

Explosive Leaked US-UK Trade Papers: Lowering Food and Health Standards under Brexit, Britain's NHS, "Chlorinated Chicken" Already on Table in US Trade Talks

By [Global Justice Now](#)

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Trade campaigners have welcomed the release of leaked papers detailing trade talks between the Trump administration and British government officials, which show the US government pushing Britain into as hard a Brexit as possible because they see this as the best way of benefitting the US economy. This comes at the expense of standards, protections and livelihoods in Britain.

The leaked papers show US officials calling Theresa May's 'Chequers proposal' for Brexit a "worst case scenario" because it would not allow a sufficient changes to British food standards to give US agriculture increased penetration into British markets (4th working group, p 26).

One of the biggest changes Boris Johnson's made to May's Brexit proposal was to remove the long-term linking of British and European standards, threatening food and other standards under a US trade deal. The papers show that Johnson made these changes despite economic modelling which suggested this scenario would be good for the US but bad for Britain (5th working group, p97).

The details are leaked versions of the secret papers detailing trade talks between US and British negotiators which were previously only released in highly redacted form (1) and were condemned by Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn as part of the first general election debate. Analysis by Global Justice Now says the papers also show:

- The US pushing lower food standards on Britain post Brexit, including allowing imports of chlorine-washed chickens (2nd working group, p42), less nutritional labelling on foods (2nd working group, p42), and less protection for regional food like stilton cheese (1st working group, p41). The US offered to help the UK government 'sell' chlorine chicken to a sceptical British public and stated that parliamentary scrutiny of food standards is 'unhelpful' (2nd working group, pp42-43).
- The US banning any mention of climate change in a US-UK trade deal (2nd working group, p17).
- US officials threatening UK civil servants that they would undermine US trade talks if they supported certain EU positions in international forums (5th working group, p35).

- The US suggesting a ‘corporate court system’ in a US-UK deal, which would allow big business to sue the British government, in secret and without appeal, for anything they regard as ‘unfair’ (4th working group, pp92-98, 5th working group, p35). Recent similar cases have included suing governments for trying to phase out use of coal.
- US officials pushing a far reaching proposals on the digital economy, giving Big Tech companies like Facebook, Google and Amazon sweeping freedoms to move and use our online data (2nd working group, pp30-31, 4th working group, p22), which would make taxation and regulation of these companies more difficult and prohibit Labour proposals for a public broadband service (4th working group, pp99-100).
- Threats to public services like the NHS, via sweeping services liberalisation (3rd working group, pp41-42). The British government would need to exclude everything not subject to liberalisation in order to protect public services, while bringing formerly public services like the mail, or rail companies back into public ownership would be much harder.
- US officials making a further threat to NHS in terms of medicine pricing policy, with special concern about Brits paying more for cancer medicines which the US feels Britain doesn’t pay enough for (4th working group, pp121-132). Trade negotiators have received special lobbying from pharmaceutical corporations as part of the trade talks (5th working group, pp43-44).
- US officials demanding US experts and multinational corporations are able to participate in standard-setting in Britain post Brexit (4th working group, p58-59).
- A promise by both sides to keep talks secret from the public (2nd working group, p5 & 8).

Nick Dearden, director of Global Justice Now, said:

“No wonder the government didn’t want us to see these papers: they clearly show the British negotiators being bullied by Trump’s administration, and Boris Johnson dancing to the tune of US big business. Boris Johnson’s position on Brexit is clearly dictated by what’s best for US corporations, even when he knows this will be worse for the British economy and British welfare.

“The US is demanding damaging changes to the British economy which threaten our public services like the NHS, our food standards and farmer livelihoods, our access to new cancer medicines, and our ability to tackle climate change. US officials are damning about parliamentary scrutiny over safety standards and are even trying to dictate what positions Britain can take in international fora. Both sides are committed to as much secrecy as possible in these trade talks.

“These papers make a mockery of Boris Johnson’s manifesto pledge to protect British public services and standards – that would be absolutely impossible under the type of trade deal being discussed here. We will continue to force these discussions into the light, so people know what they’re voting for 12 December.”

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