

## BREXIT CONCERNS INTENSIFY



Public concern about the prospect of a no deal Brexit is intensifying. One hopes that the national media will get its head back in the game having largely taken its eye off this massive issue due to a doleful Presidential Election campaign.

Reports last week revealed that consumer confidence has dropped to a level not seen in six years, which cannot be unrelated to the prospect of the UK leaving the European Union without a deal being struck. One can only hope that common sense will prevail in the next few months, but the complete absence of common sense from the British political and media establishment when it comes to Brexit, in which Ireland has been caricatured as a post-colonial ingrate, has hardly helped matters.

The list of concerned groups and organisations are growing: for example, ferry companies and airlines are getting concerned about disruption and delays. Passport backlogs at UK airports are being predicted if things go sour, and that the British Government is considering the use of container ships and warehouses to store food if things go wrong seems utterly ludicrous. But that's the world we're living in now, one which is a far cry from the days when Britannia ruled the waves and acted as she wished without too much consideration for other nations. However, that genuinely appears to be lost on many in the Conservative Party, many of whom know precious little about the nature of politics in Ireland, let alone cross-border trade. That some with aspirations of occupying 10 Downing Street, aided by some myopic broadcasting and column-inching, appear to be thriving on their ignorance is hardly helping matters either.

Reading reports in the national press, Northern Ireland farmers have re-iterated their concerns and have made their feelings known to the DUP party about the dangers that lie ahead for their sector, be there no deal or a hard Brexit.

Retailers in towns including Newry or Enniskillen, who benefit from southern trade, are also concerned, as we learned anecdotally when visiting both towns recently.

Why the DUP continues to fight against a practical Brexit deal, as well as the backstop measure is quite bewildering from this juncture. To some observers, their approach is akin to economic suicide.

Why would you willingly hurt your own economy on imaginary worries over sovereignty and the EU? It simply does not make sense. In Britain, the Brexiters are acting increasingly manically and appear to be just throwing their hands in the air and openly inviting economic and civic anarchy into British society. And where are these all too easy trade deals with Tories such as Liam Fox and David Davies gushed about, never mind the sabre-rattling balderdash espoused by Boris Johnson.

For that matter, one isn't sure Taoiseach Leo Varadkar struck the appropriate note when speaking of the possibility of losing the peace in Northern Ireland, a move hardly likely to win the hearts and minds of Ulster Unionism. The subtler, more considered tone which the Taoiseach and Foreign Affairs Minister Simon Coveney have adopted since taking their respective briefs, needs to be maintained.

The UK will remain our nearest neighbour and largest individual trade partner post-Brexit. And while they are likely to be out of the EU tent very soon, we must maintain an outreached and open palm to them. A closed fist is not in the mutual interest of either country.