

campaign for that you find overlap with this and you want to do some joint campaigning, please do email in and let me know. With the Labour Party at the moment, there still hasn't been enough of a turn towards acknowledging the role that Brexit has had in this crisis. The top line of the party is very much 'we can make Brexit work'. And this is about trying to win over red wall voters. But opinion is obviously shifting very rapidly as people are feeling this in their pockets, the impacts of Brexit. One of the focuses of our campaign as well as, I'm sure, your campaigns is to highlight this and get it on the agenda. The fact is that many elements of this crisis are caused either directly by Brexit or by the ideology that led us towards Brexit and the neoliberal disaster capitalists and hedge funds who drove the Brexit campaign early on, and who are continuing to make money out of shorting the currency, as we have seen happening before our eyes. So that's our position on the economic crisis now. We have a members meeting today with James Meadway on the economy and we're going to talk to our members about what kind of campaigning they want to see coming out of this crisis. Many of them are keen to support the Rejoin march on the 22nd. There are opportunities for collaboration there and campaigning that will come out of that.

Another Europe is coming towards the end of a round of campaigns that we've run across this year in which I've updated you at different roundtables. Aside from the economy, one of our big focuses has been Ukraine. Recently, the Ukrainian government has seen lots of wins, pushing back the Russian occupiers. But whilst this has been happening, there have also been pushes to privatise further and to deregulate and to bring in zero hours contracts, and get rid of some key workers' rights. So what Another Europe is Possible is trying to do is try to try and defend workers' rights in Ukraine as much as possible, and also to call for the cancellation of Ukraine's debt. Many of its creditors have decided that they're going to suspend all intermediary payments on the debt and it's acknowledged now that the debt will eventually end up being forgiven and cancelled. The problem is that lots of the loans that Ukraine needs to reconstruct itself come with conditions relating to privatisation and the labour market. And because it's a war zone and a war economy, these kinds of conditions won't actually help secure Ukraine and keep the social consensus intact. So we're doing lots of campaigning on that.

Finally, we've also had some fringes at Labour Party Conference. One was on Brexit Britain in the environmental emergency, and the other was on confronting Islamophobia across Europe. Both of those fringes were tied in with some reports we're going to be launching in the next month or so. What we discussed there was, firstly, the policy gap, when it comes to the British government's targets for environmental standards. The British government hasn't completely created a bonfire of environmental regulations, it's actually committed to keep certain standards. But while it has committed to this in rhetoric, it hasn't actually achieved it. And there could be ways that we can work across Europe, with the German government and with municipal governments to develop the cross European strategy to meet emissions targets and environmental targets.

With the Islamophobia fringe, we're producing a report on Islamophobia in France, as well as in Germany and the UK. We've made lots of contacts with activists in France and

Germany. And we're hoping that we can mount a more permanent campaign including a list of demands for the four UK governments to combat Islamophobia. There's a big link between the Brexit movement, anti-Muslim hatred and anti-sentiment. You can find references to all of this work on our website in [the news section](#).

We're now looking forward to the next year and thinking about a new set of campaigns against the latest reactionary legislation that this government is looking likely to produce!

Richard Corbett: “Labour's perspectives on Single Market issues”

Richard Corbett CBE was Labour's last Leader in the European Parliament. After Brexit, he was asked to represent the European Parliament on the Common Secretariat running the Conference on the Future of Europe (CoFoE), and is Deputy chef de cabinet to the Secretary General of the European Parliament.

Let me first point out that I'm not speaking on behalf of anybody. Certainly not on behalf of the Labour Party or its leadership, nor on behalf of any other organisation. I was at the Labour Party Conference as a former MEP, former Labour leader in European Parliament. I went to a lot of fringe meetings on Europe, there was a lot of activity, organised by the European Movement, by Labour for a European Future, Labour Movement for Europe, Another Europe is Possible, Party of European Socialists, Labour Irish Society, and indeed others. So there was a quite a lot of discussion on Brexit coming from a range of angles on the fringes with very well attended meetings, with, I should say, three different kinds of views clashing: those who say, well, Brexit has happened, we've got to attenuate the damage and do as much as we can, without changing the fundamentals; those who say, “well, no, we really should, at the very least be re-joining the Single Market and perhaps much more”; and those who want to re-join the European Union and say it's wrong to rule that out.

