

That booklet!

We have received a number of e-mails from people very angry about our money being spent by the government producing the booklet which landed on our doormats last week.

Some people have very kindly responded by making a donation to us, for which we are most grateful. "I don't want my taxes used on propaganda... so I have to do my bit to redress the balance" said one kind contributor.

But what of the booklet itself? It has been criticised – and with good reason – both for its style and content. Rosalind Moffitt, an inclusive communications consultant at Inklecomms, said of the former, *"I...am astounded by the long and complex sentences within the leaflet. It also uses many unnecessarily difficult words. The leaflet is written at a complex level for average-low literacy readers, so it will be difficult for many to read and understand"* Good news for the Brexit campaign!"

Turning to the content. Lord Wemyss did not mince his words, calling it "senseless twaddle – insulting to the intelligence of the recipients."

This is indeed a good summary. If the "twaddle" can be categorised, most of it comes under three headings:-

1. So-called "benefits" which aren't actually very beneficial.
2. Benefits which we don't actually need to be in the EU to enjoy
3. Untrue and misleading statements.

In the first category comes the European Arrest Warrant, which is mentioned under "keeping us safer". Since 2004 (when the EAW was first introduced), we are told "over 1,000 suspects have faced justice in UK courts and over 7,000 have been extradited." Fine. You try telling people like Andrew Symeou

or Edmond Arapi how wonderful the EAW is. These men suffered gross miscarriages of justice, being exposed to judicial processes on the Continent which do not include the legal safeguards we are accustomed to in the UK. It is so easy to forget that Magna Carta may have crossed the oceans, but it never crossed the Channel. One consequence of this is that you can be tried *in absentia*, tried on hearsay evidence or kept in detention for ages without being charged. The EAW potentially exposes any one of us to all these horrors.

Also sold as a benefit, on page 12, we are told that “the EU is leading the world on tackling climate change”. Try telling those made redundant in the now defunct UK aluminium smelting industry what a good thing this is! Perhaps when we suffer blackouts because our government has signed up to unachievable emissions targets we will console ourselves with how virtuous the EU is being!

Turning to the second category, the phrase “Single Market” comes up no fewer than eight times. There are probably few regular visitors to our website who aren’t aware that we can retain access to the Single Market on leaving the EU by re-joining EFTA and availing ourselves of the European Economic Area agreement. The booklet boasts how the EU “guarantees many employment rights” without mentioning, of course, that most employment legislation originates with global organisations like the International Labour Organisation. These benefits would not disappear if we left the EU.

“EU reforms in the 1990s have resulted in a drop in fares of over 40% for lower cost flights”, proclaims the booklet. Once again, one has to question whether this benefit would disappear if we left the EU. To help us answer this question, guess which airline won the “Best low-cost airline in Europe” award in 2015? It was called Norwegian and furthermore, this airline which seems to Hoover up awards, flies to a number of European destinations but isn’t based in the EU.

What about the untrue and misleading statements? It's hard to know where to begin. Going back to the Single Market. we are informed that "No other country has managed to secure significant access to the single market without having to follow EU rules over which they have no real say /pay into the EU". Shoddy work here. As we have pointed out, Norway **is widely consulted** in the framing of EEA relevant legislation (which amounts to less than 25% of the total *Acquis*) and the price it pays to access the single market is peanuts compared with how much we pay *per capita* to the EU as a member state.

The first page proclaims that "the UK has secured a special status in a reformed EU." Oh really? The legality of the agreement has been widely questioned, with Alexander Graf Lambsdorff, the vice-president of the European Parliament, describing it as "nothing more than a deal that has been hammered out down the local bazaar".

Part of the "deal" is that "we will not join the Euro" Didn't we secure that opt-out over 20 years ago? What about the "tough new restrictions on access to our welfare for new EU migrants"? Well, suppose that, say a Latvian decorator moves over here after 2016, falls off a ladder and breaks both legs after living here for three years during which time he has only worked for 29 months. In theory, he shouldn't get much out of our system under Dave's new deal. In practice...?

Keeping our own border controls is another benefit which is part of our "special status" so we are told. Once again, if this means that we are not part of Schengen, this is not exactly a show-stopper. We secured an opt-out here many years ago.

The biggest criticism, however, is that nowhere in this booklet does the word "sovereignty" come up. The EU's unique selling point is that it requires member states progressively to hollow out their national institutions and surrender sovereignty to supranational institutions. These other issues

are peripheral. the creation of a federal superstate is the EU's *raison d'être*. Failing to mention it is rather like a supplier of fruit trees illustrating its products with lovely pictures of apple blossom but failing to show a single picture of a nice ripe apple or to mention that the reason you buy an apple tree is to eat of its produce.

To be blunt, this reluctance even to mention what the EU is all about is just plain dishonest. If the referendum is won by the "remain" side without this issue being at the centre of the debate, it will have been a pyrrhic victory which will leave us stilll being the EU's awkward partner, always dragging our feet and being outvoted more than any other member state.

Is this really what Mr Cameron wants? it will be a most unsatisfactory legacy. Best for his sake and for our country if we deny him such an opportunity by securing a vote to leave.
