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for Yorkshire & Humber

Quarterly Report

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1. Cameron's "renegotiations"

We always knew that there would be few surprises in Cameron's much-touted speech on Europe. Anyone who's been following the erratic progress of his negotiation "strategy" already had a good idea of the main themes. We got those main themes again, plus all the usual rhetoric about standing firm and being proud to be different.

Even so, it was striking quite how familiar it all sounded. Cameron seemed to be committing himself to re-fighting a string of old battles – battles that have already been won, in some cases a generation ago.

Take, for instance, his professed aim to make Europe a flexible network of cooperation, with different countries integrating to different extents and in different areas, depending on their own needs and preferences. All well and good – so good, in fact, that this principle is already legally enshrined in the Lisbon Treaty, together with detailed mechanisms for how it works under the heading of 'enhanced cooperation'. It has already been used to allow some countries, but not all, to work together closely on policy areas like patent protection and divorce law. And even this sets aside the obvious point that there are already several



overlapping circles of differential cooperation, such as the Schengen agreement and the euro. Several EU members, including Britain, have opted not to join these.

Another case in point is Cameron's obsession with "ever-closer union" – an aspirational, not legal, expression of European optimism that in any case means nothing close to what he keeps pretending. Is he ignorant of the fact that the last Tory prime minister, John Major, fought and won exactly the same battle back in 1992, resulting in the Maastricht Treaty's measured wording tempering union "among the peoples" (not the states) by saying, in the very same sentence, that this should be in accordance with subsidiarity (decisions should be as decentralised as possible)?

Has Cameron also forgotten the agreement among European leaders made less than 18 months

ago, in June 2014, underlining that "the concept of ever-closer union allows for different paths of integration for different countries, allowing those that want to deepen integration to move ahead, while respecting the wish of those who do not want to deepen any further"? I would hope not – Cameron himself was one of the signatories to that commitment.

I could go on. The principle of subsidiarity that Cameron says he wants to formalise is already enshrined in the treaty. Subsidiarity is already monitored by national parliaments via a mechanism very similar to the one he is now talking about. Protecting non-eurozone countries from discrimination is already an integral part of the European Banking Authority. Specific provisions already clarify that the Charter of Fundamental Rights creates no new legal rights in the UK beyond those already established in law. And so on, and so on.

No doubt words could be repeated, principles could be restated, agreements could be re-signed, proposals could be repackaged... and Cameron could claim credit for a host of new successes. But is anyone really going to be fooled?

The charitable interpretation of Cameron's performance is that he is playing the career politician –

painting himself as the defender of the reasonable middle ground, while trying desperately to hold his fractious party together. And promising to conquer territory you already own is, I suppose, one way to guarantee victory.

But there is a danger in this: it relies on your opponents playing along. And the increasingly intemperate 'out' campaign shows no sign of doing so. Their strategy involves shouting loudly that Europe is against us and reform is impossible. In fact, the exact opposite is true: Britain has a long track record of shaping the EU, and reform is a constant ongoing process, not a one-off event.

Cameron would be well advised to pay a little attention to the many positive changes achieved over the past four decades, and others that are underway — from reform of the CAP to the new fishing policy, from deepening the digital single market to developing a joint strategy to fight climate change.

By pretending instead that we are sole combatants in a war we have already won, he risks endangering everything we have achieved — and our future prosperity to boot. Labour must continue to campaign vigorously to remain in the EU, and not be distracted by Cameron's somewhat confused agenda.

2. Speech to conference

At Labour conference this September, I was pleased to be called to speak in the debate on Europe that was introduced by Alan Johnson, the leader of the Labour 'in' campaign, and wound up by Hilary Benn.

I was delighted that not one of the 20-odd speakers called from the floor dissented from the motion adopted that Labour should run an unconditional 'in' campaign in the EU referendum.

We may well not agree with some of the 'reforms' that Cameron negotiates with the EU, but the referendum is not on those reforms. It's on the much bigger question of our overall membership. Bad policy reforms (such as weakening EU social rights) by Cameron could be reversed by the next Labour government. But exit from the EU would be very difficult to reverse!

