

Yes we can – sell your country, know your history!

On Tuesday, I had the privilege of presenting CIB's latest booklet, *Generations Betrayed*, to the Better Off Out group – a meeting of MPs, Lords, think tanks and eurosceptic campaign groups. This excellent booklet, written by Chris McGovern, Chairman of the Campaign for Real Education, illustrates how history teaching has been dumbed down in British schools, producing a generation who have left school with a severe lack of knowledge about our past. Those who do not know the history of our country with its great distinctives, says Chris, are harder to win round to supporting withdrawal from the EU.

The presentation led to an interesting discussion and some helpful conversations afterwards. One theme to emerge is that we who are campaigning for "Out" must be unashamed to tell our country's history to those who don't know it. "In" supporters are belittling the country that has nurtured them. "Poor little England can't stand up on its own in the 21st Century. We have to be part of the European project." What nonsense! (I could use a stronger word, but don't want to offend my readers' sensibilities!) A nation with such a great past can look forward to what Owen Paterson described as a "spectacular" future outside the EU. It is so unfortunate that, in an age which is seeing a growing national self-awareness among, for example, the Flemings in Belgium or the Catalans in Spain that patriotism in this country is frowned upon and history is taught from a curriculum devised by people consumed with national self-loathing. As I mentioned to the group yesterday, our history does contain a few blemishes, but the balance overall is of a very positive story. We have far, far less of which to be ashamed in our past than not just (obviously) Germany but also France, Spain and Russia, to name a few others.

Much of the debate in recent weeks has revolved around economic issues and CIB fully recognises the need for an exit strategy which is feasible, watertight and at least economically neutral. The “out” campaign must be realistic, rather than aspirational when it comes to the nitty gritty of the withdrawal process. However, this needs to be set to some very optimistic mood music. It is the supporters of “in” who are the Little Englanders – belittling our abilities, decrying our history, undermining our confidence. Barack Obama may now appear a lame duck president, but he won the 2009 US Presidential election by setting a positive note – “Yes we can.” If we can sell an equally positive vision for the UK on independence as well as convincing the electorate that the sky will not fall in economically, it will be greatly to our advantage. This year is particularly rich in anniversaries – Magna Carta 1215, Agincourt 1415, Waterloo 1815. Has there ever been a better opportunity to harness our past successes to the service of selling our future success to a public who must surely be receptive to a positive vision for our great country?

(Copies of *Generations Betrayed* can be obtained by contacting CIB at the address on the home page of the website or by emailing admin@campaignforanindependentbritain.org.uk. Price is £2 per copy plus postage & packing)

Photo by David Jones 