

# Muddying the waters

David Cameron is keeping us guessing regarding the finer points of the “deal” he hopes to sell to us, in order to persuade us to remain in the EU, but a few key features are leaking out.

The most important of these is his claim that he will change our domestic law to state that Parliament is sovereign. “I think there is a good case for it,” he told Radio 4’s *Today* programme earlier this week. Michael Gove, the Justice Secretary has been asked to look into this. At first glance, it sounds like an important significant agreement has been made with the other member states, allowing us a major concession. This may well be his cynical tactic. “We’ve won power back from Brussels” could be a rallying cry for the all-important swing voters.

Nothing, however, is what it seems and Mr Cameron is deceiving us again. He is clearly determined to try to keep us in the EU or else he would not be trying to muddy the waters in the hope that we, the people, won’t look beneath the surface. While we only have the scantiest of clues to guide us at this stage, it is already obvious that talk of restoring sovereignty to Parliament is just smoke and mirrors and should not therefore make anybody waver in their desire to leave the failing political experiment of the EU with its aim of creating a Europe-wide centralised Superstate.

Let us start by taking Mr Cameron at face value and assume that he will come back with an agreement with the other 27 member states to allow the UK Parliament to veto ALL EU legislation; not very plausible. Firstly, what status will this “agreement” have? Without a treaty to back it up – and there is no sign of a new treaty in the offing – it will have no legal force within the EU or in this country. Furthermore, even if it did, we are faced with the uncomfortable reality

that the majority of our MPs are Europhile. Six years ago, had Parliament so decided, it could have struck down the Lisbon Treaty – indeed, our MPs could have killed off every new treaty since the Single European Act of 1986. They already had sufficient powers back then, but did not choose to use them.

Analyse how Parliament handles its existing powers and Cameron's great deal rapidly loses much of its force. Take the EU (Approvals) Bill of 2014. This Bill covered a number of EU-related issues, but most of the debate centred on the Europe Citizens' Programme, a five-year programme costing €185 billion to fund educational projects that seek to enhance both the understanding of EU institutions and European integration. In other words, as one MP put it: "this grant-making exercise is aimed at providing propaganda, as I see it, for purposes of political union."

In the House of Commons, only 32 MPs opposed it at this second reading, and just a couple of weeks later it went through its final stages with only 30 MPs opposing. Can we really trust our Parliament to stem the flow of European legislation? Its track record to date suggests we cannot.

Sometimes, of course, Parliament isn't even given a say by our own Government ministers. The shambles last year over the opt-in to the 33 law and justice measures in the Lisbon Treaty from which the UK had earlier opted out is a classic illustration of this. MPs opposed to the opt-ins ended up accusing ministers of "tricking" them when it emerged that they would not be given an individual vote on the controversial European Arrest Warrant after being initially told that they would.

If MPs are not told the truth, giving them any extra power is of little value. As readers to John Ashworth's series on fisheries may recall, Edward Heath deliberately misled the House of Commons over the nature of the UK's "transitional derogation" from the Common Fisheries Policy. He assured them

that we held a veto whereas we had nothing of the sort. Can this Conservative Europhile Prime Minister Mr Cameron really be trusted any more than the previous Conservative Europhile Prime Minister Mr Heath?

Indeed, we can go back to the vote on the original accession treaty. MPs were forced to vote on a document that most of them had not even read. Heath knew that in those days, when MPs were more likely to stick up for their country than their successors 40 years later, he would never have succeeded in passing the bill if his colleagues in Westminster knew the full truth.

So this 'power' which the UK Parliament may gain, according to Mr Cameron, is in reality, a paper tiger. Of course, so far we know nothing about its scope. EU legislation comes in three main forms: regulations, directives and decisions. Currently, only directives need to be run past Parliament. Is Mr Cameron proposing that Parliament has the power to veto regulations and decisions as well, instead of automatically rubber-stamping them? It would be good to know. Much EU legislation currently goes onto our statute books by Statutory Instrument, which means that Parliament is bypassed altogether

For all the smoke and mirrors of Cam's great Sham, this latest "rabbit out of the hat" nevertheless requires a slight change of tactics by "Leave" campaigners. When the positions of UK and Norway have been compared, which they recently have been on this blog and elsewhere, it has been noted that Norway refused to implement the Third Postal Directive, even though it was marked as EEA-relevant. There is no point in trying to sell this to undecided voters. Cameron will be claiming to offer our toadying MPs similar powers; the problem, as we have outlined above, is that they won't use them.

Instead, the focus of our campaign must be to tell all and sundry just how untrustworthy the majority of our politicians are. No doubt we will soon have ample evidence of this when

scores of “Eurosceptic” Tory MPs all fall in line behind their leader saying what a wonderful new deal he has secured. Convince the country that they are talking rot and we may stand a chance not only of leaving the EU but of addressing a good few other failings in the way we are currently governed.

Photo by treehouse1977 