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## **The EU remains a protective bloc for German manufacturing and French agriculture that doesn't serve UK interests**



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Austin Mitchell was Labour MP for Great Grimsby between 1977 and 2015.

In becoming a clash of caricatures, the Brexit debate loses sight of the main problem. The liberal intellectuals and Euro-enthusiasts who have fought such a long rear-guard action to stop Brexit without admitting it, (see Brexiteers as out-of-date jingoistic Blimps keen to go back to the days of empire and neo-liberal fanatics anxious to build a low-tax, de-regulated, free-trade hell in our green and pleasant land.)

Remainers see themselves as progressive modernisers defending liberal principles, environmentalism and the good society all springing from a benign EU which they understand, love and are ever ready to explain and justify – even to the extent of justifying its desire to punish us on the grounds that they can't do anything else without endangering its wonderful future.

I've not met any Blimps, though I've met a lot of people who've been left behind by globalisation and Europeanisation. I've also heard a lot of noise from Euro-enthusiasts for whom the EU is a matter of religion. My conclusion is that both sides are happier fighting symbols than looking at Britain's economic problems and the effect the EU has on them.

Brexiteers regard the EU as an undemocratic imposition. Remainers see it as a great adventure in international idealism, building a federal union. Neither picture is real. The EU is essentially a protective bloc set up to provide powerful German manufacturing and expensive French agriculture with a wider protected market. The question Britain must face is whether that serves the different interests of a nation with a weaker manufacturing base which imports 80% of its food.

This is made worse by the euro acting as a series of guy ropes keeping the German exchange rate down, making its products even more competitive. The result is huge German surpluses at everyone else's expense, particularly ours. Added to our growing contributions to belong – and the higher food prices

**necessitated by the Common Agriculture Policy, this means a steady drain of jobs, money and demand from failing Britain.**

**This can't go on. Our annual deficit is around 4% of GDP – one of the biggest in the world. Because we can't pay our way, we must borrow or sell our companies, property, farms and businesses. This creates a series of vested interests like the German firms BMW and Airbus threatening to withdraw, the car-makers demanding subsidies to stay, the big multinationals lured in by soft deals and low taxes sending their profits abroad, and the importers all tied to the protective bloc. The question now is whether this process of absorption has gone so far that the EU is better able to throw out our government and change its policies than our Parliament and people.**

**The EU is the problem. It should require Germany to redistribute its surpluses and end the enforced deflation of weaker economies in order to boost the stagnant EU economy. We need the ability to trade with expanding markets, buy food from developing countries and a reduction of contributions – giving us a return and no longer contributing to subsidies given by other members like the £130 million handed by Slovakia to Land Rover. It also requires equalisation of business taxes so countries like Ireland, Luxembourg and Holland can't syphon off tax due in this country by low tax competition.**

**Remainers should (but don't) show their concern by persuading the EU to accept it rather than devoting their efforts to undermining Britain's case. It will be hard enough to get reform in an EU which prefers hypocrisy and puts its own interests first, yet if nothing is done, it's surely better to leave the sinking ship.**

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