

UK independence stalwart Lord Stoddart dies aged 94

We are greatly saddened to announce the death of one of Britain's longest serving and most determined campaigners for independence from the EU.

Lord Stoddart died on Saturday 14th November in his ninety-fifth year. He continued to show a keen interest in the cause of independence and to be a source of wisdom and advice in recent years.

In CIB we remember him with most gratitude for serving as our Chairman from 1985 until May 2007. In a cross-party campaign like ours, which includes a wide range of strongly held political opinions, his ability to build mutual confidence and trust added greatly to the coherence and effectiveness of the wider independence movement.

After a distinguished career in local government, he became Labour Member of Parliament for Swindon from 1970 to 1983, when he was ennobled . He was a government whip from 1975 to 1978, PPC to the Housing Minister 1974-75, and Front Bench opposition spokesman on trade and industry. In the Lords, he was the Chief Front Bench spokesman on energy (1983-88) and served as a whip during the same period.

He was expelled from the Labour Party in 2002 for backing a Socialist Alliance candidate in the 2001 general election when he was strongly opposed to Labour parachuting Shaun Woodward, a Conservative defector, into the safe seat of St Helen's South. Since then, he sat as Independent Labour.

This freed him to be more outspoken and supportive of the principle of national independence and democracy outside the EU – which had of course originally been Labour policy. Members of CIB and other pro-democracy groups were greatly

encouraged by the vigour of his speeches.

Lord Pearson of Rannoch, who worked extensively with Lord Stoddart in the House of Lords over many years, said: 'David Stoddart will be hugely missed in the Lords, even by those who disagreed with his passion to take this country out of what he saw as the corporatist project of European integration. He was forensic in debate, sure of his facts, firm but kind in how he put them as well as good natured and humorous outside the Chamber with those who didn't agree with him.

'Not bad for someone born the son of a coal miner in the Rhonda Valley, who rose via grammar school to take his place in the Lords, and to see what in 1962 was a very lonely vision brought towards fulfilment.

'We have lost a truly great and generous man.'

In the coming weeks we hope to expand this very short, inadequate summary of a long life of great political courage and principle by sharing some recollections of his colleagues. If you have any special memories of Lord Stoddart that you would like to share, please do get in touch.

Our deepest sympathy is extended to his wife and family.