

EU DEBATE, 4.2.16.

Alistair Black (RISE), Donny Gluckstein (SWP), Dr. Myrto Tsakatika (Syriza-Scotland)

Two of the original billed speakers Professor Jo Shaw (non-aligned) and Neil Davidson (RS21) both gave their apologies. Alistair Black (RISE), Donny Gluckstein (SWP) and Dr. Myrto Tsakatika (Syriza-Scotland) put forward the arguments for and against leaving the EU. Sally Wainwright RIC chaired the meeting. 50 people attended. After the introductions the meeting was then organised into break-out groups. Instead of time-consuming report-backs from all the groups, each was asked to produce post-its of the points it wanted raised, either as questions or contributions. Below is a compilation of all these points. These will be circulated throughout RIC.

There will be a further opportunity to discuss the issue at the forthcoming national RIC conference in Edinburgh on Saturday 20th February (see <http://radical.scot>)

QUESTIONS COMING FROM THE BREAK-OUT GROUPS

1. Where can we get accurate information about the EU?
2. How do we bring more people into the discussion?
3. Is leaving the EU a question of principle or tactics?
4. Would the UK be better off out of the EU?
5. How does EU policy actually limit British law/action? What are the economic and worker right advantages/disadvantages of being in the EU?
6. How much could we change the EU without leaving?
7. What would the UK look like out of the EU?
8. What would the EU look like without the UK?
9. What are the economic and political forces behind staying in and leaving?
10. How would migrant workers be better off if the EU left the EU?
11. Will there be an amnesty for EU citizens currently in the UK if there is out of the EU?
12. If there is a 'Leave' vote what happens to UK citizens living in Europe?
13. Would we take in more refugees if there was a 'Remain' a 'Leave' vote?
14. What would happen the day after a 'Leave' vote?

15. A number of groups associated with the protection of the environment have said that the UK leaving the EU would have a detrimental effect. So what do people feel about this?
16. What does the Left in the rest of the EU say about whether the UK should leave?
17. Would a 'Leave' vote encourage other countries to leave?
18. Can we harness the optimism of Syria?
19. How much potential is there for pan-European worker cooperation?
20. Should we be taking into account other trends, such as the rise of Bernie Sanders (US) and Jeremy Corbyn?
21. Are we heading for another banking crisis and if so how does that affect things?
22. Is it easier to fight from inside or outside the EU?
23. Is it easier to fight the Tories than the Tories and EU?
24. Is Scotland more pro-EU?
25. What happens if Scotland votes to stay and England votes to leave?
26. Would getting a 'Remain' vote and a second Scottish independence be more difficult if the whole of the UK is outside the EU?
27. How long would it take to complete Brexit and what effect would a prolonged negotiating period have on UK politics?
28. Would the EU bureaucracy recognise a Brexit vote or would it push for a rerun, like it did with Ireland over Maastricht?
29. Why am I still confused?!

CONTRIBUTIONS MADE IN THE BREAK OUT GROUPS

GENERAL POINTS

1. The referendum opens up a new political option with greater turnout and interest in politics, where the Left could be influential in the debate.
2. We need a non-party campaign.
3. We need country wide political educational programme - popular education.

4. The economic forces behind Brexit are mainly small businesses, which fear EU competition and have no clout within the EU.
5. The main economic force for staying in are those larger businesses with markets in the EU and which can have influence on the EU through lobbying etc..
6. The banks look more split. Some favour the wider market in finance, others fear EU regulation and are turning East (e.g. China).
7. The Tory Right and UKIP are currently the main forces behind Brexit. They want the UK as an offshore economy able to undercut the EU, and with much fewer migrant workers, and not subject to any progressive EU legislation.
8. The Far Right, the BNP, EDL, SDL, WDL and the Ulster Loyalists want Brexit.
9. Cameron and his Tory backers are the main force for staying in a renegotiated EU, with fewer rights for immigrants and a further weakening of the Social Chapter.
10. The Blairite wing of the Labour Party and the Lib-Dems want to remain in the EU. They could form a 'Better Together' Mark 2 with Cameron.
11. Corbyn used to be an abstentionist, but under pressure from the Blairites has become more pro-EU.
12. The SNP is for a 'Remain' vote, believing the EU benefits Scotland and that Scotland needs more migrant because of an ageing population.
13. A section of the 45%ers also want a 'Remain vote in Scotland, but a 'Leave' vote in England to precipitate a second independence referendum.
14. Jim Sillars, Jim Fairlie and the ultra-Nats want a 'Leave' vote.

