# Talk is cheap – Peer demolishes Cameron's EU renegotiation strategy

**Cameron's 'Talk is cheap' says independent Labour Peer**

**as Government dodges question on withdrawal from EU**

In response to a written question from the independent Labour Peer, Lord Stoddart of Swindon (Hansard 15.01.15), the Minister of State at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Baroness Anelay of St Johns has once again failed to provide an answer on whether the Government will consider leaving the EU if it cannot obtain its objectives through negotiation. Her response has triggered scathing criticism from Lord Stoddart, in which he has called into question David Cameron's strategy for re-negotiating Britain's EU membership.

Commenting on the Government's response, Lord Stoddart said: "It is quite clear that the bashful Baroness is avoiding giving a proper answer to my questions on withdrawal from the EU and is not going to clarify what exactly the Prime Minister meant when he said that 'nothing can be ruled out' in negotiations with the EU. Simply giving me a copy of the PM's speech is not clarification of anything.

"I am forced to conclude that the Prime Minister's words on this were just so much propaganda – misleading and without any real substance. He obviously has no intention of withdrawing from the EU, if his negotiations fail, which disastrously weakens his negotiating stance. As the saying goes – 'talk is cheap.'"

The full text of Lord Stoddart's question and the Government's reply are as follows:

**Hansard 15th January 2015, column WA261/262**

# European Union: Question asked byLord Stoddart of Swindon

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Baroness Anelay of St Johns on 16 December 2014 (HL3536), whether recent statements by the Prime Minister stating that during negotiations on European Union reform nothing can be ruled out mean that the United Kingdom could withdraw from the European Union if the Government's objectives cannot be met.[HL3927]

15 Jan 2015 : Column WA262

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Baroness Anelay of St Johns) replied: "I refer the Noble Lord to my answers of 20 November 2014, 4 December 2014 and 16 December 2014. The Government's position has not changed: the European Union must reform to become more competitive, democratically accountable and fair for those inside and outside the Eurozone. I also refer the Noble Lord to the speech by the Prime Minister, my right hon. Friend the Member for Witney (Mr Cameron), on the 28 November 2014; and the speech by the Deputy Prime Minister, my right hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Hallam (Mr Clegg), on the 5 August 2014."