There was lively debate on the fringes. But in terms of the conference floor and in terms of statements by leading political figures in the Labour Party, there was, shall we say, a reticence or hesitation to address the issue, and when it was addressed, it tended to be ultra-cautious. Labour spokespeople and the Labour leadership said that they want to make Brexit work. Now, that's on the one hand a way of saying it's not working. But on the other hand, it implies that it could be made to work, a view which is certainly challenged quite widely across the political spectrum within the Labour Party. The Leadership has at least said that Labour would do a lot more to align with the European Union, on market rules, for instance, have a sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) agreement to obviate the need for a lot of checks at the borders, find a compromise on the Northern Ireland Protocol issue, re-join Horizon research programmes, re-join Erasmus, accept the EU's offer which to have a security partnership with the European Union, quite a lot of practical things like that which bring us closer to the European Union.

But ruling out re-joining the Single Market, which was the wording that was used, was a bit curious because the Single Market as such is not a membership organisation, it's a policy of

the European Union, which you can align with to different degrees. The closer you are aligned, the more access you have to the Single Market. Norway, for instance, is aligned on all single market regulations outside of the field of agriculture and therefore is, de facto virtually part of the Single Market, other countries a little bit less so depending on the degree of alignment. So, ruling out joining the Single Market was a curious turn of phrase, but you can see that it was part of this prudence, this caution, reticence about committing to going too far.

This reticence in my view is a forlorn attempt to placate a small and diminishing number of Labour Leavers in the so-called "Red Wall" and elsewhere, but at the risk of alienating a larger and growing number of people who are critical of Brexit among those parts of the electorate that would contemplate voting Labour. And so even in strict electoral terms, it's a misplaced strategy, let alone the fact that it's the wrong strategy in terms of the national interest. But the debate is alive, and I think the crucial point that will help shift things further is the gradual shift of public opinion. One of the most interesting speeches I heard at a fringe meeting was from Professor Richard Bentall, from Sheffield University, who is actually a psychologist who's branched out into studying political psychology, and why people form identities, why they vote in certain ways, what makes them resistant or open to changing their opinion. And he was pointing out the fact that opinion polls over time have shown a steadily growing increase in the number of people who say Brexit was a mistake: now well over 50%. This is very significant because unlike most opinion polls, which are volatile that go up and down every month with events, this has been steady, gradual, and continuous, which means it's quite deep-rooted. It means a fundamental change of opinion among many people. And let's not forget this has happened without any major political figures going out campaigning or this saying, "Look, Brexit is a bloody disaster, we need to reconsider. We need to re-join." Nobody, no leading political figure in Britain is saying that, or hardly any. Yet there's been this shift in public opinion, with even opinion polls recently saying the majority, doesn't just consider it as a mistake, but would actually vote to re-join. And that, I think, is the way to hammer away at parties such as Labour, not just Labour perhaps, in terms of their own interest. Peter Kellner, the opinion pollster recently wrote in *The New European* - perhaps not as widely circulated as it deserves to be, but it's a good read - that if "*just a few Remainers decide that Labour's stance is so weak that they decide to vote Lib Dem, Green, SNP or Plaid Cymru or they will not vote at all, then this could make the difference between a fragile short-lived Starmer government and a sustained period of Labour rule. This summer, the public mood has shifted, it's time for Labour to shift with it.*" And that's the sort of sentiment which, added to the objective justifications as a country to take a different line, adds party self-interest in taking a more vigorous line. That's the sort of argument that I think will produce a further shift in the Labour position. It was clear at the party conference that there are a lot of people working towards this. In private conversations with shadow ministers, I think quite a few want to go further than the current line. And it's up to all of us, I think, to keep the pressure going to make Labour - and probably the same applies to certain other parties - think that by taking a cautious line, they will be losing out. And that's the way to move forward.

Francis Beckett, 'Where will Starmer lead us?'

Francis Beckett is an author, journalist, playwright, biographer and contemporary historian. Biographer of, among others, Tony Blair and Jeremy Corbyn. His play about Clement Attlee was performed in Liverpool during the 2022 Labour Conference there. During the Conference he attended many of the meetings.

Agreeing in spirit but disagreeing in short-term practice with Richard Corbett, Francis Beckett feels that there is minimal or zero chance before the next general election of Labour changing the stance on Brexit which Starmer laid down in his Irish Embassy speech. We are talking about a much longer term effort. Starmer intends to fight the next general election largely on the minimalist programme of: "Can we at least have a government that isn't grotesquely corrupt and disgustingly incompetent?" Winning the next election would be a major step forward.

