

Why was there never any opposition to EU policies from Labour, the Lib Dems and Greens?

One of the things I most disliked about our period of membership of the EU was the complete absence of effective opposition to many of its plans, policies and laws. Policies that would have produced howls of protest if recommended for domestic decision by a Conservative government went through unopposed or little observed as long as they came from Brussels.

In the EU itself the Council of Ministers acting as legislature usually met in secret session. There was no formal opposition to expose the problems with a proposal, so it was only draft laws that annoyed a particular member state government that got any proper scrutiny. The European Parliament was a bit more capable of voicing criticisms, but contained an overwhelming majority of representatives who welcomed extensions of EU power and were therefore often willing to go along with new laws as each one helped with that aim.

It is bizarre that the Green party has never in the UK kicked up a big fuss about VAT on green products, for example. Strange that Labour and the Liberal Democrats offered no opposition to the UK joining the Exchange Rate Mechanism, one of the worst economic policies pursued post war. They otherwise opposed any Conservative government economic policy that was made in the UK. Where was Labour's voice demanding a more ambitious renegotiation when Mr Cameron set out to buttress the UK's membership of the EU by seeking only modest reforms to try to reflect growing public disquiet with what the EU was doing?

Instead Labour in office 1997-2010 and Labour in opposition 2010-15 tried to avoid talking about the EU as much as possible, and tamely allowed EU measures to pass without criticism. The EU was able to give us the beef crisis, the fishing discards disgrace, the ERM recession, the movement of people well ahead of the Labour's government's planning figures, dear energy and much else besides without a squeak of protest. This lack of criticism over so many huge areas of policy made more voters sceptical of the project and worried about what it was doing to our robust tradition of criticism of governments. The ERM alone cost us around 6% of our National Income, or £120bn a year!

Now we have Mr Corbyn apparently taken hostage by the Blairites, now saying he wants us to stay in the single market, customs union and freedom of movement area. That will drive a big wedge between him and the many Brexit supporting Labour voters in the northern cities.