



CNI

NEWS FOCUS - Better to leave the EC, UK's Justice Secretary

In a passionate statement, Michael Gove, the Justice Secretary, tells exactly why he wants Out

For weeks now I have been wrestling with the most difficult decision of my political life. But taking difficult decisions is what politicians are paid to do. No one is forced to stand for Parliament, no one is compelled to become a minister. If you take on those roles, which are great privileges, you also take on big responsibilities.

I was encouraged to stand for Parliament by David Cameron and he has given me the opportunity to serve in what I believe is a great, reforming Government. I think he is an outstanding Prime Minister. There is, as far as I can see, only one significant issue on which we have differed.

And that is the future of the UK in the European Union.

It pains me to have to disagree with the Prime Minister on any issue.

My instinct is to support him through good times and bad.

But I cannot duck the choice which the Prime Minister has given every one of us. In a few months time we will all have the opportunity to decide whether Britain should stay in the European Union or leave. I believe our country would be freer, fairer and better off outside the EU. And if, at this moment of decision, I didn't say what I believe, I would not be true to my convictions or my country.

I don't want to take anything away from the Prime Minister's dedicated efforts to get a better deal for Britain. He has negotiated with courage and tenacity. But I think Britain would be stronger outside the EU.

My starting point is simple. I believe that the decisions which govern all our lives, the laws we must all obey and the taxes we must all pay should be decided by people we choose and

who we can throw out if we want change. If power is to be used wisely, if we are to avoid corruption and complacency in high office, then the public must have the right to change laws and Governments at election time.

But our membership of the European Union prevents us being able to change huge swathes of law and stops us being able to choose who makes critical decisions which affect all our lives. Laws which govern citizens in this country are decided by politicians from other nations who we never elected and can't throw out. We can take out our anger on elected representatives in Westminster but whoever is in Government in London cannot remove or reduce VAT, cannot support a steel plant through troubled times, cannot build the houses we need where they're needed and cannot deport all the individuals who shouldn't be in this country. I believe that needs to change. And I believe that both the lessons of our past and the shape of the future make the case for change compelling.

The ability to choose who governs us, and the freedom to change laws we do not like, were secured for us in the past by radicals and liberals who took power from unaccountable elites and placed it in the hands of the people. As a result of their efforts we developed – and exported to

nations like the US, India, Canada and Australia – a system of democratic self-government which has brought prosperity and peace to millions.

Our democracy stood the test of time. We showed the world what a free people could achieve if they were allowed to govern themselves.

In Britain we established trial by jury in the modern world, we set up the first free parliament, we ensured no-one could be arbitrarily detained at the behest of the Government, we forced our rulers to recognise they ruled by consent not by right, we led the world in abolishing slavery, we established free education for all, national insurance, the National Health Service and a national broadcaster respected across the world.

By way of contrast, the European Union, despite the undoubted idealism of its founders and the good intentions of so many leaders, has proved a failure on so many fronts. The euro has created economic misery for Europe's poorest people. European Union regulation has entrenched mass unemployment. EU immigration policies have encouraged people traffickers and brought desperate refugee camps to our borders.

Far from providing security in an uncertain world, the EU's policies have become a source of instability and insecurity. Razor wire once more criss-crosses the continent, historic tensions between nations such as Greece and Germany have resurfaced in ugly ways and the EU is proving incapable of dealing with the current crises in Libya and Syria. The former head of Interpol says the EU's internal borders policy is "like hanging a sign welcoming terrorists to Europe" and Scandinavian nations which once prided themselves on their openness are now turning in on themselves.

All of these factors, combined with popular anger at the lack of political accountability, has encouraged extremism, to the extent that far-Right parties are stronger across the continent than at any time since the 1930s.

The EU is an institution rooted in the past and is proving incapable of reforming to meet the big technological, demographic and economic challenges of our time. It was developed in the 1950s and 1960s and like other institutions which seemed modern then, from tower blocks to telexes, it is now hopelessly out of date. The EU tries to standardise and regulate rather than encourage diversity and innovation. It is an analogue union in a digital age.

The EU is built to keep power and control with the elites rather than the people. Even though we are outside the euro, we are still subject to an unelected EU commission which is generating new laws every day and an unaccountable European Court in Luxembourg which is extending its reach every week, increasingly using the Charter of Fundamental Rights which in many ways gives the EU more power and reach than ever before. This growing EU bureaucracy holds us back in every area. EU rules dictate everything from the maximum size of containers in which olive oil may be sold (five litres) to the distance houses have to be from heathland to prevent cats chasing birds (five kilometres).

Individually these rules may be comical. Collectively, and there are tens of thousands of them, they are inimical to creativity, growth and progress. Rules like the EU clinical trials directive have slowed down the creation of new drugs to cure terrible diseases and European Court of Justice judgements on data protection issues hobble the growth of internet companies. As a minister I've seen hundreds of new EU rules cross my desk, none of which were requested by the UK Parliament, none of which I or any other

British politician could alter in any way and none of which have made us freer, richer or fairer.

It is hard to overstate the degree to which the EU is a constraint on ministers' ability to do the things they were elected to do, or to use their judgment about the right course of action for the people of this country. I have long had concerns about our membership of the EU but the experience of Government has only deepened my conviction that we need change. Every single day, every single minister is told: 'Yes Minister, I understand, but I'm afraid that's against EU rules'. I know it. My colleagues in government know it. And the British people ought to know it too: your government is not, ultimately, in control in hundreds of areas that matter.

But by leaving the EU we can take control. Indeed we can show the rest of Europe the way to flourish. Instead of grumbling and complaining about the things we can't change and growing resentful and bitter, we can shape an optimistic, forward-looking and genuinely internationalist alternative to the path the EU is going down. We can show leadership. Like the Americans who declared their independence and never looked back, we can become an exemplar of what an inclusive, open and innovative democracy can achieve.

We can take back the billions we give to the EU, the money which is squandered on grand parliamentary buildings and bureaucratic follies, and invest it in science and technology, schools and apprenticeships.

We can get rid of the regulations which big business uses to crush competition and instead support new start-up businesses and creative talent. We can forge trade deals and partnerships with nations across the globe, helping developing countries to grow and benefiting from faster and better access to new markets.

We are the world's fifth largest economy, with the best armed forces of any nation, more Nobel Prizes than any European country and more world-leading universities than any European country. Our economy is more dynamic than the eurozone, we have the most attractive capital city on the globe, the greatest "soft power" and global influence of any state and a leadership role in NATO and the UN. Are we really too small, too weak and too powerless to make a success of self-rule? On the contrary, the reason the EU's bureaucrats oppose us leaving is that they fear our success outside will only underline the scale of their failure.

This chance may never come again in our lifetimes, which is why I will be true to my principles and take the opportunity this referendum provides to leave an EU mired in the past and embrace a better future.

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