

Resistance

More thought needed on 'WINNING THE REFERENDUM?'



It has been an incredible month. The Mail's "Blueprint for Tyranny" on 8th May caused ripples, but the real shock waves were caused by the Sun's attack on Blair on 15th May.

Given sustained coverage, voters are forcefully asking why they should be denied a choice: "People are at last waking up to what has been done in their name" noted the Telegraph¹. Straw & Hain helpfully remind voters that much of what is in the proposed EU Constitution is in place now - such as the supremacy of EC law².

With growing calls for a referendum, the reluctant Blair, who has produced 34 referendums since 1997, is looking increasingly exposed. Although he told BBC News that there would be no vote, he conceded to the Sun that there might be one "as a last resort" but it would mean accepting the Constitution or leaving the EU³.

The influential (and accurate) *YouGov* opinion polls showed a voter backlash

Voters would rather leave the EU than accept the Constitution by 51%-29%. Only 11% would actually support it. 75% want a referendum⁴
An earlier poll, very loosely worded, saw 62% wanting Britain to remain "an independent country" with only 28% backing being part of a "larger European state"⁵.

While bamboozling Polish audiences that they have "a common history" (!) with Britain, Blair tells them that we can have a referendum on the Euro as a matter of "constitutional significance" but somehow an EU Constitution would not be!!!⁶. Lord Blackwell hopes to amend the constitutional Bill in the Lords and therefore to force a referendum. He seems likely to win⁷.

But what will the question be?

Shadow Foreign Secretary Michael Ancram hypocritically calls for "an honest debate". He misrepresents the issue as "a false choice between surrendering national sovereignty and pulling out of the EU"⁸.

(The only other 'option' is to stay in the EU without the Constitution, but with 75% of our laws 'made in Europe', and at the mercies of the bureaucrats who can find loopholes around our veto).

Meanwhile debate on the content of the Constitution continues. Simon Heffer and Frederic Forsyth have questioned if entering the Euro was a necessary part of signing up to the new Constitution⁹. **We checked the official drafts and Britain's opt-out is not to be found¹⁰. The drafts may, of course, be incomplete, but we need to be vigilant.**



The Danish PM, Rasmussen, is keen to get rid of Denmark's four opt-outs, and their referendum could effectively be a decision on EU membership¹¹.

Alice Thomson queried if a 'solidarity clause' requiring the EU to mobilise all military assets "to prevent a terrorist threat" could mean EU troops in Britain¹². Quoting Professor Patrick Minford & David Heathcoat Amory MP (but no more), Pascoe Watson noted that up to 2m jobs could be lost after ceding economic policy to the EU¹³.

While the ridiculous Peter Hain tries to kid us the Constitution is just a bit of tidying-up, LibDem MEP Andrew Duff accused Blair of trying to disguise its serious implications, calling the Charter of Fundamental Rights "profoundly federalising", feeling it would extend the European Court's reach into everyday life¹⁴.

Former Italian PM Lamberto Dini similarly accused the Government of deceiving British voters¹⁵.

"In 1975, I campaigned for a 'yes' vote that kept us in the EC. In retrospect it is abundantly clear that I campaigned on a prospectus that was sufficiently false to ensure that, if the issue had been a public issue in securities, I would face prosecution under the Companies Act and I would lose.

In 1975, we told voters that we were joining a vigorous free-trade association..."

- former MP Tom Benyon, letter to the Times, 29.5.03 (edited)

The Sun also claims that the EU is after "powers to ensure the security of energy supplies in the EU" (which could affect Britain's oil), and plans to "raid Britain's £600Bn pension pot" and prop up failing pension schemes in Europe¹⁶.

Blair has denied that Britain would be forced to give up her seat on the UN Security Council¹⁷ but even under the existing Treaty, our representative would have to support any (non-defence) EU foreign policy made without Britain and avoid any action against the interests of the EU¹⁸. He has said he is against any 'significant' increase in majority voting (i.e. loss of veto) on defence & foreign policy¹⁹.



Look out for 'Vote 2004' - a campaign for a referendum. It is being grafted from the 'no' (anti-Euro) campaign.

