



The Euro Realist Bulletin

An occasional bulleting

campaigning for an EU free Britain &

Parliamentary sovereignty

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A NEW ANTI-EU GROUP LAUNCHED

On Saturday the 23rd January a new cross party anti-EU group was launched, which will add to the growing numbers of anti-EU organisations and groups now campaigning for the UK to leave the EU. The name of the new group is ‘Grassroots Out’ and is supported by a varied cross section of British political personalities.

At the event in Kettering, which was attended by 2000 people, prominent politicians such as UKIP’s Nigel Farage was joined by Labour’s Kate Hoey and Liam Fox of the Conservative Party, as well as others. Nigel Farage stressed that the group was not against Europe, but were opposed to the EU which wants to create political union, in effect a single country called ‘the United States of Europe’.

Former defence secretary Liam Fox, whose membership of the group was unveiled at the event, said: "If you cannot make your own laws or control your own borders you are not an independent sovereign nation." He added: "It is time to look forwards and outwards... It is time to take control of our own destiny."

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A DAFT DRAFT

What more proof is needed that Britain, a once proud sovereign nation, is now so subservient to the EU when our Prime Minister, David Cameron, has to ask an unelected foreign power if he can be allowed to change a few minor things to give the false impression he is governing the nation.

The PM has gone to the EU with his begging bowl asking for a few concessions, got far less than he wanted and is now promoting the daft draft of a deal to the people. Lord Stoddart said: "If he expects the British people to vote to stay in the EU based on this watery brew, then he is taking the electorate for fools."

Instead of a block on benefits for migrants, he got a fudge, instead of protecting sovereignty he got a red card system that relies on the backing of other nations, Cameron has failed miserably. Nigel Farage commented we must come together and get our country out of the EU.

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TRYING TO CHANGE THE WAY WE THINK

BY CHRISTOPHER BOOKER

The metric system - love it or loathe it, this is the strange story of how it was imposed on Britain over several decades, by stealth, deception and downright lies.

In recent days, as television news has brought us non-stop reporting on the terrible floods, we have yet again seen evidence of one of the odder things to have happened to Britain in our lifetime,

An official of the Environment Agency tells us that some river has burst its banks because it has risen by '5.2 metres', only for a shocked local to tell us that it is '17 feet higher than normal'.

Some hapless BBC reporter interviewing a flood victim outside his house solemnly informs us that the water is '300 millimetres deep'. But only when the homeowner tells us 'it's a foot deep in our living room' do most of us have an idea of what they are talking about.

What this illustrates us how we now have side by side two quite different systems of weights and measures in this country - one invariably used by government officials and the BBC, the other still used by millions of people because, for most everyday purposes, it seems to be much more sensible and easily comprehensible.

And part of the reason why so many of us now live in two different worlds like this, on something which touches almost every aspect of our lives, lies in a strange saga which has never been properly told.

In the year just ending, anniversaries of glorious events in our island story have come thick and fast - Magna Carta 1215, Agincourt 1415, Waterloo 1815, victory in the Second World War 1945.

But 2015 has also marked two anniversaries from a much less glorious story - one I have been following for 50 years as one of the murkiest episodes in the history of our supposed parliamentary democracy.

This is the story of how politicians worked to replace our old system of weights and measures with the 'much more sensible' and 'rational' metric system.



Christopher Booker: EU enforcing metric.

I am not here concerned with the pro's and con's of the two systems - although I shall touch on that later - but with the peculiarly dishonest tactics our politicians devised to bring about such a huge change in our British way of life without ever needing to consult our wishes.

Precisely because the politicians knew that such a far-reaching move would be highly controversial, they wanted to introduce it without ever allowing it to be debated or voted on by Parliament.

They sought instead to impose it on us, at every stage, by stealth, deception and downright lies.

The story began 50 years ago when, in 1965, a Labour government used a Written Answer buried at the back of Hansard to announce its intention to replace the weights and measures used in Britain since the time of the Roman empire (it was after this, not the British empire, that it was known as the 'imperial system').

The first lie was a pretence that the switch to metric was to be made in response to the wishes of British 'industry'. When years later I managed to unearth the relevant documents, it turned out that 'industry' had said nothing of the kind.

Under pressure from a small group of shadowy bureaucrats, the chief trade body representing businesses had certainly expressed interest in the possibility of such a change, since it would affect all its members. But it merely said that many were 'concerned' by its implications.

In 1968 came the second lie when, as the then-technology minister Tony Benn gabbled to MPs a list of his plans for the future, he slipped in his wish to see Britain 'fully metric' by 1975.

