

Lord Howell of Guildford (Con)

Speech September 5th

My Lords, I very strongly welcome this Statement and in particular the stream of position papers that have come out throughout July. We have hardly had time to read all of them, the volume has been so great, but they set out extremely clearly—much more clearly than has been given credit in this House or elsewhere—the aims and objectives of Her Majesty's Government in reaching constructive agreements with the rest of Europe. Would she agree in particular that the concept of customs partnership, which is developed in one of the recent papers, is really a vast improvement on being tied to the outdated customs union, which is a design of the 20th century and hardly fits into the modern pattern of trade at all—but which the Opposition have suddenly decided to cling to, for reasons which I cannot fully understand, although perhaps they can be explained?

I know some more position papers are coming, but I would ask for one more in particular which concentrates on the thoughts and contribution that Britain might make to the overall fundamental reform of European co-operation and the modernisation of the whole EU model, which is so obviously needed as the European continent as a whole faces colossal new challenges—notably, migration and refugees but many others as well. We need an entirely new pattern of co-operation to meet the 20th century in Europe, and through our deep and special relationship we can make that contribution. Could we have that set out as well as the other ideas that have already been presented to us?

- *Baroness Anelay of St Johns*

My noble friend, as ever, speaks from great experience in these matters. I am very interested in his proposal about a paper looking at further EU reform and the new pattern of co-operation. I recall in our years in opposition together listening to him examining, in a very intellectual way, how we could change the way that the EU worked for the better of all. I am very interested and will certainly take that idea back.

I agree with my noble friend that a customs partnership is better than a customs union because a customs union means that one is not in a position to carry out trade deals. The Department for International Trade is ready, willing and very able to carry out those deals. Earlier on, the noble Baroness, Lady Hayter, seemed to think that it lacked capacity. However, since its formation, DIT has increased to a global workforce of more than 3,200. The trade policy group has quadrupled in size, and in June 2017 the department appointed a new chief trade negotiations adviser with over 25 years of experience. I was a little bit cheeky there, because what I really wanted to do is add to the record my thanks

to my noble friend Lord Price. It has been an absolute joy to be able to work with him over the last year and a quarter. I was very keen on his appointment because before that, for one month only, I am pleased to say, I was Trade Minister while also doing the work at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. He was super

8.43pm