Worryingly this campaign is said to be "pro-European and in favour of a Constitution".

A key aim of the new campaign will be to build support among those people who are committed to deeper integration, but who want to involve people in the process by giving them a chance to vote...²⁰

Rodney Leach of Jardine Matheson & the European Foundation is said to be involved, and the ad agency used by Business For Sterling, M & C Saatchi, will be "advising on advertising". Yet Lord Saatchi, a Shadow Treasury Minister, warns of a "big country called Europe" and says it'll be a watchdog! (We have requested clarification!)²¹.

WHY YOU CAN'T TRUST NEW LABOUR



In a 1995 party conference report "The future of the European Union" Blair insisted:

✪ "Labour does not support the establishment of a European army or proposals to give the EU a military competence". *Nov 2000 saw the EU Rapid Reaction Force. The Times, 24.2.00, reported that the MOD was planning for 'possible formation of an EU army by 2010' and training troops in other forces' establishments!*

✪ Justice, home affairs, asylum & immigration matters should stay national ('inter-governmental'). *Now Blair is prepared to put them all under majority voting, (although still claiming to oppose a European Public Prosecutor).*

✪ "A Europe that has the wholehearted consent of its peoples". *Which explains why he won't hold a referendum!*

✪ "We reject permanent opt-outs". *Can we trust Blair to maintain the veto on 'significant' foreign policy, defence, taxation, an EPP, etc?*

✪ Ironically he since says he'll reject any Treaty without an EU President or the right of national parliaments to scrutinise European law for 'loss of sovereignty' (*FT, 19.5.03*). *Blair's Nov 2002 speech in Cardiff redefined 'sovereignty' beyond our ability to say 'No'. Gordon Brown, whose aid for church repairs was forbidden by the EU, might not agree!*

✪ Ambrose Evans-Pritchard noted that before 2001, the Government opposed a EU Constitution, but has decided it would "consume too much political capital" to oppose it (*Telegraph, 16.10.02*)

✪ In "Ayes to the Left", 1995, Hain warned political and monetary union was "economically disastrous & politically dangerous". *Before becoming 'Europe Minister'.*

✪ In a Foreign Office pamphlet, "The EU treaties in under 300 words", 2001, Hain said: "As Minister for Europe, I make a point of telling it like it is on Europe, in plain English". So why claim creation of nothing less than "a new constitutional order" (*FT, 22.3.02*) is now just "tidying up"?

"...much of the eventual success will depend on how well the ground has been prepared in advance"

- **Chris Powell, of BMP DDB ad agency and New Labour adviser, "Winning the Euro Referendum" Foreign Policy Centre, 2001 ISBN 1-903558-06-9**

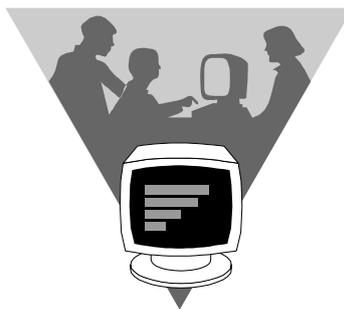
By the time this is in print, all smart money says that the Chancellor's Five Tests will have been failed and joining the Euro will have been put on ice. Britain In Europe and Blair will no doubt have been professionally advised that the 45% 'hard core anti-Euros' will not be moved off the battlefield.

But their research, above, and the pamphlet "Winning From Behind" may give a head start *if* a vote on the Constitution is called. They note that (to 2001) 15 out of 19 'EU referendums' had been won, which is well above average.

The anti-EU movement cannot lose by understanding their research and their thinking.

"Those prepared to acknowledge some kind of European identity is easily the lowest in Europe... the 1999 British Social Attitudes Survey clearly shows [this] is a major reason for the low level of support for joining the single currency."

- **John Curtice, social science Director at the University of Strathclyde, see above book.**



KNOW YOUR ENEMY

See www.britainineurope.org.uk/le_news.phtml?art_id=89

"Winning From Behind" reviewed key elections and referendums where a poll lead was overturned.

