

**“Britain in Europe – sharing sovereignty to strengthen sovereignty”**

The pleasure at being here is, of course, laced with great sadness since the lecture is held in memory of our dear friend and comrade John Fitzmaurice, who died suddenly last year. I am delighted that Lisa, John’s mother will get a recording of it, since she will understand the deep feelings we all had for him. I am also pleased to welcome some of John’s colleagues, including the Secretary General of the Commission, David O’Sullivan.

The tributes paid to John by work colleagues from all of the European Institutions, from the University, from the wider circle of people who regarded him with affection and esteem, and from his soulmates in this Party, testified to his multiple qualities.

His combination of humour and wisdom, insight and innovation, kindness and determination was rare. His unassuming but unremitting internationalism was basic to his democratic socialist convictions and fundamental to his personality.

I therefore thought that, in this first John Fitzmaurice Memorial Lecture, I ought to strive to reflect that particular asset of his intellect and character. I consequently give my lecture the title “Britain in Europe – sharing sovereignty to strengthen sovereignty”.

I take, as my starting point, words that would have been endorsed by John, not only because the author was admired by him as by me but because of the enlightened perspicacity which they manifest: 53 years ago, in a concluding passage of “In Place of Fear”, Aneurin Bevan wrote “...The attainment of political power in the modern state leaves many problems outside its scope.

National Sovereignty”, he said, “is a phrase which history is emptying of meaning”.

That was overstatement rather than understatement. But what matters is that the context for Bevan’s declaration was provided by a preceding half century with two devastating World Wars, prolonged global slump, chronic mass unemployment, and widespread systemic poverty, injustice and oppression. By the early 1950’s, as Bevan had earlier advocated, a post-war generation of international leaders had responded to those searing experiences by taking collaborative action to reduce insularity, combat poverty, and restrain aggression. They created the United Nations, the World Bank, the GATT, the IMF and a wider apparatus of systematic international co-operation. In 1951, the precursor of the European Union – the 6-nation Coal and Steel Community – was established.

I am not implying that a contagion of selfless idealism had swept through Governments. But I am saying that the leaders of that time had learned from the causes and effects of repeated Armageddon. They did recognise the sources - and universal, borderless results - of communicable misery. They did perceive that all that they valued depended not upon the supremacy of any nation but upon the community of many nations. And, to make those insights effective in peaceful and productive ways, they began to build security and stability in Europe and the wider World by undertaking some pooling of power, some sharing of sovereignty.

Our times demand a similarly constructive course, and the case for that is straightforward:

Sovereignty is the *effective* power to influence and shape events, decisions and outcomes; the *effective* power to achieve benefits and to prevent or mitigate disadvantage.

Sovereignty cannot therefore be abstract or sentimental. In its meaning and purpose it has to be tangible. Sovereignty is not a matter of identity, it is a matter of potency. It is not a monument to the past, it must be manifested by the real ability of a countries to protect and advance their current and future interests. And for free countries, those interests plainly and fundamentally include liberty itself.

In the circumstances of today and tomorrow, the scope and utility of sovereignty has particular significance. The reason for that is clear:

The facts of 21<sup>st</sup> century life are globalisation, integration, interdependence.

In our time and for all of the future, those are the realities of existence which determine the extent and the nature of the *effective* power, the true sovereignty, that a nation State can exert.

Separatists and nationalists in politics and the press sustain the illusion that isolation can provide refuge from those realities.

But the truth is that the opportunities and benefits that transcend borders, and the terrible menaces that ignore land and sea frontiers, prohibit retreat into physical or mental national enclaves.

This is a World in which the internationalised evolutions in economics, commerce, transport, communications, crime, environment, disease, science, technology, consumption and culture are too strong, too insistent and persistent, to be evaded.

This is a World where multinational mega-corporations have assets that compare with the national wealth of many developed countries, and they have power to match that economic strength.

This is a World where there is currently one military and economic superpower – the USA, and where other countries – India, China and Brazil – will have a combined economic size that will equal that of the EU by 2025 and that of the USA by 2030.