But this change, he insisted, would be entirely voluntary. 'Compulsion', he twice promised, 'is not part of the process' (hence no need for parliamentary debate).

Within months this was given the lie when his government issued a statutory diktat - the first of many - making it a criminal offence to sell drugs except in metric.

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In 1969 it set up a 'Metrication Board' to 'co-ordinate the process' and ruled that, after 1975, It would become illegal for anything but the metric system to be taught in schools.

During the 1970 election campaign, when I first revealed all this in a magazine article, one reader was so incensed that she badgered her would-be Tory MP into promising that Parliament would, for the first time, debate the subject.

It was only a short debate (which I attended). But when other Tory backbenchers heard of what was going on, they were furious that such an immense change to British life was being smuggled in by stealth,

In 1972, when Edward Heath was taking us into the European Common Market, he learned that Brussels planned a directive to ensure that all its members must use the metric system. He pleaded that this be kept under wraps until Britain was safely in.

But in 1973, after we had entered, Heath issued a Metrication White Paper, based on the wholly fictitious claim that Britain was only adopting the metric system in response to 'two polls' of industry. No such polls had ever taken place.

By 1978, under Margaret Thatcher, the Tories were pledged to have no more of it. No sooner was she elected in 1979 than she scrapped the Metrication Board.

In 1980 Brussels hit back by at last issuing its long-planned directive requiring all members of the 'European Community' to use the metric system (all except Britain and Ireland already did).

In 1985 the Thatcher government responded with a new Weights and Measures Act, confirming that the 'imperial' system would continue to be legal.

In 1989, Brussels issued a new directive designed to whip Britain into line - although, to soften the pill, this still allowed us to continue for a time using miles on road signs and pints (but only for beer, cider and milk).

It was this directive which 20 years ago in 1995 - our second anniversary - led to the Major government issuing a swathe of new statutory instruments making it a criminal offence to sell goods of any kind, including fruit and veg, except in metric.

Indeed the government went much further than the directive envisaged, by requiring the metrication of every aspect of British life, from evidence given in courtrooms to speed limits on our canals, along with thousands of local by-laws.

When some of us pointed out that this all resulted from Brussels directives, the minister who signed most of these diktats into British law,

Michael Heseltine, insisted that they had 'nothing to do with Europe'. This had been British policy, he said, 'since the Sixties'. But the very documents he signed

were being put into law under the 1972 European Communities Act - again without Parliament being given the chance to discuss them. .

When I was interviewed by a young BBC presenter at this time, he scornfully suggested that no one under the age of 40 had any idea what feet and inches were. When I asked him how tall he was, he replied 'five feet, 10 inches'. That bit of the interview hit the cutting room floor.

Nothing angered many British people more than when, in 2000, these laws made it illegal for market traders to sell fruit and veg by the old weights which most of their customers preferred - and this came to a head when a Sunderland stallholder Steve Thoburn was charged with the criminal offence of selling a 'pound of bananas'.

He and four other 'Metric Martyrs' took their case to the Court of Appeal, arguing that since, under the ancient rule that no Act of Parliament can be overruled by one passed previously, the 1985 Weights and Measures Act could not be negated by an edict issued under the European Communities Act of 1972.

To get round this argument, Lord Justice Laws craftily devised a wholly new legal principle. He ruled that the European Communities Act was a 'constitutional statute', so important that it could not be overturned by anything which came after it.

Many larger businesses, such as those making tinned foods, welcomed the confusion created by the new laws, as they reduced the contents of their old '1lb' tins (454 grams) to 400 grams, hoping customers charged the same price would not notice. **Continued on page 4....**

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In 1989, Brussels issued a new directive designed to whip Britain into line

Many other manufacturers, such as those making sweets and chocolate, played the same trick - even though the only reason why weights and measure legislation was backed by the criminal law was that this was to prevent customers being sold 'short measure'.

At least it still remained legal for shopkeepers forced to sell in metric to print the 'imperial' equivalent next to it. But in 2002 Brussels issued a new directive designed to make even this illegal, and again the UK dutifully complied. It would become a crime for retailers to make any mention of the old weights and measures at all.

The new laws continued to throw up ever more anomalies until, in 2007, many giant US corporations, such as IBM and Hewlett-Packard, were warned by a clever pressure group, the British Weights and Measures Association, that this new EU law would make it illegal for them to export anything to the EU unless its packaging, sales literature and much else was given only in metric. It would even become illegal for them to refer to a '42-inch' television screen.

The US firms protested so loudly - estimating that it could cost them billions of dollars - that Brussels at last backed down. Not only did it scrap its demand relating to US goods, it also withdrew its law banning any mention of non-metric measures within the EU itself.

