

Why I am happier now we have left the EU

The worst job I was given in government was the UK's single market Minister. I held it at the time of maximum activity, with the EU claiming it needed to hurry through a substantial number of new laws to complete the so called single market programme for 1992. They wished to regulate so many different sectors and activities in the name of freer trade. I found myself in disagreement with the underlying theory. You do not need to standardise everything to have a successful market. You do not need to lay down required methods or standards for every good and service to be offered for sale. It seemed as if the single market was being used as an excuse for a large expansion of EU power.

The EU believed in the doctrine of the occupied field. Starting from a position where member states made their own laws and enforced their own justice, the EU wished to get to the point where the EU made most of the laws and had superior powers to national legislatures to impose and enforce their preferred ways of doing things. If the EU could get any directive or regulation agreed for a new sector or area, however weak or general, it could then go on to more detailed legislation on the grounds that it had already established its competence in the chosen area.

The EU also practised code based law where they wished to set out in detail what you could do rather than the common law approach where you could do as you wish subject to specific bans or general duties to act safely, responsibly etc. To me a single market just required the enforcement of a rule their court had already established in the cassis de Dijon case. If a product was offered for sale and was of merchandisable quality in one country in the EEC then it could be offered for sale in another without further regulation or checking. Labelling would tell customers sufficient so they could make their own decisions about whether they wanted to buy a product from another country.

I found the EU was hectoring and bullying if you objected to their legislative proposals. Meetings were always being pressured to pass more laws, whether the laws made sense or were good or not. I had to spend a lot of time trying to build blocking groups of countries against draft laws which I thought particularly damaging or needless. It was never ending work as the Commission and rotating Presidencies were merciless in wanting to get laws through in bulk. When I protested that people would not want an extra law on a topic the reply usually disparaged the people, as they did not approach lawmaking in a democratic way.

Now we are out we can refine our common law system which is more useful to the rest of the world than the EU code system. It is very disappointing that so many people in the UK governing establishment are unable or unwilling to grasp and use our new freedoms, but great to know we can if we wish. The EU still wants to treat us as a naughty member who needs to obey their rules. The

UK government needs to move on from the misery of compliance rows over their spiders web of controls. Time to use and enjoy our freedoms.