

UK has two options: alternative deal or stop Brexit, says senior MEP

Written by Martin Banks on 17 January 2019 in News
News

Senior Labour MEP Richard Corbett says the failure to approve Theresa May's Withdrawal Agreement in the House of Commons this week has left the UK facing only two options.



Photo Credit: Press Association

Speaking to this website on Thursday, Corbett said, "The UK Parliament does not want a no-deal Brexit but has rejected the only deal currently on the table."

Corbett, a constitutional expert, added, "There are now only two possibilities: an alternative deal or stopping Brexit."

His comments come after the UK government on Wednesday night won a vote of confidence by 325

votes to 306, with the support of DUP MPs.

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Following the vote, Prime Minister Theresa May invited the leaders of the opposition parties to meet with her to “identify a way forward on Brexit that can secure the backing of the House.”

May’s appeal came after she suffered an overwhelming defeat in this week’s Commons vote on the deal she had struck with the EU. This triggered the confidence vote, tabled by the opposition Labour party.

It was announced on Thursday that MPs will now debate and vote on the “Plan B” options on 29 January.

“The UK Parliament does not want a no-deal Brexit but has rejected the only deal currently on the table. There are now only two possibilities: an alternative deal or stopping Brexit” **Richard Corbett MEP**

TIME FOR AN ALTERNATIVE

Earlier on Thursday, more MEPs reacted to the latest events in the UK, with Polish member Danuta Hübner telling this website, “We are at a critical point, just before the end of the two-year period with no agreement signed.”

“The one [Brexit deal] negotiated for a year and a half has just been rejected by the House of Commons. The Brexit process continues to create uncertainty. The ball is now clearly in the court of the UK government.”

Hübner, a former EU commissioner, went on, “It [the UK] needs to decide quickly on how it seeks to resolve the impasse before a disorderly Brexit severely disrupts Britain’s and EU countries’ economies.”

Further comment came from UK Socialist MEP Neena Gill who said, “The onus is on the Conservative government to come up with a plan and to offer an alternative, cross party.”

“We will not move forward unless Prime Minister May changes her red lines. Chaos and lack of certainty will not only have negative impact on the UK but on the EU as well.”

“This problem is of our own making, and the UK has to sort it out and cannot look at the EU to solve

it," she added.

CORBYN THE BREXITEER?

Former UK Liberal MEP Andrew Duff said, "Mrs May's evident success with the Tory party has been entrenched by Labour's motion of no confidence. Now that, at last, cross-party talks are really afoot, we will find out whether Mr Corbyn is a Brexiteer or not."

"We will not move forward unless Prime Minister May changes her red lines. Chaos and lack of certainty will not only have a negative impact on the UK but on the EU as well"

Neena Gill MEP

"The Commons has no chance of agreeing the EU's deal unless the Brexiteers are confounded and the pro-European majority of MPs can impose a version of soft Brexit on the prime minister. Where will Mr Corbyn be on this?" he added.

Roger Casale, a former UK Labour MP and now head of the campaign group New Europeans, said, "I hope British people in the EU feel that although they have been hung out to dry by the British government, they have not been left alone."

"We have been reaching out across Europe and reminding British people that they are not just UK expats or 'British in Europe' but also EU citizens. Their fight is our fight and we are doing all we can to mobilise support from EU citizens, whatever their nationality."

ARTICLE 50 EXTENSION

Meanwhile, there are reports that EU officials are looking at the possibility to extend the Brexit process until 2020.

A European source is quoted in the UK media as saying, "There is work going on to see how Article 50 can be extended beyond the European elections. Any extension can only be a one-off so after the defeat it looks sensible to go for a longer period."

On Wednesday, a Downing Street spokesperson ruled out the possibility of being in a customs union with the EU, saying, "The principles that govern us as we go into these talks is that we want to be able to do our own trade deals, and that is incompatible with a customs union."

In a report published on Wednesday, the House of Commons Exiting the European Union committee called for a "series of indicative votes" in Parliament to identify a way forward that would be supported by a majority of MPs.

The report states, "The most important question to be considered by the House in generations cannot be determined simply by the running down of the clock. This would lead either to a default exit with no deal, or to the House being offered a Hobson's choice of the deal currently on offer or no deal."

"If Parliament cannot reach a view in time, then the House should be able to express its opinion on extending Article 50," it adds.

Elsewhere, 71 Labour MPs have signed a letter calling for another referendum on Brexit.

About the author

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