

Debate with Lord Adonis

This evening I have been asked to debate Brexit and our future relationship with the EU with Lord Adonis.

On the eve of this event I just want to reassure him I do know exactly how he feels. I remembered the huge misgivings and unhappiness I felt when I learned the result of the 1975 referendum. I saw years of rows, economic damage, high budget contributions and loss of sovereignty ahead for the UK as we stayed in . I had been swayed to use one of my first votes as an adult to vote to leave by looking at the costs of membership, the likely loss of industry and the impact on fishing and farming. I was also extremely worried about the progressive loss of self government as the Common market went on a continuous power grab.

That referendum was not technically binding on Parliament but the government clearly told us we the people were making the decision. Fewer people voted to stay in in 1975 than voted to leave in 2016, but it was a good majority on a lower turnout. The question was very misleading in 1975 whereas it was very clear in 2016. The question in 1975 gave In an advantage by making it the Yes answer without a balanced question.

In 1975 we were asked if we wanted to stay in the European Community (Common Market). The European Community as defined by the existing Treaty of Rome already had ambitions much larger than a Common market, and plans were in discussion for a single currency, the Snake as a precursor for monetary union, and wide ranging additional Treaties. The Stay in campaign played all this down. Talking to people afterwards who voted to stay, all thought they had just voted for a Common market, not for the wider Community which became a Union.

Despite all this I did not spend the ten tears after the vote demanding a re run with a more accurate question, or urging Parliament to ignore the wishes of UK voters. I accepted the verdict. In the mid 1990s, twenty tears later, when I started to want a second referendum, it was because the so called Common market of 1975 had so visibly been taken over by a much vaster project.

I hope Lord Adonis can see that the same is true today. The public have made up their minds and it is Parliament' s job to implement the decision. At least this time there is no ambiguity. We voted to leave, and voted knowing that meant leaving the single market and customs union as part of leaving. That was one of the few things both official campaigns agreed about.