

'Inspiring Minds' Lunar Society Breakfast event, with Gisela Stuart MP

'Challenges for Britain following Brexit', BCU, 4 November 2016

Gisela's presentation

1. Tactically the need to rewrite the rules pre-dates Brexit, and Euro and migration crises require them to be rewritten anyway. Win/lose referendum doesn't answer question HOW to 'take back control' of borders, laws, etc.
2. Unlike Scotland (where SNP did lay out detailed independence proposals), there was no plan for desired outcome (on either side), and there is no 'tribe' to take responsibility for implementation of the result.
3. On Right acceptance of new realities of power (new PM within 1 week of 23 June); meanwhile
4. On Left 'Life of Brian' response – 'Don't mention the Referendum'; 'what did EU ever do for us?', etc
5. The crucial (irreconcilable?) difference is the clash between economic liberalism and social cohesion: need to 'soak up extremes' (excesses of globalisation vs national protectionism?)
6. Leavers and Remainers must now get together to write the new rules (see 'Change Britain' leaflet by Robert Salisbury and Maurice Glasman: proposes to start by repeal of European Communities Act). Project must be to get the right deal:
7. Need to go through legislation that will be repealed to check for key battlegrounds (eg workers rights, trading standards). Parliamentary votes on each to hold politicians feet to the fire: no-one is to be trusted
8. Labour heartlands will be lost unless the party fights for the 'right things'. Focus of Party activity is no longer 'getting out the vote' at elections, but engaging in political persuasion in between. Need to argue for steering a course between bureaucratic tyranny of over-regulation and mob rule of post-truth identity politics.

Discussion

1. Student Union – students voted remain; accept result (but not Amber Rudd's anti EU nationals rhetoric)
2. Risk to businesses of losing skilled employees returning to Poland (etc); need to continue collaboration in fields like climate change, industrial innovation, or find alternatives to EU quickly. 'Pause button' may not be helpful: extended period of uncertainty → 'bleeding to death'. NB role of NFU in seeking continuity in terms of substitutes for ERDF money (concentrated in areas that voted out)
3. Metal stockholder (400 jobs) – family firm, so can take 25 yr view but risk to confidence from uncertainty is very serious. Need to understand whether WTO environment would avoid serious disruption. EU colleagues warn that national governments could make this worse with a 'punishment mission'. 2 years uncertainty too long – should join EEA as interim position.
4. GS response: EEA stepping stone on way in to EU, not out. Risk of voters' revolt if basic in/out decision not implemented. Imperative to start the process by triggering Article 50.

Alan Wenban-Smith
5 December 2016