gove on Wednesday warning of four "key areas of concern" over their plans for the border next January.

This is no small deal. And I am quite sure Truss would not have done this without considerable pressure being brought to bear upon her by her Permanent Secretary and others. That is why I think this is significant.

In effect one of the 'true believers' is calling out the lies, the incompetence and the haste of Brexit and saying it cannot be done this way. The idea, inherent in everything that Johnson does, that law, protocol, international convention and simple practical need can be ignored in pursuit of the vainglorious, is being challenged by Truss in her letter.

She is saying that whether we have passed laws to leave the EU or not, we still have to comply with the requirements of others. International law has to be respected. Laws on tax, smuggling, place of origin and much else have to be adhered to or we simply cannot trade. That's because what leaves the UK will not be acceptable for import elsewhere as its legal compliance cannot be assured.

And most importantly, we cannot manage to put such arrangements in practice by 31 December, after which it will be too late to remedy the error as other states will

perforce have to block the passage of goods from the UK for reason of uncertainty as to their legal status.

I have to be honest and say that this is not where I thought the opposition to Brexit would come from. But it is highly effective. That's aided by the very obvious fact that it's true. What is more, it is so compellingly so that a hard right minister (and I am quite sure Truss will take no offence from me calling her that) has felt it necessary to say it.

In summary Truss is saying Brexit cannot be done. I am not sure she is quite so blunt, of course. I suspect she'd characterise it otherwise. But read the piece and that's the message. We cannot leave the EU with no deal with anyone, and no effective border or customs arrangements in place - which is what Gove has said will happen - and not expect a significant and very painful reaction as a result. Those reactions will include lawlessness, but more importantly, a simple refusal to accept goods from the UK as being legitimate - because that cannot be proven.

All of which will make the current economic crisis look like an afternoon out in the woods with some Teddy bears.