

Countering EU Spin, Fear and Negative Campaigning

The use of spin, (hyperbole, selective information, dubious comparisons, endless simplistic repetition etc.) and deceit to mislead, and negative political campaigning, that almost exclusively attacks opponents to induce fear or distract the electorate, says a great deal about the perpetrators. In particular such behaviour shows that they have contempt for truth, voters, and democracy which exist only to be manipulated to serve their own ends. It also demonstrates intellectual laziness and a lack of competence at delivering high standards of performance for the People; results usually speak louder than empty or shallow words. They have also ignored or discounted the effects of such behaviour on performance of government and enterprise both of which work better and more efficiently if elements of professional integrity, trust, honesty, and self-imposed restraint are present.

Unfortunately, in the forthcoming referendum on membership of the EU there is a high probability the staying IN the EU camp, with its plentiful political and ruling class representation, will make extensive use of these methods. After all, these techniques have been shown to work in politics and can cover up the weak case for continuing EU membership, with its obvious and painful disadvantages, by resorting to shallow fallacies, misleading the electorate and spreading concocted fear of leaving. The following are suggested as the basis for specific and more detailed countermeasures that could be available to the more poorly financed and resourced OUT campaign:

Verification and Logical Analysis – The use of spin, deceit and negative campaigning can only work if they are accepted as being true or reliable, that the electorate can have

confidence in them, probably through impartial verification from elsewhere, experience etc. Where this empirical verification does not exist, or can be challenged, then use of such tactics will undermine their proponents, especially where they have a previous record of similar less than reputable methods.

Spin by its very nature is superficial. Analysis, drilling down into the detail, comparison with a wider view or actual evidence can reveal its shortcomings, contradictions and unreality.

Real raison d'être – Where the ends are thought to justify the less than reputable means, it would be helpful to understand and expose the real motives or reasons; vested interests in particular. For the professional politician it could be a case of putting ideology, party, promotion and power before principles and people. For Big Business, especially those of the ruling establishment, it could be a case of taking a very narrow, even monopolistic, self-interested or historical, perspective which does not consider effects on the whole economy or wider national interest; underlying feelings of patriotism, national identity and unique heritage may also be weak in an internationalised 'Power Set'.

Spin side-effects – Spin negates the need to deliver actual results and restricts the ability to analyse and to think outside the 'spin-box'; sloppy, vague and confusing language undermines clear, logical thought and rational ideas. George Orwell in *Politics and the English Language* wrote about political language being used to deceive, conceal the true horror and give substance to pure wind. He also pointed out its limiting or negative effect on ideas 'English becomes ugly and inaccurate because our thoughts are foolish, but the slovenliness of our language makes it easier for us to have foolish thoughts.' The side effects can be serious although the connection to spin etc. is subtle.

Fear mitigation – The positive case of leaving the moribund EU is strongly advantageous and as a sovereign country we would be better placed to mitigate problems and risks as they arise, in some cases in voluntary co-operation with others. Remaining within the EU is the riskier and constraining proposal. Over the years the EU's institutions, Eurocrats and political actors have shown repeatedly that they are unable to act quickly and appropriately in our interests, for example, on economic, security and migration issues; it is all a slow, cumbersome, disjointed, secretive and attenuating process. They have also created serious otherwise avoidable problems, such as the common currency, the Euro and bureaucracy. Giving the EU carte blanche over us is 'throwing caution to the EU wind'.

Sham and Distraction Alert – Expose the reality, exaggerations, unsupported claims, misrepresentations and other efforts to create something of substance out of nothing more than spin. Great claims for renegotiation success are likely to be nothing more than shams of little worth. Distractions are likely to be used to divert attention from the positive case for leaving, continuing EU crises and the really important issues facing our country and us individually.

The EU Dream (and nightmare) – The 'devil is in the detail' of any holistic EU-centric vision of the future, in particular the practicalities of delivery and its supposed benefits. The detail from Europhiles could display 'pie in the sky' naïve emptiness, cliché and muddled, narrow thinking. How will an EU-future facilitate individual liberty, democracy, justice (including the rule of law and social justice) and free enterprise based prosperity? So far the EU hasn't changed its 'dead hand' ways, which are holding back our traditionally hugely talented and dynamic country.

The Positive Leaving Case – The most powerful antidote to negative fear-inducing spin is, probably, cogent presentation

of the positive case for leaving the EU and the status quo, for example Selling the Dream – the Case for Leaving the EU now and A Simple Approach for Considering EU Membership.

Olive Branch – Conversions from the fanatical or fantasist IN camp are more likely and easier when treated with magnanimity and acceptance. Reconciliation will obviously strengthen our country's capabilities in the years ahead and there are many causes that can unite our diverse opinions and backgrounds.

Our country deserves much better than cynical machinations and manipulations by our rulers determined to retain EU membership. It is a truly worthy cause to help liberate the aspirations and great potential of a free, sovereign, democratically governed people.

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