In such a World, the safeguarding and advancing of national interests and effective sovereignty cannot be assured by individual countries that are the size of the UK – or Germany, or France, or Italy, or Spain or anything smaller – acting alone. For countries like ours, isolation is not splendid, it is puny. It sabotages the very national interests which the counterfeit patriots claim to love and serve.

The international and transnational nature of the challenges and problems confronting modern States must therefore be matched by international and transnational means of dealing with them. Making national preferences and power trenchant instead of nominal, effective and not decorative, requires consistent collective multinational action in a regime of Law agreed by democratically elected Governments

That is what the European Union is for. That is how it works. That is why the United Kingdom needs to be actively engaged. Not unconditionally – that would be absurd. Not without argument – that would be impossible as well as unhealthy. But certainly engaged with conviction and consistency. The reason for that is basic:

As with any other association of humans, communities or countries, detachment reduces impact. Absentees lose arguments. Withdrawal guarantees weakness – whether it is partial, as some politicians want, or total as other political forces demand and promise.

In our time and in our children's future, therefore, for sovereignty to be meaningful Britain's presence in Europe must be profound and some sovereignty must be shared.

The nature of that sharing deserves emphasis:

Reading most newspapers, you'd think that common EU decisions only move sovereignty in one direction – and that is towards being “lost” or, in the more lurid versions, “surrendered” or “stolen”. It is not true.

In the policy areas where elected Governments have agreed it, real sovereignty is being *extended* by being pooled: Democracies like Britain legislate with others to internationalise policies and laws in order to exert their common will over supranational conditions. They are doing that through negotiated statutory and executive action. And they are achieving productive outcomes that would not be feasible if they had to act alone. So there is not a one way traffic in legal and political authority, and no Member State gains or seeks dominion over us any more than we supersede them: By sharing some sovereignty the United Kingdom and the other Member States of the European Union are collectively adding to their effective individual power, not dissolving it.

The evidence for that is material and plentiful. It includes high legal standards of international environmental, employee and consumer protection; a job and wealth-generating barrier free Internal Market with a single currency for most,

equitable competition regulation for all, and the liberalisation of markets that has brought price reductions and massive extension of consumer choice in energy, telecoms and several other products and services; the World's biggest humanitarian aid provision and untied development support funding; increasing collaborative action to combat cross-border crime and illegal migration and to assist with relieving tensions in, for instance, the neighbouring Balkans; and the largest ever enlargement to include ten more democracies – most of which were trapped in political and economic totalitarianism just over a dozen years ago. These must all be listed among the plentiful advantages of being part of the EU. None of them or the many other practical accomplishments and the freedoms which they sustain and extend could have effectively been secured by countries acting alone or by some complex nexus of multiple bilateral relationships.

In short, in Europe, and so far only in Europe, practical and democratic means have been developed and applied to rationalise the ostensible contradiction between sovereignty and common interests through managing interdependence. That system has been evolved pragmatically over five decades. It is unique in the World and in history. It has a net annual cost of just one per cent of Gross National Income of Member States. The net annual UK annual contribution is about 0.14% of National Income – about 43p per head, per year. That is the membership fee for access to a barrier – free Single Market which consumes 56% of our exports and generates – as a result – about 3 million jobs, and to a Union that provides powers in international technology, trade and commerce; in environmental, food and medicines protection; in market regulation; and in global political relations that could not be secured by post-colonial Britain or by any European country acting alone.

The European enterprise can be innovative and enabling – and it can also be cumbersome and bureaucratic. Those faults deserve, and are getting, modernising

reform and that must continue. But with all of its flaws, the project is still – in the words of John Hume – “the most successful peace process in World history”. And whilst it may not be the only way of promoting and managing interdependence it is certainly more durable and creative than an alternative which, for instance, depends upon unilateralist actions by a hyper-power buttressed by afterthought arrangements called “coalitions of the willing”.

My concerns about the origins and destinations of that way of conducting affairs are in no sense “anti-American” – indeed, those concerns are profoundly shared by many US citizens as, I believe, they will show on November 2<sup>nd</sup>. There are, however, words of Bevan’s which come from a different era but are regrettably relevant to conditions today: “The guidance given to the World by the United States administration is wrong”, he said “It has mistaken the nature of the menace”. “Freedom”, he argued elsewhere, “is the by-product of economic surplus”... “Liberal principles do not thrive without roots and those roots are fed by the contentment... of those who see in them the prospects of progressive amelioration”.

