



Elliot Tyler

I can personally recall the rush of the referendum like it was yesterday. The underdogs, the Leave campaign, insisted that we 'take back control' by rebelling against Prime Minister David Cameron and the 'establishment' he represented. UKIP's Nigel Farage and his associates were successful with their arguments, despite many of them being factually untrue, having persuaded 52% of voters to vote 'Leave', and on the 29th March 2017 the process was triggered by Cameron's successor. This month I will be using the space I have been permitted to outline why Brexit is a real and serious issue, particularly for those involved with the criminal justice system.

The social damage of Brexit is immense and has already resulted in a climate of xenophobia that is hurting both EU and British citizens. Anybody who doesn't look British or is capable of speaking a foreign language might be targeted as a subject of abuse, and this is unacceptable. A prejudiced person may have abused others their entire life; however, Brexit has enforced the belief that a tribal nationalism is an accepted model for our country. In a diverse and multicultural Britain, this mindset is deeply dangerous and concerning. Scotland Yard and other police forces have released their figures, showing a 50% rise in recorded incidents during the three months directly after the referendum. Convictions for offences related to Brexit are occurring daily, with even respected MPs becoming victims.

Since the referendum, there has been a notable reduction in EU applicants for jobs in important sectors such as health, leisure and, of course, the justice system. Prisons are already understaffed, resulting in regime changes becoming commonplace, and this will only get worse. There has been much talk about immigration putting a strain on the country, but thanks to the 'Brexit effect' the UK's service provision is in trouble. Additionally, Leave



No one can whistle a symphony...

voters didn't anticipate that by ending freedom of movement for EU citizens, the rights of UK citizens would also be affected significantly, meaning that our opportunities to live and work in Europe are greatly reduced. Imagine applying for a travel authorisation to holiday abroad, or for a visa to live and work in Europe, and having to explain a past custodial sentence to the authorities? It wouldn't look too great. Before Brexit, it was simply the case that disclosure was deemed unnecessary. In purely territorial terms, the loss of freedom of movement has resulted in British passport holders losing free access to 94.4% of EU territory.

If there is a single group that is against Brexit, it is younger voters. This is because leaving the EU will result in there being less opportunities for young people. The UK has benefited hugely from European Union funding for important academic subjects, notably the field of law, but

this will no longer be the case after Brexit. The Erasmus Programme, which allows students to study in different countries, is at risk of collapse, and EU graduates from UK universities are reconsidering their choice to stay in the UK and contribute to our society and economy. Worse still, UK graduates face an ever more uncertain future. The word 'uncertainty' fits Brexit perfectly, and another example of this being the case is for British nationals who are unfortunate enough to be held by the courts in European countries. Ministers have been warned by top lawyers that lengthy pre-trial detention abroad, which was stamped out five years ago, will likely return, making life a misery for many. The European Arrest Warrant process will be dragged out also, wasting weeks of time in every single case.

Due to Brexit, individuals are significantly worse off, according to the Bank of England,

and HMRC have stated that new customs arrangements may cost £20 billion. Most will recall Boris Johnson's big red bus that toured the streets spreading lies (and now he's facing private prosecution for this), the biggest of these being that £350 million per week could be 'taken back' and given to our struggling National Health Service. It is clear from projections that the country will be worse, not better, off, and that public services will suffer drastically as a result. Prisons are one of these services in need of more funding, but in a post-Brexit world will likely receive even less money, resulting in conditions worsening and rehabilitation coming to a grinding halt. I believe that for the majority of Leave voters, austerity was a key consideration; however, their particular vote will only deepen the austerity that the British people suffer. And, before the referendum, laws passed by the European Court of Justice ensured that the construction and management of private prisons was of a high standard. That will no longer be the case if we exit the European Union. Without these laws, which are designed to stop corruption and deliver value for money, it will be difficult for the country to prevent poor contracts being accepted and this will cost us dearly.

The European Union evolved shortly after the Second World War, from a fervent desire to further the cause of peace by ensuring close collaboration between countries. A lone Britain will diminish rapidly in international stature, as we can only combat and mitigate against issues by working together with other nations. To have a hope of retaining real influence, we must play a significant part in the EU by remaining as one of its 28 members. An interconnected world is all about negotiating standards and agreements. It would be unwise for me to predict the future; nevertheless, there is no doubt in my mind that when it comes to our relationship with the EU, we are better off integrated rather than divided. In the words of H.E. Luccock, 'No one can whistle a symphony; it takes a whole orchestra to play it.'

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