

The great day dawns!

Just over nine months since the UK voted to leave the EU, the great day when that process begins is finally dawning. On one hand, it is a cause for celebration as we formally begin our journey back to being a sovereign, independent nation free from control by Brussels. On the other, however, big challenges lie ahead. We do not know how much preparation has been undertaken by the government and the Civil Service for what is going to be a gruelling two years, which will probably end with us out of the EU but still only in a transitional arrangement as far as trade is concerned. We also need to be fighting hard to ensure that we get the best possible Brexit deal in other areas, notably fishing, criminal justice and foreign policy, where current government thinking is, at best, muddled and at worst downright dangerous.

Another potential problem is that the hard core remainiacs are not going to give up. Some 50,000 demonstrated against Brexit in London on Saturday 25th March and they have their friends in high places, who do not want to heal the wounds and make positive, constructive contribution to help deliver the best Brexit possible. Instead, people like Alastair Campbell are determined to further the divide in our country.

Just in case you've forgotten, Campbell was Tony Blair's spin doctor or, in the words of Kelvin Mackenzie, someone who "told lies for a living". He has recently taken over as editor of *The New European*, a pro-EU newspaper originally intended as a short-term publication for remain supporters after the Brexit vote. Higher than expected readership figures, however, have given it a lease of life which it clearly doesn't deserve. Campbell's decision to take the job is based on his belief that Brexit can be stopped – and his method? To counteract the "lie machine" which he claims has been built by the *Sun*, the *Daily Mail*, the *Daily Telegraph* and the *Express*. "Never has the truth about this debate been more needed," he said.

Finding the word “truth” and the name Alastair Campbell in the same sentence can only be described as highly amusing, given Mr McKenzie’s accurate description of his CV. Not to mention that this is the same Alastair Campbell who, only a few days ago eulogised the terrorist IRA thug Martin McGuinness as “a great guy, a good guy.”

He will have a fine team to work with. A list of writers for the paper reads like a veritable rogue’s gallery, include his old mate Tony B. and the former Europe Minister Dennis McShane. Such people are no match for any of the four titles mentioned when it comes to being economical with the truth. It was back in 2003 that Iain Duncan Smith perceptively observed of Mr Blair, “people no longer believe a word he says any more.” Fast forward 14 years and nothing has changed.

Maybe at this time when the Brexit process is finally under way, it’s time to remind ourselves of a few home truths. Firstly, the EU project was, is and always will be about creating a federal superstate. The plaque in the European Parliament visitor’s centre includes these words:- **“National sovereignty is the root cause of the most crying evils of our times....The only final remedy for this evil is the federal union of the peoples.”** Although the article which displays the image of the plaque was written almost a year ago, there is no reason to believe it has subsequently disappeared – or that the EU has changed its objective. We voted to regain our sovereignty – in other words, to leave this club of failures and re-join the rest of the world.

Secondly, many people voted to leave because they did not want the freedom of movement of people to continue. The crowd of pro-EU remainiacs in London would no doubt want to label as a racist everyone who voted to leave the EU in order to curb immigration. This is a long way from the truth. While no one can deny the existence of some ugly attitudes towards foreigners, firstly, the alleged spike in “hate crimes” since Brexit is based on distorted figures and secondly, there are

other good sound reasons for wanting a drastic cut in migration. At the moment, we would struggle without foreign workers. Fast forward a mere 15 years and instead, we will be struggling to find work for the millions who have come to the UK in recent years. A recent study by PriceWaterhouse Coopers suggested that 10 million low-skilled jobs could disappear due to advances in robotics. Given the predominance of migrant workers in the lower end of the labour market, the last thing we want is any more people coming to our crowded islands, unless they have short-term work permits and nothing more.

Only a couple of weeks ago, I was talking to a well-respected economist who voted Brexit primarily due to concerns about the scale of immigration. "It's unsustainable", he said – and rightly so.

Thirdly, as has been mentioned many times on this website, the EU's Common Fisheries Policy has been a disaster for our fishermen. Brexit offers us, in the words of fisheries campaigner John Ashworth, an "exciting future" due to the "tremendous resource" in our territorial waters which we can reclaim.

Fourthly, Brexit will enable us to take our seat on the world trade bodies which count. At the moment, we are represented by someone from the EU who is meant to be speaking for all 28 nations. Given the clout which Germany and especially protectionist France has within the EU, it's fair to say that the UK's interests have not been well served. We can also make our own trading arrangements and reorientate our trade away from the EU towards the growing economies of the world. Trade with the EU is important and must not be jeopardised by a gung-ho approach to the negotiations, but it is nonetheless declining as a percentage of total exports and this trend is likely to accelerate in the years to come.

There are umpteen other good and valid reasons for wishing to

leave the EU. While we would concede to Mr Campbell that not every claim made by the Leave side in last year's referendum campaign was totally accurate, such as the alleged £350 million weekly saving which would be available for the NHS, this does not negate the very real benefits we will gain from leaving this sclerotic organisation.

The idea that Mrs May is betraying our war heroes by invoking Article 50, as suggested by Michael Heseltine, is therefore so ludicrous as to be laughable. One of those surviving heroes, Bryan Neely, strongly disagreed with Heseltine's claim that we have "handed {Germany} the opportunity to win the peace" by leaving the EU. Mr Neely, now aged 92, said that "it was the EU which is letting down our war dead."

"Winning the peace is certainly not about the UK being outnumbered or overruled in the EU," he added. "The UK has had very little voice for a long time. You only need to see the lack of influence {David} Cameron had in his negotiations to see that."

This is the crux of the matter. We were duped into joining an organisation that has never had our interests at heart and in so many fields has been progressively moving in a different direction from that which most in the UK would wish to go. The road back to freedom is going to be long and hard, with many potential pitfalls on the way, but there cannot be any turning back now. The EU wants us out. "The bus has gone," as one senior diplomat expressed it recently. It is now up to the Government and Civil Service to make sure they get things right.