That is an enduring verity. In our age it means making arduous, sustained, substantial collective efforts to overcome poverty; to sponsor the prosperity and safety which – amongst other results – starve extremism; and to promote just settlements that redress deep, enduring grievances. If power has meaning it must be deployed for that reason. Giving “roots to liberal principles” also means preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (including small arms which - together with land mines - killed over 300,000 people in the World last year and *were* the weapons of mass destruction – it takes simply a Kalashnikov with 21 rounds – not chemical or nuclear weapons – to kill 21 people with the touch of a trigger ).

It means establishing respect for diversity even if that does not readily develop into perfect harmony. It means recognising that super-power must carry super-responsibility.

The serenity of humanity depends upon making progress with such an Agenda for Security. No single nation can pursue it productively alone. It requires joint action, with the most affluent partnering – not patronising - the least affluent. It requires common efforts – sometimes with force to deter or punish manic extremism and genocidal criminals, more often with generosity to provide proof of liberating and non sectarian purposes. And, for Europe particularly, it requires the employment of effective collective policy to forestall disadvantages and dangers and to foster benefits and opportunities. It requires the continued sharing of sovereignty in order to increase sovereignty, the pooling of power to ensure the potency of power.

No other feasible means exists for dealing convincingly with the demands that, in our interdependent continent and World have gone, or are going, beyond solely national resolution.

And when so much – good and bad – will continue to develop in ways that ignore borders, it would be horrific if accountable democracy did not also transcend frontiers. That would not protect the sovereignty of the people, it would negate the sovereignty of the people.

Plainly, sureness of involvement in the Union does not mean unconditional acceptance or any spirit of submissiveness. Equally, no-one could or should argue for uncritical coverage of EU affairs.

But the right of the public to know the pros and cons so that informed positive and negative opinions can be developed, the need for representatives to be able to act pragmatically in negotiations without being accused of ‘betrayal’, and the advantages for the country in facing the future in Europe with self assurance rather than perpetual suspicion are all clear. They call for balance to replace prejudice in coverage, for scepticism to mean reasoned doubt instead of unreasoning bigotry, and for fact in reporting to be separated systematically from jaundiced opinion in reporting.

Those rational qualities are essential – but they are almost absent from UK newspaper coverage of EU affairs including, for instance, reporting of the constitutional Treaty. It is portrayed as a contrivance of cunning continentals, a hideous threat which no democracy should tolerate. In reality, of course, the Treaty has been drawn up by democrats who are at least as vigilant about liberty as the editor of the Sun, and it is simply relevant and necessary for the operation of a Union of 25 and more member countries, and it will not alter or weaken the established system of constitutional parliamentary democratic governance in the United Kingdom – indeed, having a referendum where it is not needed is more likely to inflict harm by imposing a plebiscitary democracy on a parliamentary one. The French commentators who call it “La Traité anglaise” are engaging in hysterical hyperbole, but it is true that the Treaty as it was finally agreed by the Leaders of 25 democracies is more pragmatic than didactic, much more practical than ideological, and – most important – very functional and not at all “Federal”.

The existence of the Treaty does not, of course, reduce the need for other improvements in the functioning of the European Union. There must, for instance, be more radical revision of the Common Agricultural Policy and funding, further urgent evolution of the euro Stability and Growth Pact, more transparency and flexibility in the function and operation of the European Central

Bank, and much greater urgency about the effective implementation of the Lisbon Strategy for growth and competitiveness.

The desirability and utility of these and several other changes are, for me, not in dispute. They should certainly continue to be pursued by the UK Government, especially as the Presidency term approaches.

The strategic question - especially for this party - is, “how is that best done?”:

How are the necessary advances most likely to be accelerated? Will they be most quickly and thoroughly gained by hostile calls from the edge, or by persuasive voices from the centre? And is profound progress across the necessarily wide front best propelled by intemperate advocacy and scourging or by temperate advocacy and encouragement – whether it relates to the upcoming Financial Perspectives, or economic reform, or the use of EU development aid?