3. TTIP

I spent part of the summer in the USA, where I had meetings with members of Congress in Washington. One of the main subjects we discussed was, of course, the ongoing negotiations for a transatlantic trade deal known as TTIP. I also met the US negotiators and the EU's ambassador to the USA. It was an opportunity for me to explain to them why many of us in Europe have reservations about some of the ideas that are mooted for TTIP.

There's much sympathy there for our concerns on potential threats to public services and to the right to regulate, but less sympathy for criticisms of the proposed investor-state dispute settlement system

known as ISDS. On this, discussion is still focusing on a reformed ISDS, as suggested in the European Parliament resolution this summer.

A reformed ISDS is, however, still a privileged court for international businesses (and not domestic ones), which circumvents the normal legal procedures and allowing businesses to take governments to task, but not vice versa. Labour MEPs are opposed to such special privileges for businesses — and, indeed, the lack of clarity about this was the principal reason why we voted against what was otherwise a good resolution on TTIP in the European Parliament.

4. Save our steel

Across Europe, workers in the productive and highly skilled steel industry are losing their jobs as firms struggle to compete with cheap Chinese steel being dumped on the market. In Yorkshire & Humber alone, 900 people have lost their jobs at the Tata works in Scunthorpe in the past month. Urgent action is needed to address this crisis so our steel industry can compete on a level playing field.

The first line of responsibility for British steel lies with the British government. But there are also some key aspects at the European level. The EU has much more clout to pressure the Chinese government over steel dumping than the UK could alone. We also have tools to act against unfair trade practices, such as through anti-dumping duties. Roughly one third of such measures are related to steel, and already many relate to China. What this means is that the EU can put 20-25% tariffs on specific steel products entering the EU.

Unfortunately, introducing new trade defence measures takes time. The EU has to receive a complaint from the sector, investigate it, assemble the necessary evidence, and demonstrate that dumping has

taken place. This takes a minimum of nine months. It's too slow.

That's why the Commission put forward a proposal over a year ago that would let us act more swiftly. National governments have been unable to agree on this proposal, with a blocking minority preventing its adoption led by Cameron's government! This discussion was taken more seriously at an emergency meeting in Brussels recently — but it's too little too late for those who lost their jobs.

Nor is the government doing all it can nationally. It has not done as much as governments in other EU countries to help the British steel industry with its costs. It has not provided state aid. It has not even accessed EU funding designed to give immediate relief to people who have lost their jobs. The UK is entitled to this funding — but at the time of writing, Cameron has ruled out applying to the Globalisation Adjustment Fund. Millions could be spent on helping communities in the UK, but is instead lying unused.

Labour MEPs will continue to press for national and European-level action.

6. Referendum & campaigns

Things are starting to take shape for the EU referendum.

On Labour's side, Alan Johnson will lead the Labour 'In' campaign. Alan has written to all CLPs asking them appoint a European officer to focus on European issues, liaise with MEPs and work with campaign coordinators during the campaign itself.

The Labour Movement for Europe is also calling on CLPs to campaign vigorously to keep Britain in the EU. Linda McAvan MEP and I have written to all CLPs on behalf of LME with a model resolution that can be discussed at upcoming meetings to support this. We also urge CLPs to affiliate with LME to help bolster their nationwide campaign.

More broadly, the umbrella organisation called Britain Stronger In Europe will get broadcasting time and finance. It is important that we are part of this campaign, even though we will be running our own Labour campaign (and we are rightly wary about sharing platforms with the pro-EU minority in

the divided Tory party). Britain Stronger In Europe's chief executive is Will Straw, and a range of leading business and celebrity figures were announced at the campaign launch in London in October. More info can be found on the website (strongerin.co.uk), Twitter (@strongerin) or Facebook (StrongerInCampaign).

The long standing European Movement, a non-party organisation of individual members with local sections across the country, will also be a campaigning force ahead of the referendum. Although small, it hopes to focus on local campaigning. More info can be found here at euromove.org.uk (where you can also join) or at @euromove on Twitter.

There are also arrays of others who will also have their distinctive 'in' campaigns, with many more launching in the coming months. From Scientists for Europe, to Universities UK, to various trade union campaigns, the list is growing.

All hands on deck for this historic and vital campaign!

7. Visitors' group

I was delighted to welcome a group of constituents from Yorkshire & Humber to the European Parliament in October.

