



ACTION FOR EUROPE

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Rt Hon Philip Hammond MP
House of Commons
London SW1A 0AA

5th August 2017

Dear Mr Hammond

THE UK AND THE EU

We urge you as the senior and best informed Cabinet Minister to press for an urgent reconsideration of the question of how to deal with the UK's relationship with Europe.

We urge you to accept that the most democratic, pragmatic and ethical path, in the best interests of the nation, and equally of your own party, is to

- a) Permit Parliament itself to decide what action to take, with a debate and free vote on realistic options, including remaining, or:
- b) Plan now for a new referendum be held in early 2018, with full enfranchisement of all UK citizens, based on the real facts as then known, with a vote on specific realistic options:

Option 1. Accept whatever 'deal' may be on the table with the EU - even if in skeleton form - by the end of 2017.

Option 2. Reject any deal and vote for a departure "at any cost" in April 2019.

Option 3. Accept that the best deal for the UK is to remain a full member of the EU and to press for reform in areas such as free movement of labour. At the same time the Government will undertake to implement the existing EU rules permitting removal of right to stay from those who have not found work or cannot show independent financial means of support after three months .

Such referendum should be backed up by established facts issued by an impartial Committee of Inquiry and disseminated through all media by law.

These are the reasons:

1. Representative democracy and the flawed referendum

- a. The relative advantages and disadvantages of European Union membership are complex, and ultimately can only be decided upon on the basis of careful study and assessment.
- b. The concept of the referendum, in hindsight, was flawed. The simplistic option "Leave the EU" without precise further definition was virtually meaningless, as has become apparent.
- c. The referendum was not set up as a binding vote, and as a result no supermajority was properly debated on during the package of the 2015 Bill. The assumption that 50% should be a passing majority is a fiction created during the period of the Cameron administration.

c. The enfranchisement of the referendum was flawed in that it omitted two groups of British citizens who may be more directly affected by the result than any others : 16 to 17 year olds, and millions of UK citizens resident abroad for over 15 years. The latter group are already severely affected by the result.

e. The management of the referendum was flawed. There was no control of false information or false promises. You are well aware of the claims and promises made.

2. Interpretation and Implementation of “The Will of the People”.

a. The result of the advisory referendum was not a firm basis for action. It required only one voter in 50 to choose Leave instead of Remain to sway the result. Regular front page headlines in the popular press referring to “Migrant Crisis” and the like, promises to give £350 million a week to the NHS, Vote Leave misinformation such as ‘Turkey is about to join’, for example alone, must surely have influenced more than one voter in fifty.

b. It is known that many of the votes were ‘protest’ votes against Government policy or issues in general, in the expectation that Remain would prevail. There is strong evidence of change in public opinion since 23rd June 2016. To quote one formerly committed Leave voter who has reconsidered his decision:

“My view on an independent UK was predicated on vibrant leadership (to be discovered post referendum) stirring up the potential that we undoubtedly possess. Exactly the opposite has happened. Although against the concept of a super state my reason for voting Leave was as much, if not more than, to do with shaking up our political system. I would have been quite satisfied had the vote gone 52:48 in favour of remaining.”

c. The recent General Election resulted in denial of a mandate for Prime Minister Theresa May’s policies.

d. The considerable increase in registration by younger voters, who overwhelmingly voted Labour in that election, is a warning. Your party is at risk of being rejected as a viable choice by those under 45 year olds who were born European citizens and passionately wish to remain so. The inevitable progress of demographics is ignored at your peril.

e. The ‘Will of the People’ cannot be that £50-60 billion be spent on a self-destructive exit from the EU instead of supporting the NHS.

3. Democracy and populism

a. You know that the legal and moral obligation of each member of Parliament is not to blindly implement the simple majority vote of the advisory referendum, but to take the result into account together with other factors, not least being the best interests of the nation, and take action accordingly.

b. Democracy is not served by unthinking acceptance of a populist opinion poll taken on the basis of incomplete information. Genuine democratic choice requires full and correct information. The people of Britain did not get that.

4. Legality

As you know, there is considerable legal opinion that the purported Article 50 Notice is invalid due to the absence of an appropriate Act of Parliament. In the absence of such an Act, the Notice is meaningless, and further legal actions may result.

We urge you to save Britain and abandon Brexit.

Respectfully yours,

Richard Bird MA (Cantab)
Coordinator, Action for Europe (formerly *The 100 Group*)
with 1062 co-signatories as attached list