

ADRIAN WAITE

13th June 2019

Mr Matt Kelly,
Editor,
The New European,
Prospect House, Rouen Road,
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Sent by email to: letters@theneweuropean.co.uk

Dear Mr Kelly,

Brexit and the Labour Party

I have been studying the policy of the Labour Party on the European Union and it is fascinating!

When the European Coal & Steel Community was formed in 1948 and the Treaty of Rome was signed in 1957, Labour was cynical about the European Union. At that time, Britain had one of the most advanced welfare states in the world, thanks mainly to the reforms of the Attlee government of the 1940s. Labour members felt that their efforts to protect and advance socialism in Britain would be best served through 'splendid isolation' and 'Socialism in one country'.

However, things changed in the 1960s. First, it became clear that Britain, as a medium-sized country, dependent on trade and having lost an empire was no longer big enough for 'Socialism in one country'. For example, high tax rates were causing a 'brain drain'. There was a need to decide whether Britain should align with Europe or with the United States. At the same time, members of the European Union were developing their own welfare systems and public services, often to a higher standard than those in Britain. Harold Wilson's Labour government applied to join the European Union.

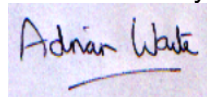
This caused division in the Labour Party. The 'left' wanted 'Socialism in one country' the 'centre' wanted to join the European Union, the leadership dithered between applying to join in the 1960s, opposing joining in 1972 and supporting remaining in 1975.

In the 1980s, there came a third change. While the European Union pressed on with developing workers' rights and public services, in Britain, Margaret Thatcher's government 'rolled back Socialism' so that the European Union countries had better developed welfare states, higher pensions and better workers' rights than had Britain. The Labour Party shifted its position. It became a supporter of Britain's membership of the European Union. The Labour government of 1997-2010 played a major role in the European Union.

However, during the referendum of 2016 and since, Labour has adopted a policy of 'constructive ambiguity', standing on the side-lines. Britain has a choice between continuing as a European country or aligning with the United States with inferior workers' rights, inferior consumer rights, lower environmental standards, lower taxes and lower public expenditure.

I would be grateful if someone in the Labour Party could explain. Has Labour returned to the idea of 'Socialism in one country' which I think is an illusion, or have they just failed to engage?

Yours sincerely,



Adrian Waite