

Brexit speech last night

One of the first votes I cast as a young man was to vote to leave the EEC in 1975. I read the Treaty of Rome and realised this was no simple common market. I thought we were being lied to by the establishment who told us we could veto anything we did not like and would not lose our sovereignty, as the Treaty made clear wide ranging ambitions by the Europeans on their chosen path to "ever closer union".

I accepted the democratic decision of the UK voters and did my best for many years to believe in the common market and to limit the EU's activities to those of a common market. I only called for a second referendum a generation later when several new Treaties had transferred large powers to the EU and it was quite obvious this was well removed from the common market people thought they had voted for. It was helping lead the campaign to keep the pound that marked the turning point. The UK's eventual rejection of the main feature of European integration meant we had to seek a new and different relationship from those countries signed up to the federal state agenda. I launched the idea that joining a single currency was like sharing a bank account with the neighbours. It turned out to be an accurate metaphor, and one which most UK voters rejected as a policy for our country. The Euro predictably caused intense economic distress in various Euro countries.

Tonight is an historic occasion. We are well on the way to being an independent self governing nation again. The government now needs to be firm as well as friendly to the EU in the talks ahead. We should not make any more concessions. Our fish are not be bargained away again, our laws must be under our sole control, and our money repatriated. The EU needs a Free Trade Agreement more than we do as it is such a big exporter to us, so we must stand firm in negotiation. The UK has been Treasure Island for the EU, both as a source of tax revenue for their plans, and as a great market for their exports. They should now be decent and honour their promise of a Free Trade Agreement with no penal clauses.

When we leave the Implementation period at the end of the year I will celebrate more. We will once again be that free independent country we were for centuries before we joined the EU. We will be a world leader for free trade, peace and democracy. We will regain our vote and our voice on international bodies. We will be true to our traditions of being engaged with Europe but not governed by Europe's main continental powers. The UK has long championed the rights of smaller nations, democracy and the importance of national self determination in Europe.

We will be free to set out own taxes, so we can remove VAT from green products, from repairs to charitable buildings and from female hygiene products.

We are already shaking off the Maastricht debt requirements as the central driver of our economic policy and replacing it with the aims of promoting growth and prosperity.

We will be able to pass the laws that people want, and spend all our tax revenues on our priorities.

I always thought myself lucky to be born into a country that so valued and defended freedom and democracy. I was always humbled by the knowledge of the sacrifices my grandparents and parents made with their generations to keep us free.

Tonight I am again proud to be British, and optimistic that we can do so much better once we have truly taken back control.