

We must force Brussels to learn to take ‘No’ for an answer

In this round of budget negotiations, the European Council has to make it absolutely clear that it is determined to impose a freeze on EU spending

Well, here we have another classic example of the way the vested interests of the EU combine to frustrate the will of the member states and show their contempt for the peoples of Europe.

The story starts back in the early summer, when the Commission presented its budget for 2012, seeking – in the midst of the gathering economic crisis – a 5 per cent rise in EU spending and an increase of more than 3 per cent in commitments.

This naturally produced outrage among real governments with real electorates as they introduced austerity programmes designed to lighten the burden of debt and deficit, largely at the expense of their citizens.

As David Cameron said at the time, “The idea of a 5 per cent increase at a time when member states are having to make difficult reductions is completely unacceptable and we’ll make sure it doesn’t happen.”

Accordingly, in July the European Council took its blue pencil to the Commission’s figures and limited any budget increase to 2 per cent, which, allowing for inflation, amounted to a freeze. In cash terms, this meant taking more than €5 billion out of the EU’s

planned spending and commitments, and to set an example to Brussels, the council slashed its own administrative budget by 5.45 per cent.

The will of the people who actually pay the bills could hardly have been clearer, but that, of course, was of no interest to the Eurocracy, which sees extracting and spending ever larger sums of money as the main reason for its existence. The functionaries in Brussels merely smirked and activated their second line of attack.

Under the Lisbon Treaty, the European Parliament now has the opportunity to endorse or reject the Commission’s budget proposals. We ask you, are turkeys ever going to vote for Christmas?

This month, then, produced the inevitable result. The Budgets Committee of the parliament voted to overturn virtually all the cuts demanded by the European Council and, with a bit of tinkering here and there, settle for the Commission’s proposed 5 per cent increase. In some cases the MEPs went even further than the Commission, adding such things as €30 million to spending on the so-called EU2020 growth strategy, €250 million in support for fruit and

vegetable growers, €5 million for “youth projects”, €3 million for election observation missions and €3 million for the Turkish-Cypriot community.

Some of this extra money would come from savings elsewhere (MEPs are prepared to cut 5 per cent from their generous travel allowances), but that is irrelevant. Both the Commission and the parliament are determined to spend more and the only differences between them are precisely where the extra money should go. The upshot is that we are now back to square one, with the addition of a quasi-democratic veneer because somebody has actually had a vote.

The budget now goes to the full parliament and it is not hard to forecast what the outcome will be. Nobody should be fooled, however, by this cynical manipulation of what passes for an exercise in democracy. The European Parliament has no more legitimacy than the Commission when it comes to spending taxpayers’ money.

The European Council must make it clear to the Eurocracy that when it says “No”, that is what it means – it must fulfil Mr Cameron’s promise that “we’ll make sure it doesn’t happen”.

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Challenge to EU snooping directive

The European Data Retention Directive, which requires telecoms providers to retain full details of people's telephone calls, emails and text messages, is being challenged as disproportionate and possibly illegal by a large number of digital rights groups.

More than 30 organisations have written to EU Home Affairs Commissioner Cecilia Malmström asking a series of questions about the impact and usefulness of this mass data collection and suggesting that the directive might break the Charter of Fundamental Rights and the European Convention on Human Rights.

When the directive came into force in 2006, the justification was that it would aid the fight against serious crime. It required telecoms companies to log users, recipients, dates, types of communication, location of equipment used and times and duration of calls and messages. That information was to be made available to national police forces as required.

The directive has certainly been well

used. The group European Digital Rights has reported that in 2010, the average European citizen had his or her communications data logged every six minutes. The civil liberties campaigners now want to know for what legitimate purposes all this data is being used.

“Does the presence or absence of blanket data retention legislation in practice have a demonstrable, statistically significant impact on the prevalence or the investigation of serious crime in a given member state?” their letter asks.

“If it does have a significant impact, by how many percent does it increase or decrease the prevalence, the clearance or the prosecution of serious crime? Has the introduction or the absence of blanket data retention legislation in the past made a significant difference to the number of prosecutions or acquittals or the closure or discontinuation of serious crime cases in any given state?”

“By how many percent did the number of condemnations, acquittals

or the closure or discontinuation of serious crime cases increase or decrease as a result of blanket data retention legislation or its absence?”