So embarrassed was Brussels by the anger its metrication laws had aroused in Britain, that its trade commissioner issued a remarkable statement. He wanted the British to know that 'imperial measures', such as the mile and the pint, were 'the very essence of the Britishness that Europeans know and love'. The British could continue using imperial equivalents alongside metric weights and measures as long as they wished.

On this last, carefully phrased fudge, 40 years of deceit and chicanery more or less came to an end. Never again, it seemed, would a greengrocer be charged with a criminal offence for shouting 'lovely toms, a pound a pound' to customers who hadn't a clue what was meant by 'half a kilo'.

But one legacy of this bid to impose metrication on the British people without ever

consulting their wishes is that we are left with a strange hybrid system which is sometimes one thing and sometimes another.

Fervent supporters of metric scornfully insist that it is so much more 'rational' than that ridiculously antiquated system rightly consigned to the dustbin of history.

They try to overlook that the most modern and successful economy in the world, the USA, which landed a man on the moon in feet and inches, still somehow manages to survive with the imperial system.

And how many realise that the official EU definition of a metre is that it is 'the length equal to 1,650,763 wavelengths in vacuum of the radiation corresponding to the transition between the levels 2p(10) and 5d(5) of the krypton atom' You can't get more 'rational' than that.

(Those figures in brackets should be printed just below the line of the '2p' & '5d' in a way my computer cannot cope with)

[**Note by MP** - I don't know what Mr Booker means here and my machine probably could not deal with it either!]

In truth the only way metric is more user-friendly than imperial is simply that it divides and multiplies by 10,

But one thing I have learned from 50 years of observing all this is how, for everyday practical purposes, such as cooking or carpentry or measuring out a carpet, imperial wins every time.

We see this, as I said at the start, whenever reporters from the rigorously-metricated BBC come up against members of the public, as when they interview flood victims.

The reporter may dutifully tell us that the floodwater in someone's house has reached a depth of '300 millimetres'. But only when the victim tells us 'it's a foot deep' do we really have a picture of what is meant - just as when we are told that some new-born royal baby weighs '6 pounds, 8 ounces', rather than '2.72 kilograms' or even '2720 grams'.

Despite half a century of trying to change the way we think, I suspect that, for practical purposes, those dear old pounds, feet and inches will be with us for a long time yet.

Many thanks to Christopher Booker for allowing this article to be published here.

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SOME INTERESTING ALLIANCES

BY JOHN PETLEY

As the referendum draws nearer, one of the more interesting developments is to observe how “leavers” from both left and right are seeking to work together to secure the all-important vote to withdraw and are making significant attempts to bridge the sometimes substantial divide that separates them in many other policy areas.

It is one of the peculiarities of the UK that opposition to the EU can be encountered across such a broad political spectrum. Until recently, in the other member states, support for withdrawal has been confined either to the extreme left or the extreme right of the political spectrum. By contrast, in our country, many on the Thatcherite centre-right and some fairly mainstream Labour politicians like Austin Mitchell have been keen supporters of withdrawal.

This does, however, pose a problem. Potentially, left and right may have very different, even conflicting, reasons for wanting to withdraw. For instance, while the proven inability last year of the democratically-elected Syriza government in Greece to pursue a radical socialist mandate because of the EU has led to a revival of anti-EU sentiment on the left in the UK, those on the centre-right would be extremely reluctant to campaign for withdrawal from the EU on the grounds that it would enable us to re-nationalise our rail network!

One possible solution I have heard is to run two parallel campaigns, using different literature with different arguments in different areas. This, however, is fraught with problems. An issue which may encourage a Conservative-leaning voter to support withdrawal, such as scrapping some employment protection legislation, may alienate working-class Labour voters and result in their voting to remain. You couldn't easily keep two parallel campaigns watertight and distinct.

The best way of building a commanding majority is to focus on areas of common concern

across the political spectrum and this is not as impossible as one might think. Top of the list must surely be Parliamentary accountability. On the Campaign for an Independent Britain website www.campaignforanindependentbritain.org.uk, we have recently been running a series on the Common Fisheries Policy by John Ashworth of Restore Britain's Fish, which has exposed in no uncertain terms the duplicitous behaviour of ministers and Civil Servants, being willing to betray the livelihoods of thousands of UK fishermen, using all manner of deceit and misinformation. Whether one wants a minimalist government, the state to run our industry or something in between, surely we are all agreed that however big we wish the government to be, it should be honest and accountable.

