

## EM 'Brainstorm' – Friends Meeting House, Chichester 17<sup>th</sup> July 2018

### Purpose:

- Confirm that our objective is to Stop Brexit.
- Generate thoughts and ideas that a) may help shape the specifics of the campaign to win the right to a People's Vote, b) may help define what would constitute winning the vote once granted and c) would help win the vote as defined.

### Question 1:

*Given our objective, what should be the question on the PV ballot paper and what would constitute a win?*

Options discussed were

- Stay in the EU
- Accept the deal (what ever it is at the time of the vote)
- Reject the deal and risk a hard/no-deal Brexit
- Start again – Renegotiate with the EU

After some discussion the broad consensus was that Justine Greening's intervention on 16<sup>th</sup> July might be the best way forward for a People's Vote i.e. a three choices on the ballot paper:

- Stay in the EU
- Accept the deal
- Hard/no-deal Brexit

### Question 2:

*We know that the PM's Brexit 'plan' is a shambles and that the EU may reject all or parts of it. We know that the 'plan' will have to change/evolve further over the next 2-3 months. So how best for us as activists to challenge the plan and persuade voters that what we have now as an EU member state is better?*

This question provoked some heated discussion partly because in spite of the Chequers proposal/White Paper we don't know a) what the EU will accept/reject and b) what the deal will look like by the time of a parliamentary vote in October.

By the end of the discussion there was some agreement that between now and October the EM and other pro-EU groups must stay close to how the deal evolves and be prepared to campaign that nothing can be or will be as good as what have now as a member state. This should be done in bite-size chunks containing key messages about trade agreements, acquired rights, membership of agencies etc.

As a branch we should buy into the results of the Branches Forum audit carried out by Nick Hopkinson and which will be used as the basis for selecting key messages and design of new leaflets. Nick's document can be found here:

[http://www.europeanmovement.co.uk/the\\_case\\_for\\_a\\_peoples\\_vote](http://www.europeanmovement.co.uk/the_case_for_a_peoples_vote)

### **Question 3:**

*The PM and Brexiters such as Rees-Mogg are constantly repeating the two-year old mantra that Brexit will enable us to take back control of our borders, our money and our laws. We know that this mantra is corrupted by many falsities and much dissembling. How should we positively counter this claim?*

This was not controversial and a consensus was quickly reached that the EM and pro-EU groups must continue to challenge the falsities of the take back control mantra

- Find ways of holding the Brexiters to account for claims made .... Call out truths, challenge MPs, write to papers, post on social media.
- Keep up the pressure regarding the need for EU workers, in the NHS, agriculture etc.
- Note that preliminary figures for year-end 2017 show net non-EU immigration to be more than twice that of EU immigration.
- Demonstrate that the UK has always been able to exercise greater control over immigration but has failed to do so ... application of the three-month rule.
- Challenge the claim that EU migrants are taking jobs from UK citizens. This does not compute given government claims that employment is at its highest ever.
- Demonstrate that in any scenario other than a hard Brexit the UK will become a rule taker not a rule maker. Far from taking back control this means loss of control.
- Challenge the claim that our laws are made by 'unelected bureaucrats in Brussels'. Ask people to name one EU law that adversely affects their daily lives.
- Adopt a two-way challenge to the claim that we will take back control of our money a) with a balance sheet that shows the benefits we get for what is a very small proportion of our GDP and b) revive the key messages from the 'Brexit: Is it worth it?' bus tour i.e. the government's own assessments of the impacts on growth of the various Brexit scenarios. Campaign staff at Millbank to do the research to validate the financial facts.

### **Question 4:**

*"The status quo is not an option" (Lord Adonis)*

*The EU itself is ripe for reform. How do we persuade voters that it is better to 'stay' and help drive that reform?*

*What reforms would play to disaffected leave voters who used the referendum as a vehicle to protest at their economic and social condition, a condition mostly created by successive UK government policies, not the EU?*

This question was perhaps the one most difficult to get to grips with. It suggests that if we campaign to stay in the EU we must at the same time show how we, the UK, could pro-actively help drive reform of institutions, regulations and directives that will improve the lot of UK citizens. This would involve not just a national programme of reform and change but one that clearly recognises regional social and economic variances.

Such a programme of reform would benefit from early identification (now?) of those countries among the 27 who are or would be sympathetic to the argument for reform.

However, there is a further challenge to address the concerns of those who used the referendum as a protest vote. This would mean putting forward arguments to show that many aspects of leave voters' concern about immigration, housing, job security and living standards are more to do with domestic policies rather than anything to do with the EU. This would inevitably develop into a party political argument that may or may not help a pro-EU/ Stay campaign.

**Question 5:**

*The shambles of Brexit is fuelling claims of a definite swing towards remaining in the EU and that this is what a majority would vote for in a second referendum. Without simply repeating the challenge to the validity of the referendum itself, how can we substantiate these claims and build on them to help win the People's Vote?*

At this point we were running out of time. The main idea put forward was that the EM, perhaps jointly with other pro-EU groups should commission its own professional opinion poll to ask the questions:

- Have you changed your mind?
- If yes, why have you changed your mind?
- If no, what would make you change your mind

The results would be used to nuance the campaigning materials aimed at winning the People's Vote.

This suggestion will be put to the EM Chairman, Secretary and Campaign Director.

A further suggestion was made that the EM co-opts Michael Dougan, Professor of European Law and Jean Monnet Chair in EU Law, University of Liverpool, to assist its campaigning. Professor Dougan regularly makes anti-Brexit videos for public consumption on social media but these are often lengthy and probably only viewed by those who are already pro-EU or who are converted. Nevertheless, we should share these videos as and where we can.

**Question 6:**

*Answers to the above may help support the campaign nationally. But how can we better engage with other local pro-EU groups? How should we communicate with our MPs? How best to expend our time and effort in local campaigning come the Autumn?*

Like it or not, the best way to engage with other pro-EU groups is through social media. As a branch we should make better use of our branch Facebook page and twitter account.

The EM also has a Branch activists Facebook Page for Branch Chairs and active committee members to encourage networking among the branches. The page is subject to one simple rule that it is used for campaign related questions to each other or to EM HQ staff, or comments and feedback on campaigning activities. It is not used for posting 'interesting newspaper articles' The moderator will delete these as there are many forums out there that are more suitable for such posts.

Local campaigning in the Autumn will be the usual mix of branch meetings, street stalls, writing to MPs, newspapers, leaflet drops etc.