

Extract of an open letter sent by Gavin Oldham to European Heads of State on 27<sup>th</sup> June 2016, shortly after the UK Brexit Referendum vote:

“Let me accept that the problem in Europe, and particularly in the Eurozone, has been partly caused by the United Kingdom with its opposition to 'ever closer union'. With no directly elected Head of State or executive responsible to the electorate, the civil servants who run the European Commission exercise power without accountability. There is no opportunity for the people of Europe to dismiss these people in power if they don't like the direction of travel. It is like a benevolent but inefficient dictatorship, forever taking decisions which are too little and too late.

The impact is felt hardest on the economy, with GDP growth stagnant and youth unemployment rife (Figures 1&2). Instead of transferring public works (as would happen in a unified country or federation) from Germany and the Benelux, which are effectively operating at too low an exchange rate, to those countries in the east and south of Europe, whose economies suffer from too high an exchange rate, you have let migration take the strain. So Germany has resorted to opening its doors to migrants from the Middle East, while those people from the eastern and southern countries have preferred to come to the United Kingdom. Who can blame them when unemployment for young people runs at over 50%?

Not only is there no directly elected executive or head of state, but also the democratic deficit spreads and deepens with that very migration. Someone who has lived in the United Kingdom – perhaps for many years – but understandably wishes to retain their original nationality, would have been denied a vote in every General Election and, indeed, in this recent referendum throughout that time. There are over 3 million non-UK passport holders from countries in the European Union who are disenfranchised in this way, and this will be multiplied many times over across Europe as people ‘enjoy’ freedom of movement - which in fact is driven in so many cases by poverty and disadvantage.

Affluent Europeans seem to be totally unaware of these strains, as if freedom of movement is a lifestyle choice rather than a hard and distressing necessity. They can therefore be remarkably unsympathetic to the stress that it causes, not only for the migrants themselves but also for the migrants' new neighbours.

This lack of awareness was clear in much of the broadsheet media comment after the vote: for example an article in the Financial Times made reference to bigotry which would deny people the lifestyle choices of freedom of movement.

One of my business colleagues commented as follows:

*“But why are there so many 'ignorant bigots'? Spend a month living in Great Yarmouth, spend a week working on a zero hours contract for Mike Ashley and it becomes understandable. Tell them about the benefits of EU working time directives, of EU funding and employment legislation and they wouldn't recognise any of that. Threaten them with more tax hikes etc., and they have suffered so much already it is irrelevant.*

*They feel cut adrift by globalisation and the 'haves'.*

*Our advert in this week's Private Eye 'Beyond the Referendum' [Figure 3] has it right. There needs to be a democratisation of wealth or this is just the start of the 'have nots' kicking back.*

*Our (Share) underlying purpose has never been more relevant or critical. We are part of the solution.”*

These are the real strains of poverty and disadvantage which caused so many UK citizens to vote against membership of the European Union. They are also there in most European countries and, if action is not taken quickly, they will break the whole Union apart.

So this whole situation has developed from dysfunctional and undemocratic European leadership which has resulted in economic failure. The economic hardship that has been caused has led to migration, which has imported that hardship into so many areas of the United Kingdom: areas that in past circumstances would have taken little interest in the machinations of the EU.

Now I know that the democratic deficit has been partly caused by us. It was Margaret Thatcher who encouraged expansion of the European Union to encompass the current 28 member countries. While this helped free many eastern European countries from the yoke of the old Soviet Union, it also denied Europe the opportunity to pursue that 'ever closer union': indeed she quite explicitly opposed such a development.

It is fair to say that Britain would never accept federalisation and a directly elected Head of State, but that is what the European Union and particularly the Eurozone needs. So our departure may help you to achieve that United States of Europe, if there can still be found the will in your countries to achieve it.

-----