- At the Romsey by-election, 2000, LibDems used local '(wo)man of the people' connections to trump an outside Tory candidate. Their regular leaflets addressed the issues felt important by voters.
- Norway's 1994 referendum rejected the EU, as each town had a representative group that argued against membership for their locality. This overcame the solidly pro-EU Establishment.

- In Sweden, the 'Facts On EU' group overcame opposition to the EU by engaging the people in *conversation*. On a big bus tour covering 240 cities, 700 of their people met 500,000!

- The experience of Sweden, plus the UK in the 1992 General Election, shows that *trust* is crucial in uncertain times.

"Public opinion is consistently Eurosceptic but most people's attitudes are shallow..."

- **Prof. Paul Whitely, University of Essex, see above book.**

- In the Irish referendum of 2001, *trust* in Irish politicians was lower than ever. Strong grass roots campaigns were fought after EU personalities made comments threatening Irish tax sovereignty.
- In the same referendum, the Yes to Nice side campaigned weakly and was 'out-postered'. (In 2002, it capitalised on the discovery a 'No' campaigner's links to continental extremists, but the key factor was the Government's dirty tricks in withdrawing official funding, disadvantaging the 'No's, then sweetening voters with sudden grants - BIE don't mention this).
- In the 1975 UK referendum, Britain In Europe formed several sectoral groups e.g. "Youth For Europe". They also trained 600 speakers who addressed meetings throughout the UK.
- But perhaps the 'No' side's biggest problem was a lack of a united front, followed by a lack of ability to detect and deal with the issues where voters needed reassurance (See 'While Britain Slept', Douglas Evans, 1975).

"Recent polls have shown a hardening in public attitudes towards the EU... barely half say they'd vote in favour [of remaining in the EU]"...

- **Simon Atkinson, Research Director. MORI, see above book.**

- Even so, the diverse 'No' camp won the Danish Euro referendum in 2000. The 'No' campaigners didn't threaten each other, but the 'Yes' campaigners let party politics get in the way.
- Romsey LibDems' tips were: "Understand what messages work. Understand how these messages need to be transmitted. Be realistic about what can/can't be achieved".
- In the UK, 71% trust TV, 66% trust radio, but only 24% trust the press. (Might explain why readers of the pro-Euro Mirror oppose the Euro 53%-30%?).

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Lessons from the past

We can sum up and adapt Britain in Europe's conclusions from "Winning the Euro Referendum" - and suggest some *antidotes!*

❶ A referendum campaign must be led by politicians that voters will trust with their future. The pro-EU coalition must go beyond senior businessmen and politicians. *Public disillusion with politicians is at a high. Ensuring unpopular or bad image will deter some public figures from backing the 'Yes'ses. A respected non-political figure may be an asset to the 'No' side.*

❷ Economic arguments need to be backed up by a 'patriotic case'. *The 'Yes'ses say this as the public is not sold on the EU connection. 'Making sure our competitors don't get an unfair advantage' and 'not cutting ourselves off from our main market' are easily countered, but the 'risk to jobs' argument needs skilful defusing.*

❸ Relate economic arguments to everyday experience. *Our side must also provide assurances on issues that voters feel important - we must first research them.*

❹ Hijack the status quo - persuade voters that **not** going for the Euro is a radical change of direction. *The public is wary of change so this one may not work - it goes against common sense. Our side would need to cement confidence on continuing trade with Europe etc if we left the EU, though.*

❺ Change the tone of the debate on Europe. *Europhile politicians have actually created an image of a continual threat from Europe by saying they have stopped X or will veto Y. Or that the EU must change and is waiting for Britain's leadership. Watch out for spurious images of railways or the NHS being run to continental standards*

❻ Overcome voter ignorance. Sow doubts about 'not knowing enough' - sustained 'information campaigns' such as BBC TV's Referendum Street and C4's Powerhouse do shift voters. *Ensure that voters - and opinion formers - have ready access to sound information - and proof of the pro-EU side's 'Dr Goebbels' tactics in the past.*

❼ Show unity, and exploit the opposition's lack of unity. *This will be tricky given the individualism and diverse nature of the 'No' side, but a common thread of wanting democratically accountable government above all can compensate for economic & political differences. 'Agreeing to differ' amicably will deny the media distracting stories. Gain voter confidence by keeping to issues.*

OUR £64 BILLION QUESTIONS

There are plenty of campaign tips distilled from experience. However to be of full value, they must be adapted to conditions prevailing at the time a referendum is called.

