

It's over to you to end this unhappy marriage.

We are now into the “purdah” period when the government will refrain from using its machinery to push the “remain” line. It has been making the most of its advantages in the last three months, it has to be said, with pro-remain propaganda splashed all over government websites, even (as our Chairman discovered) on a link to the Charity Commission website. However, this barrage has failed to flatten the “leave” side and there is still everything to play for.

With both sides being widely criticised for making “lurid claims”, a great opening is being created for ordinary rank and file activists. The statistics war between the big names on both sides has left many voters both underwhelmed and confused. “We want facts” is the cry. They don't feel they have been given many. A leaflet handed to them by someone they know, or even someone prepared to spend a few minutes explaining what the EU is and what its objectives are, may carry more weight with some voters than a statement by one of the “big hitters”. Dr Anthony Coughlan pointed out that in the Irish referendums, “the winning side {was} that which does most personal communication, giving people personally and ideally face-to-face the reasons why their position {in our case a vote to leave} is the safer option.”

The personal touch is definitely having some effect. A poll conducted for the *Daily Echo* in Hampshire found that almost two-thirds of over 1,000 people surveyed who had made their minds up supported Brexit and there were still undecided voters to be won over. One of our supporters recently contacted us from South Herefordshire with the news that his group's polling found 60% support for leaving the EU in that area.

Your author has received several e-mails from formerly undecided voters won round to withdrawal. ***"I have been a wavering voter for a long time but since the barrage of economic disaster scenarios from the remain camp, I have now decided on Brexit"*** said one. Following Barack Obama's visit, another correspondent said, ***"Up until this moment I have been a staunch EU supporter. but now I will vote to leave and take my place at "the back of the queue". I'm British, queueing is what I do and being at the back is a place I'm happy to be!! The US President has inadvertently supported the leave campaign."***

Neither these encouragements, however, nor the claims of some people – including a friend of mine – that "I don't know anyone round here who wants to stay in" should lead us to complacency. As we have pointed out, the polls may be wrong, but on the other hand they may not. We still have a lot of work to do. The lack of a coherent exit strategy has been exploited by George Osborne and other "remain" people. However, as Allister Heath rightly pointed out in a recent article in the *Daily Telegraph*, there is way to counter this and if we do so, we could pull off a memorable victory. Our former Chariman Petrina Holdsworth has rightly said that the EEA/EFTA route which Heath advocates "is the only way to smooth jangled nerves over our exit."

In your author's experience, EEA/EFTA exposes a weakness in the "remain" camp's flank. Twice, when advocating this as the most seamless escape route, his reasoning has been countered by barefaced lies. "We would have to become part of Schengen" **NOT TRUE**. "We won't be allowed to re-join EFTA. **NOT TRUE**. The latter culprit was an MEP in a debate in Oxfordshire in which I took part last Friday. I won't name her because I can't actually remember which of the two female MEPs in this particular debate actually made this claim! It came as such a shock and thankfully I was able to give chapter and verse regarding statements from politicians from Iceland and Norway

who both said – albeit grudgingly in the case of Vidar Helgesen, the Norwegian Minister for European Affairs, on 28th October 2015 – that we would be welcome back.

We are producing a leaflet which explains the advantages of EEA/EFTA. This is the pdf, although you will need to print both pages on the two sides of a single piece of paper and fold it to see how it works.

However, some people are totally put off the economic arguments and just need something simple. This leaflet, written by our President, George West, has proven to be very effective according to John Hart, one of our supporters.

It's horses for courses, but to repeat, we can still win this referendum in spite of the criticisms of the leave campaign so far. It would be tragic if the net result of what has largely been an ill-tempered battle between senior Conservative ministers past and present was that we remain locked in what is an unhappy marriage – merely through fear of leaving.

Let's give the final word to a Norwegian, the playwright Henrik Ibsen. His play *A Doll's House* tells the story of Nora, a wife locked into a loveless marriage to a patronising husband who just doesn't understand her aspirations. She reaches the conclusion that their marriage has been based on mutual fantasies and misunderstanding and the play ends dramatically with her boldly leaving the house, slamming the door behind her. When people are as unhappy in a relationship as Nora, economic issues are not necessarily their number one consideration. How apt this analogy will be if we too can walk through the Brexit door to freedom next month.