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Text of the resignation letter of Lord Andrew Adonis as Chairman of the UK's National Infrastructure Commission (emphasis added to references to BREXIT- in bold)

Dear Prime Minister,

The hardest thing in politics is to bring about lasting change for the better, and I believe in working together across parties to achieve this. In that spirit I was glad to accept reappointment by you last year as Chair of the independent National Infrastructure Commission, when you also reaffirmed your support for HS2, which will help overcome England's north-south divide when it opens in just eight years time. I would like to thank you for your courtesy in our personal dealings.

The Commission has done useful work in the past 27 months, thanks to highly dedicated public servants and commissioners. Sir John Armitt, my deputy chair, and Phil Graham, as chief executive, have been brilliant fellow pioneers from the outset. I am particularly proud of our work on HS3 to link the Northern cities and Crossrail 2 for London, and our plans for the Oxford-Milton Keynes-Cambridge corridor. All these will be transformational if taken forward without delay.

However, I am afraid I must now step down, because of fundamental policy differences - on infrastructure and beyond - which simply can't be bridged.

**Your decision to rupture British membership of Europe's key economic and political institutions is the most important. The European Union Withdrawal Bill is the worst legislation of my lifetime. It arrives soon in the House of Lords and I feel duty bound to oppose it relentlessly from the Labour benches.**

**Brexit is a dangerous populist and nationalist spasm worthy of Donald Trump. After the narrow referendum vote for an undefined proposition to 'leave the EU,' it could have been attempted without rupturing our essential European trade and political relations. However, by becoming the voice of UKIP and the extreme nationalist right-wing of your party, you have taken a different course, for which you have no parliamentary or popular mandate.**

**You are attempting to wrench Britain out of the key economic and political institutions of modern Europe, erecting barriers between people and trade even within Ireland. If this happens, taking us back into Europe become the mission of our children's generation, who will marvel at your wanton destruction.**

**A responsible government should be seeking to persuade the British people to stay in Europe while also tackling, with massive vigour, the social and economic problems within Britain which led to the narrow referendum result of eighteen months ago, particularly in our many desperately poor towns, cities and regions. Your policy is the opposite. The Government is hurtling towards the EU's emergency exit with no credible plan for the future of Britain's trade and European co-operation, while ignoring - beyond soundbites and inadequate programmes - the crisis of housing, education, the NHS and social and regional inequality which are undermining the fabric of our nation and feeding the populism which led to Brexit.**

What Britain needs in 2018 is a radical reforming government in the tradition of Attlee which works tirelessly to eradicate social problems, while strengthening Britain's international alliances. This is a cause I have long advocated and acted upon in government and I intend to pursue it with all the energy I can muster.

Britain needs to be deeply engaged, responsible and consistent in its European policy. When we have failed to be so in the past, the security and prosperity of our Continent have been in jeopardy - inevitably so, given our power and our embodiment of the values of parliamentary democracy. For Her Majesty's Government, there is no such thing as 'splendid isolation': and when Lord Salisbury, among your most short-sightedly cynical predecessors, pronounced this as British policy in the imperial late-Victorian era, it was followed within barely a decade by the First World War and what was, in effect, a 30-year European war between the forces of democracy on the one hand, and Communism and extreme nationalism on the other. The stakes may not appear so high as this moment, but no-one observing Putin's Russia, and the rise authoritarian nationalism in Poland and Hungary, can doubt the resonances with the past or the dangers ahead. As Edmund Burke so wisely wrote, 'people will not look forwards to posterity who do not look backwards to their ancestors.'

However, I would anyway have been forced to resign from the Commission at this point because of the Transport Secretary's extraordinary decision to bail-out Stagecoach and Virgin on the East Coast rail franchise. This bailout will cost the taxpayer hundreds of millions of pounds, possibly billions as other loss-making rail companies demand equal treatment, endangering the entire national infrastructure investment programme.

It is increasingly clear that the bailout is a nakedly political manoeuvre by Chris Grayling in defiance of his public duty. It would be an act of cavalier irresponsibility even were public resources not so constrained, and is the more so in the context of Brexit. Mr Grayling's policy appears to be motivated above all by a refusal, for purely political reasons, to follow my precedent of 2009 in the case of National Express and the same East Coast franchise. I set up a public company to take over the franchise once

the private operator defaulted on its obligations to the state because it had over-bid for the contract, and the same should have been done in this case. The circumstances are very similar.

The decision to bail out Stagecoach/Virgin will inevitably come under close scrutiny by the National Audit Office and the Public Accounts Committee, and I need to be free to set out serious public interest concerns. I hope the PAC calls Sir Richard Branson and Sir Brian Souter to give evidence soon, given the gravity of the financial losses to the taxpayer. I stand ready to give evidence to the PAC and other parliamentary committees at their convenience, and to share with them substantial relevant evidence.

As you know, I raised these issues directly with the Chancellor and Transport Secretary immediately after the bailout became apparent from the small print of an odd policy statement on 29 November majoring on reversing of Beeching rail closures of the 1960s. I received no response from either Minister beyond inappropriate requests to desist.

You occupy one of the most powerful offices in the history of the world, the heir of Churchill, Attlee and Gladstone. Whatever our differences, I wish you well in guiding our national destiny at this critical time.

ANDREW ADONIS