For instance, it would be a lot easier to maintain broad-based unity purely against adopting the EU Constitution. (The simple alternative is not to adopt it!)

However, say the Government announced that the other EU members would break their current Treaty with us in adopting the new Constitution. We would either be **in & signed up** or **out of the EU**.

Would the Mail and the Sun, which have not called for withdrawal, be prepared to swallow the Constitution as the price of EU membership, even if it went against everything they'd said? Or would they reveal their hands as covert EU withdrawalists? Or would they neutrally just give space to both 'Yes' & 'No' sides?

Would the Conservative and Ulster Unionist parties allow their MPs a free hand? What would 'europhile yes, euro no' businesses do if avoiding the Euro meant leaving the EU?

Rather than come up with a premature, sweeping 'Plan of Action', it is better to raise these fundamental questions early.

Although many people cherish the idea of "unity", would they trust & support a central 'No Treaty' campaign led by Lord Owen or some other highly suspect figure?

Although there can only be one 'official' (and state-funded) 'No' campaign in a referendum, the law also allows "permitted participants" who can spend up to £500,000, but with controls on donations.

(Any group wishing to spend over £10,000 might have to register).

"...if you have a powerful case and a skilful campaign you will win"

- Chris Powell, in Britain In Europe's "Winning From Behind"



◆ The Lords have started the 'Committee Stage' of debating the Extradition Bill on 3rd June, later than expected. Opposition Home Affairs Spokesman, Baroness Anelay of St.Johns replied that she would back the safeguards first suggested by Torquil Dick Erikson (see Resistance, Spring 2003). A further letter was sent asking for a normal definition of 'terrorism' to be built in - not the EU's catch-all that takes in peaceful but loud protest.

Progress can be checked via website www.parliament.uk or the House of Lords Information Office (020-7219 3107, 10am-6pm approx).



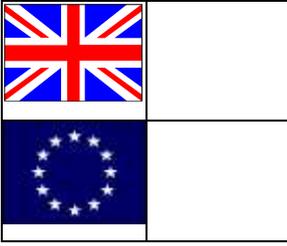
WHAT YOU CAN DO

- Media support will be key if a referendum is called. Write letters of support to papers taking a patriotic stance.
- Keep the EU Constitution an issue in the letters pages and on radio phone ins, etc.
- Give out our free **30:30 Vision** fact sheet, putting the case for life outside the EU. It is already being given out at shows from Cornwall to Herts.
- Lobby your campaign group leaders over what contingency plans they have should **either** a referendum be called **or** the Government holds firm. (Calling for a referendum is one thing, winning one is another!).
- Try to identify any celebrities, interest or pressure groups (especially local) who may be useful in publicly opposing the EU Constitution.

An official European Central Bank monthly report warned that the UK would only be able to provide 'free' NHS emergency care if we joined the Euro, otherwise the rising cost would "overwhelm European economies and lead to soaring inflation". It urged charging for other care. (*Times*, 5.5.03)

A complaint was upheld against BBC presenter Sarah Kennedy for expressing personal views on "a controversial subject" (asylum). A precedent to hit Euro-fanatics?

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REFERENDUM: WHAT DO YOU THINK?

In May, we sent surveys to a balanced cross-section of 100 anti-EU sympathisers/activists. Around 2/3 replied. The commonest answers to Q5-11 are listed.

Q1. On balance, do you favour a national referendum on whether the UK should adopt an EU Constitution? (%)

Yes-strongly	84
Yes-moderately	10
Don't know	0
No-moderately	2
No-strongly	4

Q2. How likely is it that the UK Government will call a referendum on the Constitution?

