UKIP, WEKIP, THEYKIP

by Dave Wenham

The EEC has changed over the years to be something other than was originally intended or at least expected. While things were going well the creeping social homogenisation of Europe went unchallenged, save for a few individuals, mainly in the UK but also some in other European countries. Now that times are hard many more individuals across Europe are questioning the new direction that the EC bureaucrats are taking us. Even the economic advantages are being questioned, particularly by Germany. In the UK, of nearly 800 votes cast in the latest Financial Director/Accountancy Age Debate, which proposed leaving the EU would damage the UK economy, only 28% voted in agreement.

In 1951 Germany, France, The Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg signed a treaty to run coal and steel under a common management. After 6 years the economic cooperation was expanded to other sectors, more countries joined, the Treaty of Rome was signed and the union was called the European Economic Community. In England we called it the Common Market.

So far so good, the basic idea was to cooperate to make trading easier and more efficient. However, in 1962 the Common Agricultural Policy was implemented (the CAP), this was a departure from straight market economics (supply and demand determine price) and the price of farmer's goods are set by the new bureaucracy. In 1968 custom duties are removed, trade between EEC countries and the rest of the world increase dramatically. Things were going very well.

In the 70's the EEC starts to transfer huge sums of money to try and create jobs and infrastructure in poor areas. This is an amazing change/addition to the original concept.

Further development enabled people to cross borders without a passport and later the right to work in any EU country. In 2004 'the EU' tried to set up a European Constitution with a European Foreign Minister. France and the Netherlands voted no in a referendum. Enough was enough?

UKIP was founded in 1993 and over the years has gained support, so much so that in the latest local elections the other main parties 'took them seriously', and they did very well. So why are they gaining in popularity? Two main issues; Immigration and membership of the EU. The EU argument has two main issues: the reduction of sovereignty and cost benefit of membership.

The reduction of sovereignty (or Nationhood vs Eurohood)

Most nations have a strong sense of identity, no matter the history or the geography. We in the British Isles have lots of history and are isolated geographically so it is natural that we have a very strong sense of independence and a sense of separateness. Britain fought 2 world wars not too long ago, at one point standing virtually alone against the axis countries. We were told we were fighting for our liberty, way of life and our country. We won. And yet within a life time we are giving up the rights and the way of life that we fought for. Or are we?

The soldiers were told that they were fighting for their country yet hardly any of them owned land or property. My father told the story of how when home on leave he had to cross Lord Halifax's land to visit my mother and my sisters who were billeted in Halifax's stables. He was challenged by a gate keeper and was told, in no uncertain terms, that he was trespassing. "So which bit of 'my country' is mine to fight for" he asked. Most of "our land" belonged to a very few people as the vast majority of the working class rented.

Our way of life? In this global marketing world my kids behave more like Americans than I did at their age. The Coca Cola culture pervades. Cultural values are taken from TV series and popular movies. It is reported that the internet has changed attitudes towards sexual practices and courting behaviour. Culture evolves. Still it's better than Nazism, although one wonders how long that would have lasted. My point is that the way of life we have now is not what was fought for and I believe not one many of us would have chosen.

Sovereignty? Our democracy is one in which we we get to elect our representatives who then elect an individual who then selects the cabinet (government). Most of us don't feel that we have

much of a choice on how the country is run. Who wanted Sunday opening, online gambling, gay marriage, the abolition of the death penalty, the MP's generous pension scheme, no action taken against the negligent bankers?

Yes we get to vote the government out every 5 years if we want to, but how many bother? Less than half the eligible voters vote. This shows clearly that the absent voters (mainly young) don't feel that it's worth bothering to engage with the system. Most voters have as much in common with a Frenchman or a German as they do with a career politician or an Old Etonian?

The economic argument is stronger

There are lots of figures out there but we are the 3rd largest contributor to the EU and have always given to the EU (EEC) more than we received, by quite a lot. According to thisismoney.co.uk, since 1979, Britain has paid in about €260 billion (£228 billion). It has received back in benefits just €163 billion (£143 billion). The difference of €97 billion (£85 billion at today's exchange rate) has been Britain's subsidy to the European project.

But don't just look at our net contributions; one has to consider what the gross contributions have provided. What do we get for all that money? Are the benefits worth the costs? Some of the money does come back via EU projects but what is the efficiency of doing it that way. It is a truism I think that the bigger an institution gets, the more it grows, the more inefficient it becomes and the more corrupt it becomes. The EU bureaucracy has grown enormously and the inefficiencies and corruption are regularly reported.

The argument goes that even if we did lose some trade by exiting the EU, it would be made up by the contributions we no longer had to pay. How much more competitive we would be (say) if we halved the taxes that business had to pay, or scrapped the VAT on goods? There are many countries that trade with the EU that are not in the EU, China and the USA for example.

Immigration

In recent months, due to the public support of UKIP it is possible to talk about reducing immigration without being called a racist, but this is recent. The change is due to the electoral success of UKIP, the other parties realized that dealing with or at least talking about dealing with immigration was a vote winner. Even the 'right on', chattering classes admit now that to discuss cutting immigration does not make you a racist.

About 11 years ago, a tiny campaign group captured the headlines with a startling prediction that net immigration to the UK would grow by two million over the next decade. Since this was four times more than occurred in the previous decade, the forecast was rubbished by the Home Office. Moreover, the people behind the group, Migration Watch UK, were denounced as closet racists for even raising the subject. Yet everything that Migration Watch foresaw came true; indeed, as the figures from the 2011 census show, they were overly cautious.

Sir Andrew Green, the founder of the organisation, wanted to inspire a debate about immigration that he thought the politicians wilfully refused to have. There was a good reason for

this: until the mid-Nineties most voters believed successive governments had operated sensible immigration controls. However, everything changed with the collapse of the Soviet Union and the opening up of the eastern borders into the EU. This resulted in a huge influx of economic migrants, many claiming to be political refugees, initially settling in Germany but eventually in the UK. By the time Labour came to power in 1997, more than 100,000 foreign nationals were claiming asylum annually compared with just a few thousand in the late Eighties.

As a result of chaotic administration at the Home Office, most of these new immigrants were allowed to remain in the country whether they were entitled to or not. At the same time, Labour abolished the “primary purpose rule”, which was intended to ensure that marriage was not being used principally as a means to enter Britain. The rules surrounding work permits became too lax, exit controls from the country were abolished, visa departments became overwhelmed and human rights law made it difficult, if not impossible, to deport illegal immigrants.

But is immigration bad?

There is an argument that Britain needs immigrants to help the economy and fill the skills gap. Even, that immigrants bring wealth to the country. While it may be that this is true for some immigrants I suggest that most immigrants send money home and plan to return home after a while. When they do, they take their wealth with them. And even if they didn’t, isn’t it just obvious that immigrants take jobs that British people could do or be trained to do? In the past, when there was a skills shortage, companies ran training schemes. The setting up of technical colleges, where apprentices could go once a week, was the result of a lack of skilled workers. The cheaper solution, for business is, of course to get ready skilled immigrants but it does not benefit our country in the long run.