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## NEWS FOCUS -

### **Brexit is not just a Tory debate – Labour Leave argue the progressive case for quitting EU**

**On 23rd June, as the Northern Ireland football team hopefully is progressing to the quarter finals of Euro2016, the public will be voting to make a choice between leaving the European Union or staying in - writes Kate Hoey, Northern Ireland born, Labour MP (Vauxhall) in the News Letter.**

Unlike a general or local election the decision for most will not be based on party affiliation. The vote will not be whether they see themselves as left wing, right wing or neither. It will be about what they believe to be in the interests of the UK.

We will see sharing platforms across the UK people who don't normally speak to or like each

other and disagree on almost everything. What unites them is a belief that the referendum transcends normal party politics and is more important than petty squabbles. The referendum is about the future of our country and its ability to be proudly independent and trade freely again.

Too much of media portray the referendum as only a battle amongst Conservatives. It is not. Labour Leave want to ensure that the progressive voice for Leave will be heard.

The EU is anti democratic and in no way progressive. It spends 40% of its budget on a broken agricultural scheme that prevents farmers from less developed countries selling their wares in Europe, whilst dumping excess pesticide-pumped food on African markets, disrupting the livelihood of many poor farmers.

Our own farmers may be grateful for EU support – the price of which is our government being unable to step in to provide assistance in hard times. But with the £50 million we give each day to the EU does anyone seriously think that any government would not work with the farming community to listen to them as to how best financial support should be given minus the bureaucracy?

The EU has a history of assisting tax evasion. Juncker, the current president of the European Commission, organised sweetheart deals for big multinationals in his previous job, which was only possible due to EU connivance.

The sight of the Brussels establishment imposing unprecedented levels of austerity on Greece should be a real wake-up call. This was not a benign political institution guaranteeing social protection and international solidarity, but an unaccountable force bringing crippling pain on a people who cannot hope to repay the loans that are recapitalising their banks.

Hard then to understand that those who shouted loudest, and shared platforms, in support of Syriza would be so keen today for the UK to stay in the EU. In Greece, the heart of democracy and civilisation, the EU ordered in riot police, deposed the SDLP's sister party PASOK, and introduced biting austerity that led to the collapse of the public health system, as well as mass unemployment amongst the young. Even the right of trade unions' collective bargaining was abolished on the diktat of the EU Commission.

In the Republic of Ireland all the main political parties support the EU. Yet the independent

policy think tank PublicPolicy.ie has this verdict on their manifestos:

“The binding commitments in the EU Fiscal Rules will not allow many of the commitments in the manifestos of the main political parties to be implemented within the next three years.”

So whoever wins the election in the Republic will not be able to determine freely what is best for their people. That is EU democracy.

Meanwhile, the EU is willing to require ever-greater sacrifice to living standards in order to keep the euro and the wider European “Project” moving forwards. “Ever Closer Union” is what is on the tin – and even if the words are removed the contents will still be the same. Without a Treaty change even the recent trivial tinkering cannot be guaranteed.

Many voices will try to scare us into believing that leaving the EU would ruin the UK, but these are the same people who told us that we had to join the euro or face disaster. We stayed out of the euro and have therefore been spared much of the chaos of that unsustainable currency. Not surprising that many of our neighbours in the Republic of Ireland wish they too had never joined.

How can we ensure the jobs and growth that we need when vital contracts for work go to preferred bidders on the continent and not to British firms? How can we preserve and improve our public services when the Services Directives helped force the privatisation of the Royal Mail?

EU rules against state aid make it almost impossible to even contemplate renationalising the railways in Britain. TTIP is a gift to the multi-national corporations. I don't trust the EU to negotiate on our behalf, and I certainly don't trust it to be on the side of small businesses or trade unions.

I feel very optimistic about our chances of winning the referendum. In the event of a Brexit, we can trade and co-operate freely with EU countries. They need us more than we need them. We can forge our own trade deals globally, particularly to the Commonwealth and the growing, developing, economies across the globe. We face a great opportunity if we Leave. We can stop being little Europeans and become a great trading nation in the world once again.

Most of all we will get back the right to govern ourselves with our Parliament reigning supreme over the EU courts. That is why a vote to Leave is an optimistic vote for our country's future.

**• Kate Hoey is Labour MP (Vauxhall), co-chair of Labour Leave and a founder member of the Grassroots Out Movement**

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