On the question of the Single Market, if we were to achieve what David Lammy wants to achieve by negotiation with Europe, we would effectively be participating in the Single Market, which as Richard says isn't a membership operation; we don't actually have to say so, but that is what we will have done. The temperature in Labour will change after the general election, it's in the second term of a Labour government that we can look for fundamental change. Starmer is an extremely, excessively cautious politician who is constantly and desperately searching for ways to prove that he is not Jeremy Corbyn. On Europe, he is not so much terrified of the Red Wall as terrified of the right-wing media, the Mail and the Express. When his shadow ministers go to talk to European governments or to EU officials, as they often do, they are very secretive about it, because they are paranoid that a single front-page photograph may create the impression that the Labour top brass are grovelling junior partners in any negotiation with the hated Europeans. That's why, for example, the Twitter feed of the Shadow Minister for International Trade, Nick Thomas-Symonds, offers only one picture of him, with the French trade minister Roland Lescure. It's one of those terribly stuffy official portraits, two men in grey suits standing to attention and smiling for the camera. That's the only kind of picture that Labour currently regards as safe. Starmer is much more radical than he currently appears. He has been desperately over-cautious, but he cannot change now, and we cannot change him now, before the next general election.

If Labour gets a majority next time, Starmer will start to be responsive to what is going on, but will provide fundamental change only (as Bentall suggests) in the early 2030s, if Labour wins a second term. We've probably got to give up on this decade. If rather than saying 'Make Brexit work', Labour are actually saying make baby steps towards a better relationship with Europe, we have a longer term view that may offer a certain amount of hope. Labour's approach does seem to be giving Brussels some hope. The EU Ambassador at fringe meeting after fringe meeting in Liverpool gave a very strong impression of a diplomat 'waiting for Starmer,' a diplomat who is hoping for a British government in 2025 that the EU can do

business with, that it can trust not to misrepresent it. The implication is that the EU does not trust Liz Truss at all and cannot be bothered being flexible when there is no chance of the flexibility being reciprocated by better EU-UK relations. It is extraordinary that a senior diplomat should say at a Labour Party fringe meeting that the present level of trust towards the UK is too low to produce any results. It is also unusual to say “it is not normal that we (the EU) should have had no summit with Britain for two years.” Privately, such diplomats intimate that the meeting in New York between Van der Leyen and Liz Truss was a complete disaster because there was no personal chemistry or sense of a British leader the EU can do business with. In stark contrast David Lammy, the shadow Foreign Secretary, and the EU ambassador, did give the impression of two people who have already had extensive discussions and have got to know and trust each other, and are waiting for the opportunity to do business together. The EU ambassador welcomed the fact that the UK’s largest opposition party was focusing on relations with the EU, and encouraged the Labour Party to continue, especially in relation to the Northern Ireland protocol.

In summary, behind the official caution on Brexit, Labour is offering the EU a better way to do business, a better sort of relationship. Richard is right that some shadow ministers would like to go a little bit further, but the ones I’ve talked to gave the impression that if they carry on doing what they are doing, they are at least taking baby steps in the right direction.

Francis Beckett closed by reminding us that Starmer’s political hero is Harold Wilson, whose defining characteristic was to lock people in a room to negotiate until they came to a solution.

Alex Toal. “Breakthrough in Labour’s approach to PR”.

Alex is Campaigns & Digital Executive at Make Votes Matter and is the Bylines Network’s audience development officer.

Alex Toal outlined the processes which led to the 2022 Labour Party Conference voting in favour of Proportional Representation (PR). Several organisations have been campaigning for PR for many years, with ‘Make Votes Matter’ co-ordinating the ‘Labour for a New Democracy’ campaign. It was especially important to get motions passed through Labour’s 2 largest unions, Unite and Unison. Over 370 Constituency Labour Parties (hereafter CLPs) had a policy in favour of PR, which was once again the most popular issue, with 140 CLPs submitting motions. The CLPs put forward 6 motions as did the Unions. After compositing, the session on PR was chaired by Alex Norris, Shadow Minister for Levelling Up, who recognised the strength of feeling and offered little resistance to a vote on PR. This meant that the motion came to the Conference Floor, and was passed near-unanimously on a show of hands with support from all parts of the Labour Party. Although PR will not be a focus of the leadership, there is now no concerted effort in the Labour Party to stop electoral reform.

