

Highlights from Round Table # 16 Tuesday 22nd June 2021

"Winner Takes All – Inequality & The Australian Deal"

- **Jonathan Hopkin**, Professor Comparative Politics, Dept of Government and European Institute at the London School of Economics
- **Liz Webster**, Founder, Save British Farming

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Speaker: Professor Jonathan Hopkin focused on **"Was inequality a factor in the vote to Leave and what does it mean for future campaigns?"** He argues that policy choices of successive UK governments led to rising inequality that sharply skewed income distribution in favour of a mega-rich elite and how a 'winner takes all' economy helped to create conditions ripe for Brexit.

- **Cohesive societies are more comfortable to live in** - There are many ways in which the economic life of a country can be structured to create cohesion, unfortunately the political organisation of the UK does not encourage cohesion. UK economics is based on increasing inequality.
- **EU countries tend to have economic governance that reduces inequality.** The UK has pushed the EU away from such governance and non-participation in the Euro and has insulated the UK from the effects of EU governance.
- **The Brexit vote represents a long burning fury at how market forces have torn the UK apart.** Travelling between London and Hull shows the divide. Important to note that we would have experienced upheaval at some point even if it had not been for Brexit.
- **The financial services industry only benefits a small group** with few benefits for the rest of society. EU monetary and political integration would have upset the UK balance of power rooted in this disproportion of benefit. The financial crash and subsequent stagnation have created fault lines of entrenched inequality. Brexit gave the less advantaged an opportunity to give the governing class a bloody nose without understanding the consequences.

Where next? There are new divides in politics that need attention

- **The Conservative re-invention as the champions of the Disadvantaged and The North.**
- **The Labour Party's "dislike" of its strongest demographic supporters** (metropolitan educated and young)
- **The new dividing lines are not about left and right** but about the "appeal" of Boris Johnson. to wealthy shires and declining post-industrial towns. – he has capitalised on feelings of neglect and under representation The Labour Party and the Pro EU groups failed to understand this sentiment. We were not using language that appealed to people feeling distraught and distant from decision making /influence. How do we connect that vision to the people who feel distanced from decision making and develop more of an understanding that being in "the bigger club" gives increased ability to solve problems? Leave presented the view that their problems could be solved by Leaving.
- **Remain had a real failure to communicate "what was in it for them" for the more deprived areas.** We need to demonstrate an understanding of what the EU looks like to people at the hard edges of our society.

- **People who are disenchanted with life have not had the benefits of being in the EU communicated clearly to them.** The vision of what the EU is about needs explaining. Project Fear didn't work. Currently EU policy making seems distant, technocratic heartless unappetising to the people we need to convince. The UK in the EU could have made the whole EU more politically active, but the tide has turned on Free Market Economics even inside the EU. Even though the EU is based on Free Market Economics, the architecture of the EU itself has acted against that shift e.g., The European Court of Justice not allowing more generous policies and the Free movement of people leading people towards countries with more progressive governments. We need to have a vision of what the European Union can become as the EU has not had an easy time in the recent decade. What Britain can contribute to the EU that can have a progressive impact?

Latest book from Jonathan Hopkin -Anti-System Politics: The Crisis of Market Liberalism in Rich Democracies https://www.amazon.co.uk/dp/B084CY83DH/ref=dp-kindle-redirect?_encoding=UTF8&btkr=1

Liz Webster, Save British Farming & Australian Deal

The Australian Deal sets the scene for the damage that can be done to UK by opening the floodgates to the whole world, because it is already hard to compete internationally.

- **Farming is a long game:** The damage will be gradual, not overnight. However, politics can move quickly, and we can exploit the fact that Johnson glibly promised there would be no dumping and all will be well. He must know that promise is impossible to keep, so does he betray the ERG Group on the one hand or the British people on the other? This deal is all about our health and nutrition, and some British people will die as a result.
- **These considerations give us time to get power using this powerful narrative of betrayal.** Sadly, individual farmers will be financially ruined, and British farming decimated. However, Johnson's betrayal of farmers (and other industries) will be his downfall if we seize the opportunity to expose this betrayal and stand up for those whose livelihoods are being destroyed. To achieve our aims, we need a positive and optimistic approach to campaigning. British people need to realise that Johnson has betrayed them.
- **The Australian View:** Monica Horten shared the Australian view of the deal and that it "righted an historical wrong" of 50 years ago when the UK joined the EU, that it was good for Australia, and that Australia expected all sorts of products rice, wine, etc., not just meat, to flood the UK market almost immediately.