Very likely	2
Fairly likely	16
Don't know	10
Fairly unlikely	29
Very unlikely	43

Q3. If called with at least 3 months' notice, how likely is it that the UK Government will win a referendum asking the public to adopt the EU Constitution?

Very likely	2
Fairly likely	16
Don't know	16
Fairly unlikely	44
Very unlikely	22

Q4. As for Q3, but the UK Government states that NOT adopting the Constitution will mean that the UK leaves the EU. How likely is a Government win?

Very likely	7
Fairly likely	25
Don't know	40
Fairly unlikely	20
Very unlikely	8

Q5. What arguments do you think that the UK Government will use to try to persuade voters to support the EU Constitution?

Scare tactics:
Loss of jobs/trade/investment
Loss of influence
Having a strong voice in Europe
No sovereignty to lose
Britain better in than out

Q6. What arguments do you think that anti-federalists should use to try to persuade voters not to support the EU Constitution?

Loss of sovereignty/independence
Loss of our country/culture
Difficulty in changing Constitution
EU legal system/policing imposed
Effect on taxes, employment

Q7. What tactics do you think that anti-federalists should use to try to persuade voters to take an interest in the Constitution as a matter of great importance?

Emphasise the loss of sovereignty
Leafleting drives
Make use of celebrities
Write to local press & MPs
Hold public rallies/marches

Q8. Thinking of the wider anti-federalist side (not just any group you may support). What do you consider its greatest strength(s) to be, come a referendum?

Patriotism
Telling the truth
Broad/varied base of support
In touch with the people
'People are waking up'

Q9. As for Q8. What do you consider its greatest weakness(es) to be?

Lack of unity
Lack of presence in media/BBC
Apathy
Lack of funds
Lack of leadership

Q10. As above. What do you think it should do to compensate for the weakness(es)?

Unite
Run grass roots campaigns
Run publicity/ad campaigns
Recruit celebrities/opinion formers
"Find another Jimmy Goldsmith"

Q11. Assuming that the UK Government flatly refuses to call a referendum on the EU Constitution. What should the anti-federalist side do to try to stop the EU Constitution being adopted?

(Very wide spread of answers)
Lobby peers/MPs
Street protests/marches
(Legal) civil disobedience
Disrupt government business
Run an unofficial referendum

COMMENT: Nobody pointed out that the Constitutional Treaty must be passed unanimously and supporting foreign referendums might be an opportunity to derail it?

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CONCLUSION: The survey was about *perceptions* and offers the chance for practical points to be clarified or followed up. Questions 10 & 11 received the least fluent answers, possibly pointing to where the anti-EU side must do some work - particularly if a vote is *not* called! Several other useful comments were received.

IT ISN'T INEVITABLE

An important trend was revealed by the YouGov poll (Telegraph, 15.5.03). Only 54% now think that joining the Euro 'sooner or later' is inevitable; 41% say it's not (+13%).

Compare this with the 80%-17% figure in December 1998 (+63%) and 69%-28% in 1999 (+41%) - and remember that these figures were high because voters felt that the Government would find some way of pushing us in.

Although it is too early to relax, the growing 'No' figure shows voters might be more open to persuasion on making our own way in the world and less fatalistic! It should give hope to those 'sceptics' who in 1997 saw Blair as "invincible".

Front page references

- [1] 28.5.03
- [2] Times, 28.5.03
- [3] 29.5.03
- [4] Mail On Sunday, 1.6.03
- [5] YouGov, Telegraph, 15.5.03. (The Populus poll for the Sun recorded 84%).
- [6] Warsaw speech, 30.5.03
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- [10] Treaty of Nice, Protocol 25 not seen in CONV 722/03-727/03
- [11] Jesper Larsen of national newspaper Berlingske Tidende, quoted BBC News, 2.6.03
- [12] Telegraph, 30.5.03
- [13] Sun, 27.5.03
- [14] Telegraph, 31.5.03
- [15] S.Telegraph, 1.6.03
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- [19] FT, 19.5.03
- [20] www.EUobserver.com & also Mail, 19.5.03
- [21] S.Telegraph, 1.6.03

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