The next stage will be how best to influence the Parliamentary Labour Party. About 25% of Labour MPs oppose PR, a third or more are in favour, and the rest are either undecided or

undeclared. The campaign will involve getting constituents to write to their MP or their Labour candidate reminding them of party policy in favour of PR and asking for their views. The vote on the Conference Floor itself will hopefully encourage some MPs to come out in favour. Prospective Labour candidates in target seats are also overwhelmingly in favour - after all they need to be selected by members, who are generally 80% in favour of PR. There will be more research. Polling by 'Make Votes Matter' already suggests, for example, that Labour voters in Red Wall seats want electoral reform by a ratio of four to one, and by a ratio of two to one they want MPs with strong priorities for democratic reform. We will continue the dialogue with Keir Starmer's office and will continue to persuade him that PR is not the end of the world.

Q and A.

Q1. Has the Labour Party taken a stance on any particular elements of the Retained EU Law (Revocation & Reform) Bill?

RC: would like to link this question to another issue. RC and FB are broadly in agreement about the path ahead, but might differ about how quickly it should be taken. Richard Bentall spoke about this at Liverpool and said he had placed a large bet on a UK re-join in 2032.

He could be right, but there are things that Labour can't put off for years, one of which is dealing with precisely this Bill.

The stated purpose of the Retained EU Law Bill is to revoke all UK laws now on the statute book which originated at the European level. This threatens the elimination of a whole mass of progressive legislation on labour, business, environmental and social rights, standards and protections. Labour will have to oppose this and will have to fight for the retention of valuable historic EU legislation, which the UK often initiated, supported and welcomed. By making this case, it will also maintain the necessary preconditions for a return to the Single Market. While this is going on, there will be the accompanying continued drip drip drip of bad news of the cost of Brexit – which will continue to pose the question of how to address and reverse these effects. These combined factors are likely to push Labour to think about going further and sooner along the path towards rejoin.

Q2. Richard: I think you are aware of the research (from Richard Bentall and Paul Willner) showing that leavers and remainers are similarly positive about freedom of movement. Can those data be leveraged to help shift Labour leadership views?

RC: Yes, this is a very important piece of research. More campaigning is needed to communicate and draw attention to these findings.

Q3. RC spoke of the Labour agenda of small steps to better EU relations as actually being components of the route back into the single market. Starmer has notably promised to negotiate a new SPS (sanitary and phytosanitary) deal covering food and agricultural trade? Would it make sense to regard this as the first steps of our return to SM?

RC: Yes.

Q4. Our Trade and Cooperation [TCA] agreement with the EU has processes and options built into it to re-establish links that can be implemented without needing a new treaty. Can this be a starting point for first steps towards rejoin?

RC: Yes, if we had a government with the will to make use of this. This would allow the UK to return to Horizon R&D cooperation, Erasmus, police & security cooperation and access to the European Schengen information system. But there are gaps in what can be achieved because of UK choices during the negotiations. The Political Declaration attached to the Withdrawal Agreement envisaged, for example, security cooperation, such as in economic sanctions, which would have now been of great benefit; it was anticipated that the EU council meetings could have been attended by UK ministers for these purposes. But after winning the election with this 'oven ready' Withdrawal Agreement, when he subsequently negotiated the final Trade and Cooperation Agreement, Johnson reneged on this and refused to proceed with these items. A Labour government would be likely to address those gaps.

Q5. Do you think the European Political Community [EPC] could aid closer alignment and a UK rejoin before 2030?

RC: UK attendance at the Prague EPC launch meeting was a useful symbolic step. However the EPC is not designed to produce new legally international binding structures and institutions. It is a talking shop; it is not designed as a mechanism to facilitate enlargement of the EU. Some countries attending EPC are seeking to join the EU, but can't as yet, and others have chosen not to join.

Q6. Deborah Mattinson's role as a key Starmer strategy advisor is mentioned in a recent *New European* article. Do you see her as a major influence on Starmer's negative Brexit policy, and if so why?

FB: She is not the key advisor, but does have a very cautious policy viewpoint. The policy hawk in the office is Matthew Doyle, the comms lead. He worked with Blair, and has a similar role to Mandelson. DM worked with Blair and Brown and also gave them cautious polling and policy advice, on what could do damage to Labour. FB thinks she perhaps overestimates the weight of older leaver and conservative Labour voters in the Red Wall, and their North vs South antagonism and resentment, and intense patriotism. I think the key voice in Starmer's office is not DM but Matthew Doyle and the history he represents. FB hopes that Starmer will prove to be a more radical figure when in government.

