

“We don’t believe you” briefing to foreign press in London

“We don’t believe you” thunder the people as the EU tells them that their international rules based system is right for people’s lifestyles and aspirations. Populist movements around the EU are voting into office new parties that challenge the EU orthodoxy on austerity, the Euro, climate change, international relations, migration, control of the media and much else. Today there is a row over who should lead the EU as President of the Commission, given the very fractured party base within the new European Parliament.

There is a feeling amongst many voters that the EU does not advance living standards quickly enough. Its insistence on austerity economics through the Maastricht controls coupled with the statement there is no alternative produces the reply “We don’t believe you”

Its failure to control its external borders is allied to a foreign policy that supported Middle Eastern wars that displaced more people. The Dublin Agreement is breaking down, where the original member state offering asylum or a place for an economic migrant is meant to be responsible for housing and looking after them. The issue of migration reveals a growing gap between what the elite think and what the populists want.

The EU dislikes the social media which carries growing criticism of its policies as well as fake news and cyber attacks. The populists are suspicious of the extent to which the EU wants to regulate and control the media, and are scornful of any traditional media who just accept EU spin.

This gulf is not unique to the EU. Similar feelings in the USA led to the defeat of Mrs Clinton and to victory of Trumpism. The UK avoided the collapse of the major parties experienced on the continent in the 2017 General election, thanks to their joint support for Brexit which saved Conservative and Labour. When these parties delayed or deviated from Brexit they collapsed in the European election. In Brazil there has been a populist tide as well.

In the EU it is remarkable how most of the great centre left and centre right parties of the twentieth century have allowed themselves to be wiped out or blown away by new challengers owing to their rigid adherence to the EU and Euro policy mix. French politics is now a contest between En Marche and National Rally, with the Republicans and Socialists also rans. In Italy Lega and Cinque Stelle dominate. Even in Germany, the one big winner from the Euro and EU policy, the SPD and CDU command less than half the vote between them these days.

What has led to this huge destruction? The collapse of living standards at the end of the last decade and the slow growth since has not helped. The mass migrations were unpopular, brought on by backing Middle Eastern wars which displaced many people from their homes. The insistence on the Maastricht

criteria and the austerity policies of tax rises and spending cuts have jarred over such a long time period. Ask Gilet Jaune protesters what they want and they will probably say tax cuts. The concentration on dear energy and restrictions on personal mobility to tackle global warming have also caused issues with the populists, visible in the Gilets Jaunes attack on speed cameras and demand for cheaper vehicle fuel.

Throughout the continent many voters disagree with the priorities of European government as well as with its policies.

John Redwood " We dont believe you" book available through Amazon