BREXIT: is it time to exit the EU?

June 2016

Edwina Currie (IN), Chris Bickerton (OUT) and Wendy Olsen (IN) opened a discussion on the EU referendum

Our most important vote for a generation is set for 23rd June 2016 - on whether the UK should Leave or Remain in the EU. There doesn't seem to be any particular Party divide on the issue with prominent personalities from all parties split over the issue. This referendum on sovereignty poses the issue of political principles more than any recent general election.

The consequences of this referendum will be generational. So what should we make of the #REMAIN and #LeaveEU campaigns? Is the primary issue control of national borders, economics, trade agreements, equality and employment legislation, or restoring democratic accountability of our politicians? The campaign so far has relied heavily on a series of fear and scare tactics over what life might be like after the vote rather than a positive case for remaining or leaving. Are there better arguments to be aired, and can we be trusted to hear them?

The exciting aspect of this referendum is the free vote and discussion allowed within the governing and opposition parties - a brief opening up from years of stultifying management of party politics. It's unusual to have high profile politicians like Boris Johnson and Michael Gove campaigning to Leave Europe in opposition to their Prime Minister, whilst the leader of the opposition is campaigning to stay in. Will the series of unelected 'experts' wheeled out to tell the electorate of the folly of independence win us over, or will the outcome be decided by other factors?

What will we make of this debate - cancel our newspapers for a few months, or make our principles count in this campaign?

Some background readings

The global case for staying in the EU , by Charles Grant, New Statesman 19 Feb 2016

BCC head John Longworth accuses David Cameron of peddling scare stories as he quits in Brexit row , by Tim Ross and Christopher Hope, The Telegraph 7 March 2016

14 things the EU has done for Manchester , by Jennifer Williams, Manchester Evening News 10 March 2016

Why Voting 'in' Is Morally Wrong , by Kit Brennan, 16 April 2016

Podcast: European Referendum: what will decide the vote? Institute of Ideas, 20 May 2016

The EU is a mirage , by Chris Bickerton, spiked May 2016

Watch video of the speaker and audience discussion below. Thanks to Dan Clayton the documentary filmmaker from Leeds for this.