



Department
for Exiting the
European Union

8th July 2018

Dear Prime Minister

As you know there have been a significant number of occasions in the last year or so on which I have disagreed with the Number 10 policy line, ranging from accepting the Commission's sequencing of negotiations through to the language on Northern Ireland in the December Joint Report. At each stage I have accepted collective responsibility because it is part of my task to find workable compromises, and because I considered it was still possible to deliver on the mandate of the referendum, and on our manifesto commitment to leave the Customs Union and the Single Market.

I am afraid that I think the current trend of policy and tactics is making that look less and less likely. Whether it is the progressive dilution of what I thought was a firm Chequers agreement in February on right to diverge, or the unnecessary delays of the start of the White Paper, or the presentation of a backstop proposal that omitted the strict conditions that I requested and believed that we had agreed, the general direction of policy will leave us in at best a weak negotiating position, and possibly an inescapable one.

The Cabinet decision on Friday crystallised this problem. In my view the inevitable consequence of the proposed policies will be to make the supposed control by Parliament illusory rather than real. As I said at Cabinet, the "common rule book" policy hands control of large swathes of our economy to the EU and is certainly not returning control of our laws in any real sense.

I am also unpersuaded that our negotiating approach will not just lead to further demands for concessions.

Of course this is a complex area of judgement and it is possible that you are right and I am wrong. However, even in that event it seems to me that the national interest requires a Secretary of State in my Department that is an enthusiastic believer in your approach, and not merely a reluctant conscript. While I have been grateful to you for the opportunity to serve, it is with great regret that I tender my resignation from the Cabinet with immediate effect.

Yours ever



David Davis