I met the group, coordinated by Councillor Liz Nash, when they visited Strasbourg. After a tour of

the European Parliament building, together with an explanation of what MEPs do and how the legislative process works, we also visited Strasbourg town hall where we met with one of the city's socialist councillors.

8. Whaling in the Faroes

In September, I received a lot of representations from constituents and others about the practice of whaling by Faroese people.

The Faroe Islands are outside the European Union. Not only are they not bound by EU-wide agreements banning whaling, but they have also secured exemptions from the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species and the Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (Bern Convention).

They appear to want to ignore the international community and wider public opinion in many fields, in particular regarding the environment and animal welfare.

Denmark, to which the Faroes are linked, seems unable or unwilling to bring any pressure to bear upon them.

In response to parliamentary questions from me and others, the European Commission has confirmed that it has made representations to Denmark and will continue to do so.

Will governments of other EU countries do likewise? A few questions asked in national parliaments would not go amiss!

Unfortunately, Denmark now has a Conservative-Liberal coalition government, which makes it less likely to be receptive to representations from other parts of the political spectrum.

9. Cross-examining European Commissioners

Amid all the debate about what reforms we want in the EU, it's as well to remember that there are some things we do quite well at European level — and even a few that we do much better than back home in our individual countries!

One example is the way we vet our 28 European Commissioners. It's important that the appointment and supervision of Commissioners is done properly and democratically, since they do an important job in drafting legislative proposals (though not deciding on them).

After each European Parliament election, Commissioner candidates are nominated by national governments and then matched to various jobs by the newly-elected President of the Commission. These candidates must then appear before our committees in

a series of public hearings, where they are each grilled in public for three hours, enabling MEPs to assess their qualifications for the post, their political priorities, and any potential conflicts of interest. It would be nice to see national parliaments grill ministers in this way before they take office!

We're determined to improve the hearings process even further for next time. In September, Parliament voted on a series of proposals I drafted to improve gender balance in the Commission, allow for more incisive questioning and call-back hearings, and set a deadline for governments to propose their candidates to us.

The changes were approved, so they will apply next time we conduct hearings (probably 2019).

10. Book

Squeezed between Owen Jones and Alan Johnson, I enjoyed signing copies of my new book at the bookshop at party conference.

Co-authored with Professors John Petersen and Daniel Keneally of the University of Edinburgh, it's called

The European Union: How does it work?.

Although intended as an academic textbook for university students starting to learn about Europe, it is nonetheless a useful introduction for anyone interested in the EU.

11. Cloning farm animals

The European Parliament recently debated a policy on farm animal cloning for the EU single market.

Labour MEPs voted to ban the use of cloning in animal production for farm purposes of all animal species. We also supported a ban on importing germinal products from cloned animals and their descendants, as well as a ban on importing food products from cloned animals and their descendants.

Such a ban is necessary, in line with expectations of the public, concerns about welfare conditions of cloned animals, threats to biodiversity and the current situation in the European agricultural sector, which does not need to resort to cloning in animal reproduction.

We also voted to ensure that all animals imported into the EU

are proven not to be clones or descendants of clones, and that no food or germinal products derived from clones or their offspring are imported into the EU.

Importantly, banning cloned animals, offspring and derived products from the EU market would mean that our external trading partners would need to introduce high standards for traceability and labelling similar to those which have long been implemented within the EU. This will benefit EU farmers, food producers and consumers by reinforcing the global outreach of Europe's leading animal welfare and food standards.

Labour won the vote, meaning that Parliament's strong position on farm animal cloning now passes to national governments, meeting in the EU Council of Ministers, to debate further.

Constituency mailbag

I received about **130,000** emails and letters in total since July. The top three issues of concern from my mailbag are:

Opposing bullfighting
Concerns with CETA
Speculation on food commodities

Website traffic

Since July, about **32,500** different people have visited my website. The most popular content in this period was:

Whaling in the Faroes
Deconstructing Cameron (again)
Mythbusters

You can download a copy of this report in electronic format from www.richardcorbett.org.uk, where you can also view my previous quarterly reports and read regular updates from my blog.

To request printed copies, including in an alternate format or in large print, please email richard@richardcorbett.org.uk.