Likewise, the idea of us being a democratic, sovereign state is not a left versus right issue. In the 1970s, the late Tony Benn was the *bête noire* of centre-right organisations such as the newly-formed Freedom Association (then known as the National Association For Freedom). However, many who might be uncomfortable with most of his political leanings would agree with him 100% when he said “I loathe the Common Market. It's bureaucratic and centralised, there's no political discussion. Officials control ministers and it just has a horrible flavour about it.” To his dying day, he remained an outspoken critic of the EU because of its lack of democracy.

On the subject of openness and democracy, one particularly hot potato at the moment is TTIP – the proposed US-EU trade agreement. On the face of it, a free trade agreement could be a divisive issue with centre-right free trade withdrawalist reluctant to criticise it and keen for us to piggy-back onto it if we withdraw from the EU, leaving the left-of-centre withdrawalists out on a limb as they express concern about the possible back-door privatisation of the NHS. **Continued on page 6....**

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Some Interesting Alliances continued:

Dig a bit deeper, however, and TTIP contains some sinister features. Why is there a thirty-year moratorium on the final documents being released? Why is an ardent socialist like the European Parliament's President Martin Schulz so keen to railroad it through, in spite of an anti-TTIP petition garnering over three million signatures? Built into TTIP is the ISDS - the Investor-State Dispute Settlement, which allows investors in one country to sue the government of another. In other words, the European Union, with the tacit support of our own government, is surrendering significant power to large corporations, or is it? Conflicting statements from the European Commission make it unclear whether the ISDS clause is to be in the final document or not.

All very opaque and worrying. Trying to read between the lines, it seems like the biggest beneficiaries of TTIP will not be the thousands of people who will find jobs as a result, but big business, the same companies who already spend substantial amounts in lobbying the EU. Is this really developing the free market beloved of the Thatcherite right? Inasmuch as we can "read the

runes" it looks horribly like crony capitalism – unquestionably dressed in more subtle colours than the massive sell-offs of state industries at knock-down prices to their mates in the 1990s by the leaders of some former Soviet republics, but still a million miles from the free, open society to which right-of-centre withdrawalists aspire.

In summary, the campaign to leave the EU is creating some unlikely bedfellows, but amazingly, in spite of real political differences, the left/right divides ARE being put to one side as common areas of concern are identified, such as those listed above. Speakers from left and right ARE sharing common platforms without coming to blows. This isn't to underestimate the challenge of maintaining an united front between men and women who are at time pretty strongly opposed to each other in many other aspects of policy, but both sides recognise the commitment to openness, honesty and democracy among their fellow-withdrawalists. This has to be a good thing. Framing the debate in terms of honesty and accountability may provide us with our best hope of victory, for it is all too apparent that our opponents don't have much to offer in these areas.

PEER ACCUSES CAMERON OF BEING CONTRADICTIONARY



Lord Stoddart: a successful future out of the EU

The Prime Minister, David Cameron has come under fire from the independent Labour Peer, Lord Stoddart of Swindon, over his contradictory tactics in Davos.

Lord Stoddart said: "How can we give any credence to a Prime Minister who one day says "Trust the people" with the European Union membership referendum but then at Davos appeals to international

financiers and multinational industries to help him make the case to stay in, if he achieves the minor concessions he has so meekly demanded?

"Comically, the EU countries at Davos are wringing their hands about the dire consequences for the EU and the United Kingdom

if our country decides to leave. We know that the EU would suffer from UK withdrawal because it has treated Britain as a milch cow for more than 40 years. In the process, it has crippled some of our great industries through over-regulation and prevented our own governments giving early aid to ailing industries, without its permission.

"Freed from paying billions of pounds every year to the EU coffers to subsidise our competitors and no longer subject to bureaucratic impositions from the unelected European Commission, our country would be able to thrive in the wider world and our young people could then look forward to happy and successful futures in an independent, democratic country, of which they could be justly proud."

He also rounded on Tory MP Nick Herbert for his "quite ridiculous use of language" and for trying to "scare people" into voting to stay in the EU, in the forthcoming referendum. Mr Herbert has described leaving the EU as a "jump into a void."

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FEELING THE HEAT

While useful EU idiots, such as Lord Rose the Chairman of the Britain Stronger in Europe campaign (BSE), use known false and misleading facts to convince the people of the UK they are better off in the EU, yet another example of expensive EU bureaucracy has been reported to show how he and his tricky cohorts are lying.

Around the same time he was being exposed for using discredited data in his attempt to con the British public they would be better off in the EU, the European Union itself was proving just how wrong he is. The press have been reporting that even simple oven gloves cannot escape the EU's costly bureaucracy.

The EU has decided oven gloves are to be produced up to industrial standards, adding greatly to the cost of manufacture and to the public. The people are feeling the costly heat of being in the EU.

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