

Now we know the question

In spite of much speculation in the press, it is highly unlikely that the referendum on the UK's membership of the EU will be held before 2017. However, we can now be more confident about the wording of the referendum question. The European Referendum Bill was published last week and had its first reading in the House of Commons and consequently, we now know that the proposed question is "Should the United Kingdom remain a member of the European Union?"

This means that supporters of withdrawal will become the "No" campaign. While some reports suggested this question was a replacement for "Should the United Kingdom be a member of the European Union?" on the grounds that some people didn't even know that we were a member, it does make our task somewhat harder as there is an innate desire among the uninformed to want to please and to be positive – in other words, to say "Yes". No doubt Mr Cameron is aware of this.

The "Out" campaign, as Robert Oulds said recently at CIB's annual rally, must therefore be positive and talk not so much about leaving something but rather about joining something better – the European Free Trade Association (EFTA), which we should never have left in the first place.

Incidentally, to answer any critics who fear that EFTA may not want us back, Mr Oulds has pointed out that in a reply by the Prime Minister of Iceland, S. D. Gunlaugsson, to a question about Cameron's promise of an EU referendum in an interview with the "Liechtensteiner Vaterland" on 9th May 2015, he said "I would certainly welcome Great Britain into EFTA. An entry into EFTA could be a good solution for Great Britain and would be equally good for EFTA. We would at all events be open to taking the British back into EFTA."