Find out more online

My website, www.richardcorbett.org.uk, is updated regularly with news, views and analysis on EU and Labour Party topics. If you subscribe to my newsletter online, you'll be sent an email whenever I add new content.

You can also follow me on Twitter [@rcorbettmep](https://twitter.com/rcorbettmep), and on Facebook by 'liking' **Richard Corbett MEP**.

As a group of Labour MEPs, we have a shared website where you can read press releases, download resources and browse all Labour representatives in the European Parliament. www.eurolabour.org.uk



Doorstep EU

For up-to-the-minute analysis of media headlines on Europe as well as briefings on key issues, check out richardcorbett.org.uk/app

Meetings and events attended since July 2014

(other than regular parliamentary meetings) * denotes events where I was guest speaker

Yorkshire & Humber

Huddersfield CLP*
Leeds Central CLP*
East Yorkshire CLP*
Shiplay CLP*
Skipton & Ripon CLP*
Common Wealth,
Bradford theatre group*
Google digital garage
Kirklees Campaign Against
Climate Change
University of Hull*
University researchers
from York, Hull
Smith & Nephew, Hull
38 Degrees Airedale
Group*
Leeds Light Night
Amnesty International
Scarborough*
Premier Foods
City of Leeds School*
Srebrenica genocide
commemoration*
Wrose carnival
Workers' Education
Association*
Kashmir Martyrs'
Commem*
Trolley Bus Museum,
Sandtoft
Yorkshire Water
World Seafood Congress,
Grimsby
Meeting with South
Yorkshire councillors
about Roma in Yorkshire
Various Yorkshire &
Humber MPs
Yorkshire Building Society
Workshop for French,
German & British young
professionals, Bradford*

Brussels, Strasbourg

European Trade Unions*
Visitors' group from Yorkshire
& Humber*
LOW Associates*
Eurochambres*
Jim Cloos, EU Council
secretariat
All Labour leadership &
deputy leadership candidates
Several meetings with
British (and Irish & Belgian)
Ambassadors to the EU
RSPB Youth
SOLIDAR
Independent Living Group
(disability network)
Regional secretaries of Unite*
Labour party members in
Brussels*
European association of
emergency services
Nicolas Schmit, Luxembourg
Labour Minister
Votes@16 debate
Pro Europa*
British Chamber of Commerce
PEW UK
Lord Liddle
UK Major Ports Group
Councillors from the North
West
Waterloo 200 Organising
Committee*
Uni Global Union referendum
debate*
Dublin Chamber of
Commerce*
Welsh Assembly
constitutional Cmttee*
Labour MEPs' Trade Union
Group
New Zealand Ambassador to
the EU
Climate Central
Jonathan Faull (European
Commission)
European Network Against
Racism

Moldovan MPs and Staff*
David Liddington, UK Europe
Minister
The Great European Disaster
Movie (screening & debate)*
Hilary Benn MP & Pat
McFadden MP
Cecilia Malmström, European
Commissioner for Trade
Bertelsman Stiftung
Professor Vivien Schmidt,
Boston
National Farmers Union
President
Covington Burley*
Movement of European
Social Democrats Brexit
debate*
Third Generation
Environmentalism*
EP Research Group*
Friends of Kashmir in the EP
Workers' Educational
Association*
European Risk Forum*
Cross-party referendum
contact meeting

London & others

European Movement*
Ditchley Foundation
conference on future of EU*
Universities UK*
JMT
Waterloo 200
Commemoration
Launch of Stronger In
campaign
British Influence in Europe
event

Media interviews

BBC, ITV and Sky TV
Italian, Irish, Catalan & French
TV
Many newspaper interviews
Reddit 'Ask me anything'
online Q&A

THE RHETORIC



[Ever-closer union] may appeal to some countries. But it is not right for Britain, and we must ensure we are no longer subject to it.

David Cameron, March 2014
<http://bit.ly/1zK1wuk>

THE REALITY



The concept of 'ever-closer union' allows for different paths of integration for different countries, allowing those that want to deepen integration to move ahead, while respecting the wish of those who do not want to deepen any further.

Joint declaration by all EU leaders (including David Cameron), June 2014
<http://bit.ly/1lmepO5>