

Mrs Merkel backs a Euro budget, Euro Treasury and Euro Economics and Finance Minister

Today we learn that Mrs Merkel is responding positively to Mr Macron's overtures for a more integrated EU government with more power and larger budget. It will be interesting to see just how much extra money in practice Germany wants to put behind these centralising initiatives.

How we agreed to leave the EU

I find it extraordinary that people still write in here criticising me for not recommending withdrawal from the EU during the last century. As I have explained, as a democrat I accepted the verdict of the 1975 referendum to belong to a common market. That meant I did not keep on campaigning for a cause which was lost. I did keep criticising the EEC/EUU for moving further and further away from the common market people thought they had voted for. I did with others seek to create an opposition to the EU's more dangerous and undesirable policies. In the 1980s that meant trying unsuccessfully to stop UK membership of the Exchange Rate Mechanism, and in the 1990s successfully campaigning and writing books to stop the UK joining the Euro. In the first decade of this century I worked as part of the official opposition to oppose the treaties of Nice, Amsterdam and Lisbon which took the EU far beyond the common market of the 1975 referendum.

It was while helping the Conservatives form a Eurosceptic policy and argue the case against the new Treaties in Parliament that I and some others decided we had to help get the UK out of the EU. It was obvious it was going swiftly in a direction that had not been approved by the 1975 referendum and was likely to prove unpopular with the voters. Our task was made more difficult by the Labour government and establishment presentation of all the centralising changes as having no more significance than an edition of the Beano. Anyone who stood against these moves had to be personally vilified and marginalised in case their reasoned objections gained wider support.

The arrival of UKIP on the scene made things more difficult. I had many arguments with contributors to this site, and with correspondents around the country who wanted me to join UKIP. I refused to for two good reasons. The first was I do not agree with all their policies. The second, more important, was that I saw them making the task of getting us out of the EU more difficult, not easier. I explained that there was an easier route than expecting the public to elect a UKIP government. I always thought it unlikely

the public would elect a single UKIP MP let alone the 330 it would need to do the job of leaving the EU. As it turned out the public did once vote for one UKIP MP in a General election, one more than I expected. He was a former Conservative MP with his own following who promptly fell out with the UKIP leadership who did not like his views on a number of topics.

I pointed out those of us who wanted to leave had to do 3 difficult things. First, we had to help secure the election of a Conservative government. Second, we had to persuade that government to hold a referendum. Third, we had to win that referendum. As things worked out we were able to use the partial Conservative victory in 2010 to good effect. During the 2010 Parliament we built support amongst Conservative MPs for a referendum. When we demonstrated rebel voting strength at more than 100 with convincing prospects of commanding a majority in the Parliamentary party for a referendum Mr Cameron decided to make it official policy to hold one. He saw the strength of our case and realised that we could get the voting strength to replace him as leader if he was deaf to the cause. It was entirely the position inside the Conservative party that we were arguing about to secure the referendum. We did not sit around discussing how to deal with UKIP, as many of us agreed with their main aim of quitting the EU.

United the Conservatives went into the 2015 election offering the important popular vote on the EU. The rest is better understood history.

[The UK can easily calculate the exit bill – it's nothing](#)

We hear that Mr Barnier wants the UK to set out its calculation of the exit bill. That's easy. The bill is zero. Nothing. Zilch.

I read that Mr Barnier thinks we owe them £66bn. So he needs to present his draft bill, and the UK can explain why it's a load of nonsense. There is no Treaty article requiring a departing member state to pay extra for the period after it has left. The UK did not receive a present or rebate on joining to take account of the liabilities existing members had entered into before we were sitting round the table, so why would there be one in reverse when we leave? The EU has had plenty of notice of our departure so they can adjust their 2020 budgets accordingly.

Many of us who just want to leave thought about recommending that the UK simply legislate in the UK Parliament to leave and go. That would be well within our constitutional rights and in accordance with our wish to take back control. We agreed to make a big gesture to the EU to go along with the Treaty over the matter of leaving, knowing that left us exposed to having to pay additional regular contributions to the EU up until the date of departure. The EU wants more. We have already been very generous. Doubtless

the EU will want to spin the talks out for the maximum permitted two years to pocket more of our money.

I read that Labour now wants to undermine the UK's position by arguing to pay the EU more money for longer. It's always good to see the Opposition sign up to very unpopular policies. Parliament will not I trust vote for that act of self abuse, when we need the money to spend on domestic priorities.

Labour's change of policy on the EU

This Parliament recently decided that the UK will leave the Customs Union and the single market when we leave the EU. That was approved by 322 to 101. The official Labour party could have voted against but chose not to. If they had voted against the motion would still have carried, but Parliament would have sent a more divided opinion to the EU. This clear vote followed the decisive vote of the previous Parliament to send the letter notifying them of our departure, which left the EU in no doubt of our intentions.

Does this latest statement that they now want to stay in the single market and customs union for a longer time truly represent the Leadership's views? What do all those Remain voting Labour supporters make of this latest apparent flip flop? Presumably the aim was to try to weaken the government's position just one day ahead of important talks with the EU, as a warm up to Mr Blair's audience later in the week with the EU Commission on the same issue when he will doubtless want to argue for some kind of continued or watered down membership of the EU for a country which has democratically voted to leave.

The Opposition is making themselves an irrelevance on this important issue by flip flopping around following their sensible statements to back our leaving the EU after the referendum decision. Their weak and feeble changes will not in practice undermine the government's resolve but is not designed to be helpful to the country they are meant to serve.

Building work in Wokingham and West Berkshire

Today when I was having another of my walks to inspect the work and hear feedback on what is happening to Wokingham town centre a constituent came up to me to say how worried she was about the volume of development going on.

She was pleased to see I was viewing it and surprised to learn I do that every week! She also on reflection said she agreed with the idea of Town Centre improvement, and was more concerned about the scale of housing developments in the wider Borough.

Let me explain again to all those interested. I visit Wokingham, Earley and Winnersh every week and travel through them on many occasions. I live in Wokingham Borough, shopping and using local facilities. I visit the villages in the west of the constituency regularly as well. I walked around all of them in the recent election, and went to Burghfield for an event a week ago. I usually go to see any area where a complaint or problem has emerged where it is better to see it for myself on the ground. In the last few days I have visited Wokingham Town Centre and the Emmbrook area to see progress with building, have been to Arborfield following constituents concerns, to Winnersh and the Earley peripheral to see progress on the Winnersh by pass and to Shinfield to see the continuing delays with completion of the Shinfield by pass where it crosses the motorway.

I keep in regular contact with Wokingham and West Berkshire Councils, as most of the development and traffic issues are Council ones, so that they know what concerns my constituents and where people would like improvement or better service.