The organisations are also concerned that the absence of an overall definition of “serious crime” has led to abuses:

“As some member states do not have a definition of serious crime, the far-reaching consequences of not strictly defining ‘serious crime’ in the directive have been illustrated clearly in Poland, where the authorities accessed communications data more than a million times in 2009, using the retained data far beyond the prosecution of ‘serious crimes’ – even in civil proceedings.

“Alarmingly, the Commission recently seemed to argue that the telecommunications data retained only for the investigation and prosecution of serious crime can also be used in order to investigate intellectual property-related offences, that might not even be crimes, let alone serious crimes.”

Let us hope that this new challenge will spell the end of all this “Big Brother” surveillance.

Notes from the regime of cheats

THE EU and complicit politicians in member states have always operated through lies and deception: by cheating.

Here are just 10 examples – there are many more:

- Edward Heath, in 1972, arguing for UK membership of the then Common Market/EEC, asserting that “no essential loss of sovereignty is involved.” This, as he later admitted, was a deliberate lie.
- Ignoring the “No” of the 1992 Danish referendum on the Maastricht Treaty, insisting on a second referendum.
- Illegal misuse by the EU of EU health and safety legislation to force the Working-Time Directive on John Major's Conservative Government in 1996.
- Cheating (by fiddling the figures) to allow Greece to join the euro in 2001.
- Ignoring the decisive “No” votes in the 2005 Dutch and French referenda on adopting the EU Constitution.

- Rebranding the Constitution as the “Lisbon Treaty”, with minuscule insignificant amendments.
- Refusal by the Dutch and French governments to allow referenda on the Lisbon Treaty in their countries.
- Illegal use, in 2006, for setting up the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights, of Article 308 (formerly Article 235) of the Treaty of Rome, which is specifically restricted to “the operation of the common market”.
- Refusal to accept the “No” vote in the 2008 Irish referendum on adopting the Lisbon Treaty.
- In 2010, the EU's ignoring Article 125 of the Lisbon Treaty, which specifically prohibits bail-outs, and illegally using Article 122, which authorises financial assistance only if the member state's difficulty is “caused by natural disasters or exceptional circumstances beyond its control”.

Ian Milne

We don't need EU help with traffic laws

There has always been something of a mystery surrounding the reasons why governments produce initiatives when they do, especially if they seem at the time completely irrelevant to the problems facing the country.

One thinks of the parliamentary time wasted on foxhunting, the sudden introduction of NHS reforms in contradiction of the Tory manifesto, the confusion of the "Big Society"... and the latest wheeze from the Department of Transport, to raise the speed limit on motorways to 80 mph.

Transport Secretary Philip Hammond has adduced various reasons for such a change, none of which is convincing. There would be no appreciable shortening of journey times – in fact, there are technical reasons why higher speeds on motorways would actually increase delays elsewhere; carbon emissions would rise significantly and the idea that a law should be changed because a lot of people break it is frankly laughable.

And why now? We suspect that Mr Hammond might be trying to soften us up for a new wave of EU regulation designed to control the way we drive – including a 20 mph speed limit in all residential areas and on all single-lane roads without cycle tracks.

Yes, as the European project trembles before the worst crisis in its history, MEPs have been wasting their time dreaming up Europe-wide traffic rules which, like the concept of the single currency, take no account of differing circumstances in 27 member states: populations, road conditions, numbers of vehicles and accident rates, for example.

On a show of hands, the MEPs voted for the European Commission's new road safety action plan as "a matter of

urgency", harmonising traffic rules, road signs, roadworthiness tests and blood alcohol limits. The purpose is to reduce road deaths by half, serious injuries by 40% and child deaths by 60% between 2010 and 2020, with the long-term aim of a "zero death toll".

Perhaps we have to admire their idealism, but as with so many EU projects we must question the possibility of the desired results ever being achieved, not to mention any unintended consequences.

And, of course, there would be a new job for one of the boys, an EU road safety co-ordinator "to help member states to put the action plan into effect".

These are the main elements of the action plan:

- ❑ A 20 mph speed limit in residential areas and on all single-lane roads without cycle tracks.
- ❑ Eye tests for drivers every 10 years, and every five years for those over 65.
- ❑ An obligatory medical check for drivers at a certain age.
- ❑ The blood alcohol limit for professional drivers and beginners (first two years) to be zero. Installation of alco-locks on commercial passenger and goods vehicles as a rehabilitation measure for drivers with more than one drink-driving conviction.
- ❑ Technical inspections and safety-related electronic systems to be harmonised to the highest standards, and rules on the use of winter tyres to be harmonised throughout the EU.
- ❑ High-visibility reflective vests to be carried in vehicles for all occupants, say MEPs. Cyclists to be encouraged to wear helmets and reflective vests after nightfall.
- ❑ Simple roadside rails to be replaced as soon as possible by double safety barriers to protect motorcyclists.

