

The European Union that we are leaving is very different from the Common Market we joined



Divorce can be painful – and the most painful part is to make it final, to get to the decree absolute. There is claim and counter-claim, blame and counter-blame. Indeed, divorce can often get nasty – although that should not be necessary.

And the worst part of it is ‘who gets to keep what’? ‘who pays’? and ‘how much’?

Now, after the referendum, we are getting divorced after what was the political equivalent of a marriage with the European Union. Yet it is worth pointing out that what we entered into 43 years ago with six other European countries with similar economies was to be part of a Common Market – it was not a marriage with 27 countries – many with different economies and at a very different stage of development.

But now, the EU wants our money. They apparently want 100 billion euros. Obviously, the figure has been plucked out of thin air. The rationale given is that up to a hundred billion euros was in the EU budget (there was an example of this in [William Hague’s recent article](#) in the *Daily Telegraph*).

Let us be very clear, and perhaps as a Chartered Accountant I can write this, a budget is just that: a budget. It is a projection, it is a forecast. It is not a reality. Assumptions can and do change as they have in this case. The UK is exiting the EU. The fact is, legally, we owe the EU nothing. If we do choose to give them anything, that will be our choice and that will be our generosity – and should be seen as such.

But I say to the British Government, please remember, as Lennon and McCartney once sang, “Money can’t buy me love”.

To continue with the divorce analogy, we are yet to get divorced – but some people are already taking sides.

Unfortunately, many people who ought to be on our side, are in fact on the other side. It is sad for us, but sadder for them; Ken Clarke, Anna Soubry, Peter Mandelson, Nick Clegg and Tony Blair – who is apparently going to return to British politics. Indeed there was Ken Clarke and Nick Clegg's mysterious trip to Brussels. These are "the usual suspects". One is entitled to ask why it is that these very qualified people don't seem to understand that in any negotiation, and above all in this one, if you are *not* prepared to walk away, you give the other side all the cards. We have seen that already, with the recent negotiations between the EU and the Greek government.

What makes it still worse, these are the same people who told us – instructed us – endlessly at the time of the referendum that "you must accept the outcome of the referendum", but that was when they thought they would win. What they are now doing is carefully, blatantly, and in any terms disgracefully, trying to overturn the result. They ought to know better.

As for Labour and Brexit, we know that in the UK, Labour stands for unvarnished socialism; and not just any socialism, but Venezuelan-style socialism at that. However, on Brexit, nobody really knows what does Labour stand for.

This year's Labour Conference lasted four days, and in those four days, Labour could not find time to debate Brexit at all. But what is clear, is that a majority of Labour MPs want the UK in the single market. That has consequences: It means freedom of movement, an endless and enduring stream of payments to the EU and that we continue to pay homage to the European Court of Justice. These are facts.

But there is another fact which is even more important. Only around 12% of the UK's economy is accounted for by exports to the 27 Member States. Nevertheless, so long as we remain in the so-called Single Market, 100% of our economy will be subject to all the rules, laws, regulations and directives of the European Union. And out of the EU we would have no say, no say at all, not even the totally inadequate say that we have at the moment. This would not be a good outcome for our country.

On trade, leaving aside the maze of statistics, there is one simple fact. The UK is the biggest market for wine produced in Australia in terms of volume. Australia sells us more wine than they do any other country. Wine that is produced in Australia competes, on price, with wines produced in Spain, France and even Bulgaria. But Australia does not have a trade agreement with the European Union. Far less is there unconditional free movement, or any right to settle for Australians in the European Union. Nonetheless, Australia has access to the EU markets including the United Kingdom, without a trade agreement and without freedom of movement, sufficient to sell this wine produced on the other side of the world more than 9,000 miles away.

In the event of no deal, we in the UK would have similar access to EU markets without a trade agreement, but trading under World Trade Organisation rules. Trading under World Trade Organisation rules is how Australia trades with the EU's 27 member states, as does China, as does the United States, as do six of the top ten exporting countries to the EU – and 11 of the top 20. On trade after Brexit, to paraphrase Franklin Delano Roosevelt at his inauguration in 1933, “we have nothing to fear but fear itself”.

We have to be prepared and able to walk away.

Written by

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