ARGUMENTS RELEVANT TO 'REMAIN', LEAVE' OR ABSTAIN

1. We need to join with the people of Europe to challenge the big institutions of capitalism.
2. Don't just focus on the institutions it is about movements.
3. The real issue is building collective resistance. Greece would have been broken by big capital whether it was in or out of the EU.
4. Separate the legitimate demands for a borderless Europe from the EU as an institution.
5. The main forces behind the official pro-EU campaign and behind Brexit are both pro-TTIP.

6. We need a vision of a socialist Europe.
7. Cameron's decision to not allow the 1.5million EU residents the vote, shows who the Tories are targeting (c.f. the Scottish independence referendum where EU residents had the vote).

'REMAIN' ARGUMENTS

1. History of peace in Europe since EU formed is important.
2. The free movement of labour has brought about greater multiculturalism and more vibrant culture.
3. We should remain for tax justice: EU gives us bank bonus tax. There is an ongoing discussion on a Financial Transaction Tax, and another on EU wider Corporation Tax'.
4. The Right want greater freedom undermine democratic rights and what's left of the EU's Social Chapter.
5. Environmental regulation to be successful needs to operate across the EU.
6. Victory for Brexit would mean more racism weakening the working class
7. It is the UK not the EU which is putting up barriers at Calais.
8. It would be the Right and the Far Right who would be celebrating on the streets the day after a 'Brexit' vote, just as they were on September 19th after the 'No' to independence vote.
9. Brexit would lead to the reappearance of border posts between north and south of Ireland, strengthening reaction, particularly the Loyalists.
10. It is the Right and the Far Right that form the majority wanting to leave the EU in most member countries.
11. Varoufakis (Syriza ex-Finance Minister) is organising the Democracy in Europe 2025 Movement to unite opposition across the EU.

'LEAVE' ARGUMENTS

1. The EU is an anti-democratic bosses' club.
2. The free movement of labour has led to lower pay and worse conditions in some sections of the economy, e.g. agriculture.

3. The Common Agricultural Policy mainly benefits rich farmers, is environmentally disastrous and leads to dumping in Third World countries at the cost of poor peasants.
4. The EU did not stop the war in Bosnia or Kosova.
5. The EU did not stop civil war in Northern Ireland or Euskadi.
6. The EU's Schengen Agreement is directed against migrants from the rest of the world.
6. The EU is renewing internal borders to stop migrants.
7. Germany's treatment of Greece shows that the EU is an alliance for economic purposes, not for justice.
8. The humiliation of Syriza shows that the Left can not adopt a pro-EU stance.
9. The position of migrants is not dependent on EU, Norway and Switzerland have bigger proportion of migrants than many EU members.
10. The position of workers not dependent on EU agreements but collective organisation of workers.
11. The Let needs to form its own Brexit campaign.

Other articles on RISE-Edinburgh blog relevant to the EU debate

THE CURRENT SITUATION IN GREECE - KIMON BUKAS (ANTARSAYA)
<http://radicalindyedinburgh.blogspot.co.uk/2015/09/the-current-situation-in-greece.html>

THE EU REFERENDUM - DEBATE BETWEEN ALLAN ARMSTRONG RCN AND
DONNY GLUCKSTEIN SWP
<http://radicalindyedinburgh.blogspot.co.uk/2015/06/the-eu-referendum.html>