

The day the referendum became inevitable

Now some of us have been fighting the good Eurosceptic fight for decades. I take my hat off to those veterans who have been keeping the flame alive for far longer than I. The Campaign for an Independent Britain's very own Edward Spalton is one such. I came late to the struggle. It was not until I read the Maastricht Treaty back in '94 that I realised the truth about the EU.

But although we have all played our part, I think that there was one key moment that was the true turning point in relations between Britain and the EU. I want to take a moment to give credit where it is due and remember that moment.

It came in October 2011 when David Nuttall, Member of Parliament for Bury North, brought a motion to the House of Commons. That motion read:

"That this House calls upon the Government to introduce a Bill in the next session of Parliament to provide for the holding of a national referendum on whether the United Kingdom should

(a) remain a member of the European Union on the current terms;

(b) leave the European Union; or

(c) re-negotiate the terms of its membership in order to create a new relationship based on trade and co-operation."

This was not the only such motion to have been put forward over the years, but when it came to a vote in the House of Commons on 25th October 2011, its impact was massive. Prime Minister David Cameron had set his face against this motion. He ordered the Whips to do their worst to ensure that it got

as little support as possible. There was no chance that it would be passed, the votes of Labour and the Lib-Dems would see to that, but it was crucial to Cameron's authority that only a handful of Tory MPs vote for it.

The Whips went to work and made it very clear to each and every one of the Conservative MPs that it was career suicide to vote for Nuttall's motion. When it became clear that Nuttall had rather more support than Cameron had expected, the Whips doubled down and went to work with a vengeance. All the dark arts of political arm twisting were employed. MPs with embarrassing incidents in their past were told that these faux pas would see the light of day. Those who hankered after a nice holiday with the wife were promised "fact finding missions" to exotic locations.

No stone was left unturned. No MP was left unaware of what rebellion would do their career. No ploy was too low or too dirty to be used. Anecdotes abound of what went on behind the scenes during the 36 hours leading up to the vote.

But when the votes were counted a staggering 81 Conservative MPs had backed Nuttall. Given the number of ministerial positions that obliged their holders to back the government, that was a truly astonishing figure for a rebellion on such a high-profile issue where the Prime Minister had nailed his colours to the mast.

It was, I believe, the day that an In-Out referendum on the European Referendum became inevitable.

So here are their names. Honour them. We owe them our freedom and our liberty.

Stuart Andrew (Pudsey), Steven Baker (Wycombe), John Baron (Basildon & Billericay), Andrew Bingham (High Peak), Brian Binley (Northampton South), Bob Blackman (Harrow East), Graham Brady (Altrincham & Sale West), Andrew Bridgen (Leicestershire North West), Steve Brine (Winchester), Fiona Bruce

(Congleton), Dan Byles (Warwickshire North), Douglas Carswell (Clacton), Bill Cash (Stone), Christopher Chope (Christchurch), James Clappison (Hertsmere), Tracey Crouch (Chatham & Aylesford), David Davies (Monmouth), Philip Davies (Shipley), David Davis (Haltemprice & Howden), Nick de Bois (Enfield North), Caroline Dinanage (Gosport), Nadine Dorries (Bedfordshire Mid), Richard Drax (Dorset South), Mark Field (Cities of London & Westminster), Lorraine Fullbrook (South Ribble), Zac Goldsmith (Richmond Park), James Gray (Wiltshire North), Chris Heaton-Harris (Daventry), Gordon Henderson (Sittingbourne & Sheppey), George Hollingbery (Meon Valley), Adam Holloway (Gravesham), Stewart Jackson (Peterborough), Bernard Jenkin (Harwich & Essex North), Marcus Jones (Nuneaton), Chris Kelly (Dudley South), Andrea Leadsom (Northamptonshire South), Jeremy Lefroy (Stafford), Edward Leigh (Gainsborough), Julian Lewis (New Forest East), Karen Lumley (Redditch), Jason McCartney (Colne Valley), Karl McCartney (Lincoln), Stephen McPartland (Stevenage), Anne Main (St Albans), Patrick Mercer (Newark), Nigel Mills (Amber Valley), Anne-Marie Morris (Newton Abbot), James Morris (Halesowen & Rowley Regis), Stephen Mosley (Chester, City of), Sheryll Murray (Cornwall South East), Caroline Nokes (Romsey & Southampton North), David Nuttall (Bury North), Matthew Offord (Hendon), Neil Parish (Tiverton & Honiton), Priti Patel (Witham), Andrew Percy (Brigg & Goole), Mark Pritchard (Wrekin, The), Mark Reckless (Rochester & Strood), John Redwood (Wokingham), Jacob Rees-Mogg (Somerset North East), Simon Reeve (Dewsbury), Laurence Robertson (Tewkesbury), Andrew Rosindell (Romford), Richard Shepherd (Aldridge-Brownhills), Henry Smith (Crawley), John Stevenson (Carlisle), Bob Stewart (Beckenham), Gary Streeter (Devon South West), Julian Sturdy (York Outer), Sir Peter Tapsell (Louth & Horncastle), Justin Tomlinson (Swindon North), Andrew Turner (Isle of Wight), Martin Vickers (Cleethorpes), Charles Walker (Broxbourne), Robin Walker (Worcester), Heather Wheeler (Derbyshire South), Craig Whittaker (Calder Valley), John Whittingdale (Maldon), Dr Sarah Wollaston (Totnes)