

Brexit An uncivil war

I watched this C4 film on Monday evening. It was a typical Remain influenced take on the referendum, and a missed opportunity to say something new about the campaigns.

The whole film was skewed to exploring the Leave campaign rather than the Remain campaign. I mainly watched it to see more of the background to Remain but was disappointed. The movie did not even include George Osborne in it, yet he was arguably the most influential Remain campaigner. Remain went mainly on Treasury matters and used endless amounts of UK Treasury and international finance materials. Peter Mandelson was only referred to in passing in the film though he too seemed to have a big role. There was no exploration of why the punishment budget did not work or how they came to run such irresponsibly false forecasts as they did for the short term period after a Leave vote.

There was no discussion of Project Fear or of why people did not believe the wildly wrong forecasts of a worse future. The Remain campaign was seen as the work of just one man, Craig Oliver. I don't know whether he will like his representation or whether the most revealing scenes of him and the campaign even happened.

We saw him inspecting the Remain headquarters at set up time and telling them if they did not meet his requirements he could run it out of Number 10. There was no discussion of whether this was appropriate or legal. We did not see them planning to send a leaflet at taxpayers expense just before the campaign proper began, seeking to use the power of government and the idea that this propaganda sheet was in some way the truth as a means of closing down debate.

We saw Mr Oliver shouting and swearing down the phone to the BBC, complaining that they were giving equal airtime to Leave when he was fielding "Nobel prize winners" for the news. This scene represented the Remain idea that the establishment had more right to a say and a vote than anyone else, and expressed the huge Remain frustration that the BBC and electorate were not being more deferential to the galaxy of establishment people they had lined up to endorse Remain. We saw no scenes of how all these people were approached and used. It would have been good to have seen how for example the President of the USA was persuaded to say "back of the queue" which became a famous moment.

We saw Mr Oliver completely lose his temper with a focus group when the members of it continued to resist the very clear establishment messages he had been sending out. In an unprofessional moment he broke into the room, took over the conversation and hectoring the people present to accept his view of the position. Some of them pushed back hard, showing how Leave voters simply did not believe the establishment dodgy forecasts and resented the hectoring tone Remain adopted throughout.

The message of the film if it had one at all was that clever ways of using

digital technology to contact voters won it for Leave. There was no consideration of the possibility that a large number of UK voters voted to take back control because that is exactly what they want to do. The popular wish for a proper democracy and the wish to be independent again somehow escaped the attention of this movie. It was like many other media commentaries patronising about Leave voters.

It had plenty of inaccuracies. It had Sir William Cash on the Vote Leave Board when he was a member and at the meeting featured. The representation of Sir Bernard Jenkin was very inaccurate.