

# Negotiating Independence – a letter from our Chairman

The letter below, written by our Chairman, Edward Spalton, was recently published in the *Derby Telegraph*.

Sir,

Like D.G. Betts (30 June), I am keen to be out of the EU and have been since 1972 when I began to discover the ulterior motives and bad faith by the Europeans and by our own government, surrounding our accession to membership.

Negotiations were nearly complete when the EEC (as it then was) suddenly introduced the Common Fisheries Policy, demanding that our waters should become a “common resource” for all member countries to share. Prime Minister Edward Heath knew that there was no legal provision in the Rome Treaty for such a policy but went along with it nonetheless. He also misinformed Parliament that British fishermen’s interests would be protected. The result was ecological catastrophe for our seas and fish stocks, economic catastrophe for our fishermen and a massive financial loss to our country’s balance of payments..

This was one reason why Tony Blair wrote in his 1983 election manifesto “We’ll negotiate a withdrawal from the EEC which has drained our natural resources and destroyed jobs”. What a pity he never kept his word!

It is a complex business to right the wrongs of forty four years, so it will require negotiation which take time. Under Article 50 of the Treaty on European Union, a two year period is allowed. During that time we are still full participating members but we do not sit on both sides of the table during the withdrawal negotiations. We can hardly be buyer and seller

at the same time! That is reasonable enough.

Paragraph 4 of Article 50 states "...the member of the European Council or of the Council (of Ministers) representing the withdrawing Member State shall not participate in the discussions of the Council in the decision concerning it..." That is why our representatives are excluded those meetings – but only from those meetings.

For everything else, we continue full members until (Paragraph 2) "The treaties shall cease to apply from the date of the entry into force of the withdrawal agreement or, failing that, two years after the notification, unless the European Council in agreement with the Member State concerned, unanimously decides to extend this period".

Almost uniquely this is one EU document which is both short and clear – but the negotiations to get the right deal will be very complex indeed.

Yours faithfully,

Edward Spalton