

Hard Bargains or Weak compromises?

A Civitas paper by Brian Binley MP and CIB Committee member Dr Lee Rotherham.

If and when David Cameron launches his renegotiations for the UK's membership of the EU, he needs to recognise that our present terms of membership do not operate in our interests and are less likely to do so in the future, claim the authors. The Status Quo is not an option

What sort of fundamental changes are needed? What is NOT needed, says the report, is a "a deal that generates minor tinkering", for it will be "disastrous for the EU, since it will demonstrate it is incapable of meaningful and necessary reform now or ever in the future. But actually endorsing such a deal would also then be catastrophic for the Conservative Party. It would suggest that it was never serious about meaningful change. It would indicate that the party is not a credible defender of the national interest. It would associate the Party directly with the guilty elements responsible for the salami slicing of our nation's sovereignty since the departure of Margaret Thatcher, and the slow puncture of our vital economic interests through Brussels and the Luxembourg Court since."

Here is a direct challenge to David Cameron, who has been widely rumoured to be planning such a cosmetic renegotiation and hoping to repeat Harold Wilson's trick of 1975, when the electorate were deceived by a fig-leaf concession about tax exemptions for imported New Zealand butter which was sold as a major renegotiation.

What Cameron must do, they say, is to define what we need in our relationship with the EU and to draw some lines firmly in

the sand. Some of the issues covered are familiar. Immigration, the cost of the EU and over-regulation, the unhelpful compromises of the QMV system and so on.

The book is very much a wish list for a proposed renegotiation rather than a detailed study of how we should leave if they are unsuccessful, but if the authors' proposal were adopted, the relationship we would have with the EU would, in effect, be a withdrawal. "What we suggest is an optimal end result is not a million miles away from what several countries have already been able to achieve: a bit less than EEA terms, a bit more than DCFTA (Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreements) terms." Of course, any bespoke relationship isn't going to be signed overnight, and David Cameron has thus far shown no interest in any renegotiation proposals that might lead to withdrawal anyway. However, following hot on the heels of what a UKIP spokesman described as a "'pro-EU mockumentary" by the BBC, Binley and Rotherham provide a welcome breath of fresh air in reminding us that "many other forms of trade treaty access apply between the EU and third parties. 100 per cent EU programme participation is simply not the only show in town."

The full paper can be downloaded at [Hard Bargains or Weak Compromises](#)