

Crocodile Tears over Royal Mail? By Edward Spalton



Chris Williamson, the MP for Derby North is, of course, right that the Royal Mail provides a vital service to homes and businesses. Britain invented the modern Post Office, using the monopoly power of the state to provide a national delivery service at the same price from the Orkneys to Land's End.

But the impulse for privatisation does not come from the wicked Tories, as he suggests. He should look to EU Directive 97/67/EC "Privatisation of Postal Services" for that. This reduced the Royal Mail's monopoly and allowed the Dutch and German postal services to cherry pick profitable business, leaving the Royal Mail with the unprofitable parts. Further Directives have followed, requiring the phasing out of the Royal Mail monopoly by 2009. Norway has just rejected the latest Directive and will keep its own national postal service, just as it has retained its fisheries.

Instructions from the the EU to David Miliband, dated 28 November 2007, leave no doubt that the EU is in charge. He is ordered "The transformation programme will involvereducing the size of the Post Office network by around 2,500 branches".

I was in Central Lobby in 2008 when a petition of over 2 million signatures against Post Office closures had been delivered and Parliament was thronged with thousands of people who had come to see their MPs. I was with three MPs of decidedly independent views and decided to stir things a little.

"How many of your colleagues" I asked "will have told these people "Sorry, there's nothing we can do for you here. It's all controlled by EU Directives now"?" The MPs looked a little

awkward and said that they didn't suppose that anybody had said that. "But it's true, isn't it?" I asked and they had to admit it was.

It made me very angry that so many people had wasted their money and taken a day off work to lobby representatives who were powerless to give them any redress but would not admit to it. The hypocrisy of MPs signing this or that petition to save some local Post Office also infuriated me. They must have known it would make no difference to the overall number to be closed.

If Mr. Williamson really wants the Royal Mail to be an effective public, national service for the people of this country, he will have to support a government which will take us out of the EU. His colleagues in the Labour Euro Safeguards Campaign would support him.