

Giampi Alhadeff

There is no hiding our extreme disappointment at the result of the June 23rd Referendum and our conviction that our country has inflicted severe damage to itself and to the European Union. The “**Leave**” campaign, with its xenophobia, hate, lies and support from the majority of the **UK's** print media won the day, but not by a great margin.

As the LME, we are proud of our efforts in the campaign. We played a key role with others to ensure that the Labour Party had a coherent pro-EU message in the run-up to the Referendum. Then during the campaign, we were reaching up to 200K people on Facebook each week; with Progress we trained activists in 15 different locations nationwide; our members spoke at meetings nationwide and campaigners from across the country and from Brussels Labour played a vital role door-knocking and fundraising. And then in the week before the Referendum we had LME campaigning buses in Scotland, the North East and London.

The anger and resentment that was unleashed by the Leave campaign was unprecedented in this country. Jo **Cox's** brutal murder, the murder of a great internationalist, pro-EU MP, was the ugly side of the anger that was let loose. An anger that continues to fester in our society. The Brexiters may well succeed bringing the number of migrants down. Suddenly our country is less attractive and open and many a fellow EU citizen are choosing not to come to the UK, whilst others not feeling welcome are choosing not to stay.

Whilst the British political world and commentators try to find a way forward from the mess we have been landed in, with the election of Donald Trump, the world has changed and become less predictable. The EU is also going through very troubled times. The Italian constitutional Referendum and the Austrian, French and Dutch elections. have understandably downgraded the importance of the **UK's** exit from the EU. Meanwhile the difficulties the UK decision to leave is creating increase each day.

The Government intends to trigger Article 50 by the end of March. It is hoped that the Supreme Court decision expected in January will agree with that of the High Court so that the Government will have to seek the approval of Parliament before triggering Article 50. In that situation, it is of vital importance that the Government be obliged to report to Parliament on the substance of the Article 50 negotiations at regular intervals, rather than presenting MPs and Peers with a take or leave it vote at the end of the negotiations.

The Labour Movement for Europe campaigned vigorously for the United Kingdom to remain a member of the European Union, believing that EU membership was good for jobs, investment, peace and prosperity. However, a majority of British electors voted to leave the EU. The Government therefore has a mandate to negotiate leaving the EU, but no mandate to agree terms that will damage the United Kingdom and its people. One thing is however clear: UK voters did not vote to be poorer or less protected.

It is clear that the Brexit negotiations will be front page news for the foreseeable future. It is therefore incumbent on us to organise ourselves for a long fight.

The Labour Movement for Europe will, therefore, in the national interest we will campaign to:

- Stay in the Single Market, vital for our economy, inward investment, jobs and prosperity.
- Keep Freedom of Movement, a key element of the Single Market, but insist on Fair Movement implementing all the existing, but unused safeguards, closing down self-employment loopholes, combatting exploitative employers and re-establishing the Migration Impact Fund to assist relevant areas.
- Continue to comply with European standards on consumer protection, workers' rights and the environment, to prevent a **'race to the bottom'**.
- Remain in essential cooperative frameworks, such as the Erasmus+, Medicines Agency, EUROPOL, the European Investment Bank, the Chemicals Agency, Research Programmes, and the Air and Maritime Safety Agencies.
- Ensure that the negotiation process is conducted with maximum transparency and democratic accountability, with regular reports to Parliament and votes on key choices.

And if the Government negotiates a Brexit deal is bad for the UK, Parliament must - in serving the nation - have the right to challenge it.

The elephant in the room is the issue of immigration. The Labour Party is not in tune with many of our voters. Immigration has enriched us, both culturally and economically, yet the pace of change in some parts of the country has been de-stabilising. Freedom of Movement is a conditional right. There are important restrictions which Britain has failed to use to anything like the extent that other EU countries do. EU citizens are not automatically entitled to claim benefits or receive NHS treatment. Moreover, the UK could do more to close self-employment loopholes; strengthen **workers'** rights and combat exploitative employers; and finally re-instate the Migration impact fund established by Gordon Brown and catastrophically scrapped by the Tories in 2010. This could be funded by using the £2.5 billion contributed by migrants to the UK budget.

To be able to mount an effective campaign we must continue to work with Labour Party Members and supporters:

1. Increase the number of CLPs that we are affiliated to and who are affiliated to us.
2. Ensure an LME presence in each English Region, Wales and Scotland.
3. Produce a fortnightly newsletter with information about key developments.
4. Step up our social media campaign.
5. Employ campaigning staff working part-time.
6. Launch a fundraising campaign to fund the above.

Our relationship with the EU will dominate the political agenda for many years to come. It is our opinion that the outcome of negotiations will leave the UK worse off, however at this stage this view is not shared by the majority of the electorate. Reversing those perceptions is our challenge.

Giampi Alhadeff, Labour Movement for Europe, National Chair - December 2016