❑ Member states to introduce penalty point systems for the most dangerous offences, as the most efficient supplement to financial fines.

❑ An EU-wide ban on the manufacture, import and distribution of systems that warn drivers of traffic checks (e.g. radar warning and laser jamming devices or navigation systems that automatically signal traffic checks).

❑ The introduction of monitoring equipment by means of which speeding offences by motorcyclists can be systematically detected and punished.

❑ Substances or medicines that affect the ability to drive should be systematically identified, and driving while taking them eventually to be prohibited.

Of course road safety needs to be taken seriously and the number of deaths, injuries and accidents has to be brought down to a minimum ("zero" looks like a ridiculous aim). But the European Parliament is again making the error endemic in the EU concept that regulations must be applied even where they are not needed. And unnecessary and intrusive regulation is a guarantee of public resentment and resistance.

We in the UK are doing rather well in reducing deaths on our roads, compared to our European neighbours of similar size. On the latest annual figures available, 2,222 people died on our roads, against 4,731 in Italy, 4,262 in France, 4,154 in Germany, 4,572 in Poland and 3,082 in Spain.

The trend in fatal accidents on our roads is downward and, although there will always be more that we can do to reduce the toll to an absolute minimum, we don't need Brussels to tell us how to go about it.

American public turns its back on EU

The 10th annual Transatlantic Trends survey, published last month, reveals that Americans may be turning their focus away from Europe, as a majority of US respondents said that their national interests lie more with the countries of Asia than with the European Union.

The survey shows that 51% of Americans feel that Asian countries, such as China, Japan, or South Korea, are more important to their country's national interests than were the countries of the EU (38%).

On the other hand, 52% of those living in the EU countries polled thought that the United States was more important to their national interests than the countries of Asia (37%). This year's results mark a

notable reversal in U.S. attitudes from 2004, when 54% of Americans viewed the countries of Europe as more important to their vital interests than the countries of Asia (29%).

"Transatlantic Trends marks a potential sea change for the transatlantic relationship," said Craig Kennedy, president of the German Marshall Fund of the United States, which leads the project. "We may have arrived at a watershed moment when the United States looks west to the Far East as its first instinct. This is a moment when transatlantic leaders need to step up and lead."

Among European respondents, while 67% considered that EU membership was good for the economy, the euro did not enjoy the same support. Only 40%

of respondents in eurozone countries felt the euro had been good for their country's economy. Across the EU as a whole, only 40% of the respondents felt that the euro had been or would be good for their country's economy.

Overall, the transatlantic relationship remains strong as 71% of U.S. respondents and 68% of EU respondents said they felt that their countries had enough common values to cooperate on international problems.

"There is still, in political and cultural terms, a 'Free World' which has however lost its economic primacy," said Angelo Benessia, chairman of survey partner the Compagnia di San Paolo. It's the EU that gets in the way – and the UK should recognise that.

www.transatlantictrends.org

Does anyone care what happens to Greece?

Back in 2010 Greek Prime Minister George Papandreou reassured his European counterparts and the troika that he will sort out Greece's chaotic public sector. Almost two years later, civil servants still receive pensions equating to 92 per cent of their pre-retirement salary still get a bonuses for showing up to work on time, and for carrying an envelope from the first floor to the second. Foresters still get a bonus for working outdoors and trolley drivers for fixing the trolley's antenna.

The daughters of deceased civil servants can still claim their father's pension for a lifetime if they remain unmarried. As Mr Venizelos [finance minister] is trying to convince Troika to give him the next tranche, about 40,000 women benefit from this law, putting an annual cost of around €550 million on the back of a social security system about to collapse.

So while the majority of Greek

people are making many sacrifices, their pseudo-government representatives keep arguing with their New Democracy opponents on TV shows about which party harmed the country the most for the past 35 years. At the same time, political and social stability have already started disappearing in Athenian neighbourhoods. And should the EU and the International Monetary Fund withdraw their support even for this pseudo-government, chaos will inevitably occur in a country already drowning in depression and angst with recorded suicide rates having roughly doubled since before the crisis to about six per 100,000 residents annually, according to the Ministry of Health.

