

BREXIT

In the recent journal (issue 58) we said that leaving Europe was a better option than staying. That said there's a long backstory. Last time we got to vote on the subject, it was an economic trading bloc and Roy Jenkins said that was as far as it was going. Commerce is the only economic driver on this planet. Making stuff makes money and although services make money they ultimately all derive that economic activity from somebody making something. Brits sorted out their manufacturing and export trade deals with Europe in the Bronze Age, before there were any governments.

That trade carried on into the Iron Age. Between Julius Caesar's expeditions and the invasion under Claudius in 43AD, Briton was exporting surplus produce to Europe and importing luxury goods. That's business. Having a government on top of that is a bit double edged: governments don't make money; they cream money off the top of business and use that to fund themselves. It's what they spend it on that counts: defence and infrastructure being the two that help generate more wealth and prosperity. Building palaces (Herod the Great, Henry VIII, Saddam Hussein) shows a healthy economy – or morally bankrupt thinking.

So when Roy Jenkins told us that the EEC wasn't going to develop into a political union, we knew he was lying. Small government isn't Europe's style. Spain, Germany and Italy were all fascist countries to whom democracy is a new trick and France is a centralised police state. Our reading of the runes in the 1970s was that Britain's permanent government – the civil service and police – wanted to follow the French model and ever since we went into Europe, a lot of the impetus to develop that police state style of government has come from Britain and is implanted in Europe by civil servants who ignore the puppets we elect.

The clauses in the policing and crime bill (currently before Parliament) were partly taken from the paranoid Law Commission scoping paper last year. They also flagged up their view that deactivated guns are a menace (without saying why or how) and are currently gloating about the clause in the bill that designates all currently deactivated pieces (mostly done to British government standards) as 'defectively deactivated' – and requiring reworking to a new European standard (since rejected in Europe) before they can be sold again. That clause was a British inspired knee-jerk reaction to the Paris shootings. The plan seems to have been to bring French and German deactivation up to British standards, as the British gun trade don't like competing with Europeans who don't have to work so hard on their products. Someone on the BBC said that the Paris gunmen might be using reactivated deactivated firearms before the gunfight was over, thus highlighting what someone thinks the problem is.

We thought the Paris attacks were in reaction to Europe's foreign policy failures in the Middle East and beyond. Political problems call for political solutions and once one has that – Northern Ireland as an example – the impetus to fight diminishes and the asset stockpiles of weaponry become a liability: Trident as an example. We were in discussions about redundant firearms with Irish sources more than twenty years ago – exploring ways of turning the eventual liability into an asset via deactivation.

That was derailed by deactivation guidelines changing in 1995 and government sources insisting on treating the IRA's proposed truce as a surrender in which they handed their weapons over. The weapons remain a complicated issue to this day, whereas if they'd been deactivated and sold with that

provenance they would have become a financial asset to politics instead of an unusable liability. Except in the Law Commission's views, which are that inanimate objects incapable of anything pose a threat to the police state.

So just that one clause in the policing and crime bill was enough to tip us in favour of leaving Europe. Doing so doesn't solve any of our problems, though. Our current Home Secretary has brought to the statute books more of the building blocks of the police state than any other politician since we joined Europe. Whether she's just blithely sleepwalking this stuff into law without regard for the consequences or whether she believes in the centralised European police state is not clear. What will be interesting is to see if she dumps the European stuff out of the bill in view of the Brexit result or whether she continues piling on the misery because we haven't left yet.

The good thing about leaving is that it takes the British pressure off the French to pass pointless paranoid firearms legislation, so although there may be no hope for the future of any of our hobbies in the UK, it'll be easier to carry on in France, where their attitude will relax once they get to grips with how to solve their terrorism problem.

We saw the Brexit vote result as truly fascinating, when broken down by areas. Scotland and Northern Ireland wanted to stay in, so the immediate aftermath chatter was of another Scottish referendum and should Ireland be reunited? Apart from London and some large conurbations, England and Wales wanted out. The Labour vote went heavily against the leadership's half-hearted wish to stay in.

We had trouble reading Jeremy Corbin on this one. Our best guess is that he's instinctively pro-Europe, from whence so much social justice legislation has come, but was uncomfortable agreeing with David Cameron about anything. In the event, he didn't read his party. The grass roots see the four streams of immigration as their key problem: economic migrants who come here to fill jobs are quite welcome, as that movement creates more wealth for all of us. The second stream is those 'economic' migrants who don't come here to work: these include those speculating that there will be jobs to be found, and more significantly, dependents of workers. They feature in the Labour votes' concerns because of their perceived impact on our infrastructure – schools in particular.

The other two streams are refugees and people from other countries mixing in with them. Nobody understands how they can live on the French coast in full view of the authorities without a problem, but have to find ways into Britain below the radar. Once in below the radar, they stay there: supported by family or people from their village already here, they'll work in the black economy, exploited by those who they thought were helping them.

Being in Europe seems to have created this problem, so staying in was no solution. We think it's been badly handled and staying in Europe would have gained more traction if the government had paid any attention to the public's concerns. We worry a lot less about whose making up the new rules than we do about unsolved problems like the people camping near Calais.

The current 'game' is what the Scouts called 'run-outs': get to the flag and you've made a home run. We think it should be changed to 'snakes and ladders': go collect them all from Calais in a fleet of busses, process them and return those who shouldn't be trying for entry to their county of origin same day. It's got to be cheaper than what the current system costs.

We were in Calais last summer when the cross-channel traffic was severely disrupted. There were ten miles of lorries there in all directions and more in Kent. Operation Stack filled the M20 and in all that, one lorry carrying fresh shellfish to the continent was held up so long the food went past its use-by date. More than £100K written off and that came straight off the company's corporation tax, or out of the government's pocket. One lorry, one day in disruption that lasted over a month. To do the math, lorries park up at roughly ninety to the mile.

Leaving these problems unsolved generates racism. Worried Labour voters see Polish delicatessens on every street and Jack Straw's idea that the government should destroy the knowledge of firearms in the UK rings hollow when one realises that almost all the eastern European men did their military service at home before coming here. There are more people in the UK now with first hand experience of self-loading rifles than there have ever been in our history. And that's before you add in the theoretical knowledge of the X-Box generation.

There is no fast solution to our problems, and we suspect it will get worse before it gets better. We point out in the journal that Lloyd-George's intention to restrict firearms to the upper class 'friends of the government' is still alive and well in Whitehall. What they have yet to figure out in the ivory towers is that it's our country too.