Q7. I am not sure how far it can be argued that Labour's EU policies, when taken as a whole, could be seen as effectively constituting alignment with the Single Market, if Keir Starmer's speech means that Labour intends to set out plans for a points based immigration scheme in its next manifesto. What is your view on this, given the strategic importance the EU places on the integrity of the Single Market?

RC: This is indeed worrying and it would create an obstacle to single market entry. Most migration into the UK is and has been from outside the EU, a matter for national law, not EU

law, and always subject to the control of the UK only. Whereas EU migration into the UK was always a minority of immigration to UK and governed by reciprocal freedoms and controls. The outcome of Brexit had been perverse in terms of the preferences of racist and culturally xenophobic Ukipers as it has reduced white and Christian immigration to the UK and increased Asian, African and Islamic immigration – not exactly what the racists wanted! Labour has no need not bend over backwards to the bogey of Brexiter border control. Lots of UK people miss EU freedom of movement and would like to see it restored.

Q8. Has anyone tried to quantify the mitigations of Brexit economic damage (approx 4% of GDP) which Starmer's proposals offer to provide? Given the grave economic situation that a Labour government can expect to inherit (such that some are calling the coming election a 'good one to lose'), can Labour sensibly deny itself the one option which would do most to revive economic growth – rejoining the single market?

FB: is not aware of any OBR type quantification of Labour economic policy benefits. In terms of the election being 'a good one to lose. **FB** is convinced that the coming Labour victory will be one of the epoch-defining shifts comparable to Callaghan's perception of the Labour defeat of 1979 (like 1905, 1931, 1945, 1964 and 1997); however there is a big fear among some members of the shadow cabinet that on its way out, the Truss regime is planning a scorched earth policy, leaving Labour with a poisoned economic legacy and no chance of positive new action.

RC: it might be a good idea to evaluate what Labour's current policy would do to mitigate the cost of Brexit. Deborah Mattison's study of northern Labour voters is misleadingly selective in tending to ignore the great Northern remainder cities – Newcastle, Leeds, York, Liverpool, Manchester. The Labour NEC analysis after the last GE showed that even in the Red Wall, a dozen seats were lost by margins less than Labour losses of remain votes. Labour lost more votes to other more vociferously pro-EU parties than it did to the Tories. Most Labour voters in almost all areas (even majority leave ones) were pro-Remain.

FB: Deborah Mattison's Red Wall voter studies tend to rely heavily on qualitative rather than quantitative methods, and this highly selective approach can lead to discovering the popular attitudes which one previously expected, and may have been liable to inadvertently mislead and reconfirm what one first thought.

Q9 What are the chances of getting PR into Labour's manifesto?

AT: The formal process will be through a Clause 5 meeting when the GE is called. PR will be in the Manifesto unless the leadership says no. The leadership needs to be persuaded that Labour will be a less popular GE contender if it does not offer PR.

RC: It is important to stress how much these two struggles – Europe and PR - are linked. Implementing PR would satisfy one likely EU precondition for agreeing to UK re-joining: an assurance that no Brexiter Tory government will get back into power with a majority of seats for the foreseeable future.

An accompanying outputs and actions brief is being circulated on [Campaign](#)

Asks.

Attendees:

Lisa Ryan Burton [Chair] – Bremain in Spain
Francis Beckett [speaker]
Richard Corbett CBE [speaker]
Alex Toal [speaker] - MVM
Seema Syeda [speaker] – Another Europe is Possible
Yvonne Wancke – Bylines Network
Mark Johnston – Pro Europa
Paul Willner - Wales for Europe
Prof. Richard Bentall
Else Kvist – The New Europeans
Sue Wilson – Bremain in Spain
John Gaskell – Grassroots for Europe
Fiona Godfrey – British in Europe
Cal Roscow - Best for Britain
Jane Golding – British in Europe
Juliet Lodge – Yorkshire Bylines
Peter Beckett
Fiona Wishlade - EMIS
Sharon Leclercq-Spooner – Pro Europa

Apology:

Caroline Kuipers – **Round Table**

RT Team:

Caroline Kuipers [Coordinator], Jo Pye, Colin Gordon, Dr Monica Horten, Tony & Lillian McCobb, Helen Grogan, Jonathan Harris.

Next Meeting: Round Table #30. Tuesday 1st November at 5pm. “Russia and Brexit: hybrid war and dark influence”, with Christopher Steele and Turlough Conway.