I raise these questions because, however compelling objectively, the case for significant innovation and reform will always be impeded if it is put with a sour tone. Regrettably but realistically, dyspeptic delivery provides some with an excuse for not getting the message. That is in the subjective nature of politics and political decision-making. Plain speaking illuminates, provocative declaration causes diplomatic deafness. And when the case for reform and innovation is real and urgent, verbal moderation is hardly an oppressive requirement - especially since it so evidently works:

Much effort has been made, for instance, to fulfil the dual ambition that extends across the Labour Government and through the Labour movement and more widely to achieve Union-wide acceptance and respect and understanding for Britain’s commitment to the EU and, simultaneously – in Gordon Brown’s words

– to “dispel anti-European prejudice.” As a result, over the last 7 years in the Union, Britain has ended the disabling isolation which developed under the hand-baggers and what John Major called the “bastards” and, without being ingratiating, earned secure distinctiveness and standing.

The proceeds of that are obvious. They include the many changes that the UK obtained in the final text of the Constitutional Treaty, the adoption of the Lisbon Strategy, the best provision ever made for Regional Development support, the ending of the beef exports ban and several other decisions developed with British initiative or British arguments.

It is only sensible, therefore, to ensure that the genuine and ally-winning commitment to positive and influential engagement in the EU is not undermined by contradictive pummelling rhetoric which declares that EU Institutions or other Member States have been “repulsed” or “defeated”. I make no plea for excessive delicacy to avoid disturbing the neighbours. Emollience has its limits, and it would be unnatural if political language was not often robust. The need to use measured expression arises from a more prosaic consideration which relates to the national context and to that task identified by Gordon Brown of “dispelling anti-European prejudice”:

The fact is that if Governmental statements persistently convey the impression of perpetual tension and conflict in the language of resentment or triumph anti-European prejudices in the UK will not be dispelled as effectively as they would be if a plainer, more factual, story was told in ways that did not echo Eurojaundice. Winning arguments or exercising legally provided national rights and powers in the EU – including the veto – should therefore be reported in deliberately dispassionate terms. That would not be “spinning”. Indeed, it would – refreshingly – be the direct opposite. And - most important of all – public

comprehension of the EU, and of Britain's legal and representative rights to promote, or to modify, or to prevent policy and decisions within it, would be clarified and enormously increased. *Le Sang froid* is better for these purposes than *La langue chaude*.

Obviously, it is unlikely that such cool attention to fact would prevent those with a Mail and Murdochian mission of misrepresentation from continuing with distortion. They are addicted to it. It would, however, make that job more difficult, Europhobes would be denied the borrowed sustenance that can be plucked from government statements, and the non-partisan media – particularly the broadcast media - would convey a more accurate story because they had been told a more accurate story.

It is worth remembering, of course, that the patriotism of the British people does not mean that they are greatly impressed by nationalistic stances. Years of anti-EU diatribe from the Tory Party, zealously assisted by parts of the press, brought a stunning result for William Hague in the 2001 General Election... the net gain of one whole seat.

No signal could be more plain. Whatever the informed or misinformed reservations about the thing called "Europe", people know from daily life that the borderless scale of modern problems now has intimate personal as well as epic international effects, and accountable collaborative international power is consequently required to help to deal with those challenges.

That is the reality of an age in which all but the most myopic and bigoted know that islands are now only geological features and not places of economic and political hibernation. It is that reality which should guide both the policies and the vocabulary of Labour. We strive to foster what Gordon Brown has called the

“progressive consensus” after decades of what was conventionally recognised to be a dominant conservative - and therefore regressive - consensus in our country. In making those efforts, the issue of Britain’s place in Europe has central significance for two reasons: First, the need to gain mature recognition for the material necessity and advantages of European engagement. Second, the fact that a genuine progressive consensus can not include introspection, insularity, xenophobia – whether mild or bitter, in carpet slippers or jack-boots – or other components of nationalistic atavistic conservatism. I speak of the mortal affliction, not necessarily the Party.

