

# Going round in circles

Photo by Karva Javi 

It was all happening on the news today! Firstly, Sir Stuart Rose, who heads up the “BSE” campaign organisation was spelling out what a huge risk it would be to withdraw from the single market. At the same time, Open Europe staged the first part of its “EU War games” event, simulating the “Brexit” discussions with the help of two former Prime Ministers and various ministers from overseas, trying to analyse the results of various scenarios including withdrawal.

Earlier this morning, *Civitas* released a report stating that the trade benefits of the Single Market have been “mis-sold”. All this was dutifully reported on BBC Radio 4’s *World At One* programme and one has to say that if those of us who follow politics keenly found it a bit tedious, the impact on the majority of listeners must have been at best confusion, at worse, outright boredom.

The debate about trade has been going round in circles for the simple reason that we, the “Leave” side, have not been able to coalesce around a single post-independence scenario. Therefore, any attempt to say that leaving the EU would increase or decrease our overall GDP by any given percentage or amount carries very little weight as there is no agreed “counterfactual”.

Today’s developments do, however, make it apparent that any post-independence scenario which does not preserve our access to the Single Market will cause problems for some sectors of business, problems which the BBC and pro-“remain” politicians will be keen to exploit for their own benefits.

The EEA/EFTA option does address their concerns, ensuring that “Brexit” would not be the “huge risk” that Sir Stuart Rose

claimed, but this in turn means that the “no influence” myth regarding the EEA needs to be shattered. The BBC recently gave it yet another airing which included an interview with a Norwegian businessman who clearly had little idea of how EEA applicable legislation is created. Predictably, there was no discussion with anyone from Norway’s influential *No2EU* campaign.

Without a clear agreement on exit strategy among “leavers”, we are likely to suffer more of the same for months on end – barrages of meaningless statistics. It is vital to nail the economic and job arguments once and for all, for until this is done, we cannot move the debate on to a higher level – looking at the failings of the EU project as a whole and the appalling behaviour of many of our own politicians and civil servants. With trust in politicians at a very low ebb, there will be a ready audience for our arguments, but the crucial swing voters can only be won round if they can be assured that jobs and economic prosperity will not be threatened.