But no one seems to care anymore. Not the country's own politicians, not the French or the Germans, who back in 1986 voted for the Single European Act in order to build a new Europe, a political union with a common

constitution, fiscal, economic and social policies and a common currency that would protect all European citizens. It turns out no one remembers those high ideals any more and the historical idea of the European Union is permanently forgotten. Europe is sinking into irrelevance between Asia and America while riots by its suffering citizens are spreading rapidly.

Right now, the eurozone displays more similarities to a hard core reality show where members-players-good Europeans can expel the weakest link, bad Greeks, and drive them straight to economic catastrophe without caring about the hidden cost of Greece's expulsion: a new jobless, homeless, hopeless Greek underclass.

So, goodnight and good luck Greece.

Greek Reporter, 22nd September 2011
www.greekreporter.com

Why the idea of ‘renegotiation’ is a trap

London: “We’d like to repatriate Health and Safety and Working-Time regulation from Brussels to the UK.”

Brussels: “But, my dear fellow, of course you can have them back. But in return, we invite you to make a financial contribution, on a permanent basis, to bailing out Greece, Portugal and the rest of Club-Med.”

London: “No, sorry, actually, we just want Health and Safety and Working-Time back, full stop.”

Brussels: “No way old boy. If you want them back there’s got to be a quid pro quo.”

London: “Oh well, OK then, we’ll commit another €200 billion to the bail-out facility.”

Brussels: “Actually, we were hoping for twice as much. But we could live with €200 billion if you agreed to impose the Tobin Tax on all financial transactions in the UK and hand over the proceeds to Brussels.”

London: “Er, well, gosh, the last thing we want is to have a row with you blah blah blah cringe...sob...cringe...”

Readers will get the picture.

“RENEGOTIATION” of the UK-EU relationship has been around for decades. At times it sinks from view; at other times, as presently, it rises from the ground like marsh-gas.

It is, of course, a peculiarly British phenomenon, arising from the self-interest, dishonesty, illusion and ignorance with which most British politicians, the BBC and other *bien-pensant* British media approach the awkward (for them) question of EU membership.

“Renegotiation” is not a policy; neither is it a set of principles or beliefs. Rather, it is a vague, never-defined, flabby notion or slogan whose purpose, or effect, is to avoid serious, concrete thinking about “Europe”. It is a chimera, a fantasy, a miasma.

The contemporary version betrays the usual confusion. Some argue that the resolution of the eurozone crisis will involve a successor treaty to Lisbon, needing approval by all 27 member states, and that that would be the opportunity for the UK to repatriate some powers from Brussels.

This pre-supposes that if Brussels refused to repatriate such powers to the UK, the UK would refuse to sign the new treaty. Really? Are we being asked to believe that the UK – with its record over four decades of giving in to everything – would play hardball in such negotiations? That the UK would refuse to agree to a new treaty that would be presented as the solution to

an EU and eurozone in economic crisis? The very idea is laughable.

The other snag is that by waiting for the rest of the EU to come up with a new treaty over whose provisions the UK could “renegotiate”, the UK would cede control of not just the agenda of the negotiation, but the timetable as well. From the British point of view, these would not be propitious circumstances for a successful outcome to the renegotiation.

Those who argue that “renegotiation” is the way forward appear to be suggesting that the rest of the EU is ready to contemplate devolving powers to member states (some even claiming that this would mesh neatly with the “localism” strategy being proposed by the Conservatives). Really? Haven’t they noticed that the Franco-German strategy for resolving the eurozone crisis consists in giving more powers to Brussels and Frankfurt: specifically, to institute a real “economic governance” of the eurozone? Haven’t they noticed that the current Sarkozy-Fillon government plans to “converge” with Germany on pensions, working hours, debt and deficit levels and much else?

Germany is content with “more Europe” because it reinforces de facto German control of the machinery. France wants “more Europe” because Paris still harbours the illusion that it calls the shots in Europe. The idea that the EU is ready to devolve or repatriate

powers to member states is pie-in-the-sky.

Yet another problem is that “renegotiation” pre-supposes a body or entity which would negotiate in good faith with a British government. Does such a body or entity exist? No. Is there any prospect of its existing in future? No. The Commission, the Council, the European Court of Justice and other bits of the central structure are there to defend their considerable empires, prestige, powers and privileges. They are not “neutral” or “even-handed” when it comes to considering a request for the repatriation of competence to member-states. They can also be relied upon to regard existing and future treaty provisions with – how shall we put it? – a degree of elasticity.

