

Why I want to leave the so called single market

I accepted the verdict of UK voters as a young man in 1975 when I was on the losing side of the referendum on staying in the EEC. I decided I had to make the best of it. When I entered Parliament I tried to limit the EEC/EU to what people voted for, a common market. My worry had always been it was a much mightier political project, but Remain always told us in the early years it was not a currency and political union in the making. Later of course it became obvious that it was a currency union, with a political union in the offing.

So what changed my mind about the common market part of it? It was being given the role of Single Market Minister in the 1990s, when the EU wished to "complete" the single market. That turned out to be a double lie. The EU did indeed have a massive legislative programme which it called the single market programme in those days, and did more or less complete the stated programme by 1992. It then went on to invent many more legislative programmes in the name of its new creation for many years afterwards, proving the single market was in its view no where near completed in 1992 despite the claims. It was also misleading, because as I discovered it was not primarily a programme to open and liberate a wider market. It was a huge power grab. It thrived on the doctrine of "the occupied field", pressing EU legislation into many new areas in the name of the single market to take powers away from national democracies and to place them in the hands of unelected Commissioners and European Court judges.

As I used to point out to the bureaucratic, legal and regulatory minds assembled, you only need one simple rule to have a common market. That rule, established in a famous European Court case, states that if a product is of merchandisable quality and has passed the tests to be offered for sale in one part of the common market, it should also be allowed for sale anywhere else in that market. It does not mean British people have to suddenly develop a passion for German sausage or French people need to learn to love English cheese. It does mean that as Germany tells us their sausage is fine for consumption their sausage makers should be allowed to offer it to British consumers to see if they want to buy it. It means each part of a common market has to trust each other part for their standards of safety, hygiene and the rest, or allow only limited specified national overrides for public health and safety but not much else to restrict the flow of goods.

Instead the EU embarked on a comprehensive legislative programme to superimpose EU law on top of member state law to govern everything from food standards to control of hazardous chemicals, and everything from labour rules to environmental protections, all in the name of the single market. The laws often told businesses how they were to make or design something. It was very clearly a programme to create a supranational government. It soon replicated all the main departments of national governments, with a foreign policy, a security and defence policy, an environment, transport and employment policy

and much else.

The market part of it proceeded by the Commission working with the dominant companies of the day in each sector to draw up a set of rules which would be required of everyone. These rules were welcomed by the big business that helped inform them, because they already met them. They were opposed by some big businesses which had not been so successful in lobbying and drafting. They often acted as restraints on competition and innovation, as they prescribed the way firms were allowed to make and sell things. These rules were imposed in the name of cross border trading, but were also mandatory for the much larger flows of goods and commerce within each individual member state where they were not needed to assist international trade and might override perfectly good familiar national systems. Many smaller businesses found the extra cost of EU regulation, and greater prescription, made market entry and offering competitive product more difficult.

In the first ten years of our membership of the EEC our motor car output halved, unable to face the onslaught of German and French competition without tariffs and under EEC rules. Meanwhile in the areas where we were strong in services no similar market opening occurred, leaving us a growing and large balance of payments deficit which has persisted to this day. I came to the conclusion that the single market was not designed to help the UK, and we would be better off making our own rules and running our own global trade policy.