There are, of course, political forces that want such conservatism to be reasserted.

UKIP, for instance, provides British politics with a sort of Madame Tussaud’s Tendency. They want British exit from the European Union followed by what they call “negotiation of a free trade agreement”. The demand and the promise are emptied of meaning by the facts: UK total exports to the rest of the Union are worth 9.5% of our £1.1 trillion Gross Domestic Product, the other Member States’ exports to our country are worth just 2.4% of their total £5.3 trillion GDP. The huge imbalance is obvious. It nullifies the possibility that a secessionist UK could get satisfactory – let alone advantageous – terms from the EU. Those other States would not have to be malicious or vindictive – they would simply have no objective reason for doing any favours for a country that so abominated the Union that it got out. The risks to Britain’s markets, investment and jobs would be hideous. The loss of effective political and economic power inflicted by departure – the abdication from real sovereignty – would be massive.

Meanwhile, the political wing of UKIP, the Conservative Party leadership wants a ‘No’ vote on the Referendum on the constitutional Treaty and what they call “re-negotiation” of the UK’s political, economic and legal relationship with the EU.

That is claimed to be “repatriation of power” and Mr John Redwood has elaborated on that theme by saying that his Party wants to return to a relationship with the EU that is “more closely modelled on what” (he says) “we originally joined in 1973”. In reality, such aims would not be achievable – and the Conservative leadership must know that.

The reasons for that are plain and basic. First, in acceding to the European Community in 1973 the United Kingdom, led by Edward Heath, did not join an international club in which adherence to the rules can be voluntary and selective. Second, in becoming part of the Single Market in 1985 the United Kingdom, led by Margaret Thatcher, did not sign up for a political and economic hokey-cokey system in which some bits are put in and other bits can be pulled out.

Perhaps Mr Redwood really means that he wants a return to conditions *before* Britain “originally joined in 1973”. That at least, would be coherent even though it would be utterly destructive of Britain’s interests. It would mean the Norwegianisation of Britain.

Norway has 4.5 million people and is outside the European Union. Despite massive oil and gas assets, basic business realities mean that the Norwegians have felt obliged to be in the European Economic Area. They consequently have to apply Single Market and other Union rules which they can have no part in making or amending in the Council of Ministers, the European Parliament, or the European Commission.

The result of all this is what the Norwegians call “fax democracy” because that’s how they receive notice of the EU laws that must be applied by their country in their country. In addition, Norway contributes £75 million annually to the costs of a Union that they don’t even belong to.

If that is the sort of arrangement that Europhobes want they'd better explain to the British people how a trip up the political fjord without a paddle could properly sustain UK interests and the business, work, and living conditions of our country. They should also tell us how fax messages from Brussels listing the laws to be applied in the United Kingdom could enhance the self determination which they say they stand for.

Absconding from effective power would, of course, be a sell out of sovereignty, not a safeguard for sovereignty. The truth about the illusions of “renegotiation”, and “repatriation”, the truth about the mirage of withdrawal followed by a free trade deal, has to be put loud and clear:

The truth is that neither detachment nor semi detachment can sustain Britain's interests. Our country is best served by consistent commitment in the EU and full deployment of Britain's rights of representation and participation in shaping all decisions. To influence effectively it is essential to be in energetically. Stepping back or walking out would enfeeble the United Kingdom politically and economically. The reality of our country's involvement in the Union cannot be wished away, ignored, or negotiated out of existence.

Young children think that if they put their hands in front of their face they become invisible – they believe that if they cannot see you, you cannot see them.

The deluders and the deluded who want to shrink and split and disable the European Union share that infantile conviction. The realists turn outward to systematically cooperate, recognising that – since benefits and perils have become international and supranational – the means of nurturing the former and resisting

the latter must do the same. They – we – want to share sovereignty to strengthen sovereignty.

John Fitzmaurice was also such a realist. We cherish the memory of him and of the qualities that he applied in his life and in his work. And we can honour him best by sustaining his values of generosity, rationality, justice and solidarity and – even more important – employing them continually.