That is why “renegotiation” is, for the UK, an elephant trap. If the UK is serious about reclaiming powers from Brussels, she must refuse all “negotiation”. The only way (short of leaving the EU altogether) to get powers back is to present her EU “partners” with a non-negotiable list of those powers she is unilaterally taking back, and a non-negotiable timetable for their return. Simultaneously, the UK would “let it be known” – as Mrs Thatcher did at Fontainebleau in 1994 – that the Bill to take the UK out of the EU altogether had already been printed.

Ian Milne

LETTERS

Tel: 08456 12 12 65 email: euofacts@junepress.com

Follow the money

Dear Sir,

It is absurd to imagine that we can repatriate powers from Brussels. We have agreed to the concept of *acquis communautaire*, which means that we accept European law in its entirety.

It would be lawful and very much easier to repudiate Brussels' authority and cut off the money supply.

Nor would a treaty change have to be agreed by member states: Article 48 of the Lisbon Treaty allows treaties to be changed without reference to member states.

A referendum in this country would be unlawful because it is an incitement to overthrow our Constitution. In any case, we know that our rulers will invest as much of our money as is necessary to secure their preferred result and ignore it if it is not to their liking.

As England slides into the abyss of totalitarianism and bankruptcy, I urge you (and your readers) to give these matters serious consideration.

PETER HOWELL
Wiltshire

Preparing a referendum

Dear Sir,

With politicians and some political commentators desperately grasping for ways to save the doomed euro and the redundant EU, and with speculation about whether there might be a referendum to decide Britain's future relations, what might be the response of long-denied electors?

There is an assumption that, given a chance to vote on the euro/EU, British electors would register a resounding vote for independence. Is this

assumption justified? It would be worth recalling reasons for British ambivalence.

We would become isolated. We wouldn't, but prove it.

We would lose markets and jobs. Not so, but there is a recession.

Our voice would count for little. No more than that of a small nation on the fringe of the European continent. How much we count would depend upon ourselves.

The answers need to be thoroughly thought out and prepared for convincing presentation in the simplest terms. Nothing should be taken for granted. A referendum should record an overwhelming vote for independence.

RALPH MADDERN
Warwickshire

Our non-existent veto

Dear Sir,

If European Commission president Jose Manuel Barroso wished to introduce a financial transaction tax just in the eurozone, then he could probably do that without needing any further EU treaty change beyond that already agreed on 25th March.

Such a tax could easily be represented as one component of a "stability mechanism" to "safeguard the stability of the euro area", and would therefore fall within the scope of the new paragraph which would be inserted into the EU treaties through European Council Decision 2011/199/EU "amending Article 136 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union with regard to a stability mechanism for Member States whose currency is the euro". Under that EU treaty

amendment the eurozone governments could agree among themselves to impose the tax just within the eurozone, and as the UK would not be a party to that intra-eurozone treaty or agreement it would have no say over its contents and would have no veto.

European Council Decision 2011/199/EU would insert this paragraph into the EU treaties: "The Member States whose currency is the euro may establish a stability mechanism to be activated if indispensable to safeguard the stability of the euro area as a whole. The granting of any required financial assistance under the mechanism will be made subject to strict conditionality."

This could easily be interpreted as giving the eurozone governments the right to agree to a financial transaction tax just within the eurozone.

I wonder whether the Government will now reconsider the wisdom of so readily assenting to European Council Decision 2011/199/EU back in March, and decide that it will not proceed with the Act of Parliament which is necessary before it can be finally ratified by the UK.

DENIS COOPER
Berkshire

Compulsory reading

Dear Sir,

I am glad to see that Gerard Batten has brought out an updated version of *How much does the European Union cost Britain?* This should be essential reading for all journalists – including those in the BBC – and all politicians regardless of their political affiliation.

SUSAN CARROW
Derbyshire

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Plus - Marta Andreason MEP, Dr Ruth Lea, Mats Person, Alex Gordon, Dele Ogun

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01752 478050

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Brian Gerrish
Roger Hayes
John Hunt
Guy Taylor

CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION
Kings Hall, Glebe Street, Stoke on Trent
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Bruges Group
020 7287 4414

Monday **24th October** 7.00 pm

"Euro-scepticism or Secession?"

Peter Hitchen, *Author and Sunday Mail columnist*
Mark Pritchard MP, *Secretary of 1922 backbench Committee*

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01752 478050

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Roger Hayes
John Hunt
Guy Taylor

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Bruges Group
020 7287 4414

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Professor Tim Congdon CBE, *Economist and author*
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Dr Robert Barnes, UBS

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2014

Greece takes over EU Council Presidency **1st January**

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