

THE WEEK

Radical right-wing US-UK post-Brexit trade plan revealed

September 19th, 2018

A radical blueprint for a post-Brexit trade deal between the UK and US has proposed the NHS be opened up to foreign competition, a bonfire of consumer and environmental regulations and freedom of movement between the two countries for workers.

What is a Canada-style Brexit deal?

Will Chequers plan be abandoned after Brexit?

Fact check: who has the most to lose in US-China trade war?

The report prepared by the Initiative for Free Trade (IFT), a think tank founded by the long-time Eurosceptic MEP Daniel Hannan and the Cato Institute, a right-wing libertarian think tank in the US founded and funded by the fossil fuel magnates and major political donors the Koch family, is set to form the basis of a push by prominent Brexiteers to persuade the prime minister to ditch her Chequers Brexit plan.

As well as its high-profile cheerleaders, The Guardian says “the blueprint will be seen as significant because of the close links between the organisations behind it and the UK secretary for international trade, Liam Fox, and the US president, Donald Trump”.

The authors argue for a free trade agreement that would liberalise government controls on capital and data flows, remove tariffs and water down precautionary principles that have guided much EU regulation on GM foods, chlorine-washed chicken, pesticides and chemicals in cosmetics.

Amy Mount of the Greener UK coalition said the new proposals amounted to “a depressing vision for our future”, adding that “flooding our supermarkets with chlorinated chicken, undercutting our farmers and lowering environmental standards would be a strange way to take back control”.

BusinessGreen says the paper “will be of particular concern to environmental campaigners given the influence the authors and associated think tanks wield within Washington and Westminster”.

However, it is the proposals to effectively allow freedom of movement and open up the national health service to foreign private competition that are likely to prove the most contentious.

Even the IFT/Cato Institute acknowledged “any change to existing regulations would be extremely controversial,” and recommended testing the waters with foreign competition in education and legal services first.

Writing ahead of the official launch of the report in Washington on Tuesday, The Sun said that Treasury Minister Liz Truss “risks sparking controversy by visiting the [Cato Institute offices] later today - where she is expected to face questions over whether she supports the radical plan”.

Despite the report’s links to Liam Fox, the Department for International Trade have distanced themselves from the draft agreement, saying they had no hand in it.