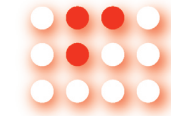


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Learning lessons from EU referendum debate

“Dire” – that’s the blunt view of the Electoral Reform Society (ERS) on the EU referendum debate.

The ERS has released a report, *It’s good to talk: doing referendums differently after the EU vote*, into the conduct of the referendum and how to improve matters in future referendums.

The report finds that there were glaring democratic deficiencies in the run-up to the vote, with previously unreleased polling showing that far too many people felt they were ill-informed about the issues; and that the “big beast” personalities did not appear to engage or convince voters.

The polling also showed that voters viewed both sides as increasingly negative as the campaign wore on. Meanwhile, the top-down, personality-based nature of the debate failed to address major policies and subjects, leaving the public in the dark.

The ERS says it’s clear that the EU debate was in stark contrast to the Scottish independence referendum held in 2014, which for all its faults undoubtedly featured a vibrant, well-informed, grassroots conversation that left a lasting legacy

of ongoing public participation in politics and public life.

There are so many lessons to be learned from the EU campaign, says the report’s author Will Brett, from the effect of a too-short campaign period to the fact that misleading claims could be made with impunity.

The report calls for a root and branch review of referendums, learning the lessons of the EU campaign to make sure the mistakes that were made in terms of regulation, tone and conduct are never repeated.

Nine key recommendations include, in the run-up to a referendum vote:

- mandatory pre-legislative scrutiny for any Bill on a referendum, lasting at least three months, with citizens’ involvement;
- a minimum six-month regulated campaigning period to ensure time for a proper public discussion; and
- a definitive “rulebook” to be published, setting out technical aspects of the vote, as soon as possible after the passing of any referendum Bill.

To make sure the electorate are better informed, there should be an official body, as in New Zealand, tasked with intervening when misleading claims are made by opposing campaign groups.

And the ERS would like the communications regulator, Ofcom, to conduct a review into an appropriate

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role for broadcasters to play in referendums, with aim of making coverage/formats more deliberative rather than combative/binary.

<http://www.electoral-reform.org.uk/blog/doing-referendums-differently>

Youth unemployment still stubbornly high

Youth unemployment remains high in certain regions and sectors across the UK, a new report finds.

The report, *The employment landscape for young people in the UK*, from the professional services firm EY and its charitable foundation found large disparities across the UK's regions and cities in the numbers of young people out of work.

Bradford, Middlesbrough, Swansea and Wolverhampton have the highest youth unemployment rates in the UK at more than 25%.

Meanwhile, on a regional basis, the North East has the highest level of youth unemployment at 18.3%, compared to 11.2% in the East, which has the lowest rate.

The overall UK unemployment rate in the three months ending May 2016 was just 4.8%. However, the Office for National Statistics data show that youth unemployment rates were 28.7% for 16- to 17-year-olds and 11.6% for 18- to 24-year-olds. It may be no consolation to a young unemployed worker, but this is lower than in many other European countries, such as Spain and Italy, the report says.

Many sectors now employ fewer young people than a few years ago, according to the report, with the biggest fall in manufacturing, which employs 28% fewer young people than it did in 2004. Construction employs 25% fewer young people than in 2004, transport and communication 26%, and financial and business services 4%. The report suggests that some traditional routes to work and skills have become harder to access.

And highly regionalised youth unemployment could hold back "inclusive growth" across the UK, particularly after the Brexit vote, the report has warned.

EY's chief economist Mark Gregory said: "A stubbornly high number of young people remain excluded from the labour market, which could be further exacerbated by a period of weaker eco-

nomie growth in these uncertain times. History has shown that young people are more exposed to economic volatility and industry restructuring than the population as a whole."

"It's vital that co-ordinated action is taken by business and government to invest in the development of young people to avoid a widening of the UK's skills gap, particularly as the demand for low-skilled workers starts to decline in some sectors," he said.

"At root level, employers have an important role to play by providing young people with the vital skills, experience and opportunities necessary to secure work in the 21st century," Gregory added.

[www.ey.com/Publication/vwLUAssets/EY-employment-landscape-for-young-people-in-the-uk/\\$FILE/EY-employment-landscape-for-young-people-in-the-uk.pdf](http://www.ey.com/Publication/vwLUAssets/EY-employment-landscape-for-young-people-in-the-uk/$FILE/EY-employment-landscape-for-young-people-in-the-uk.pdf)

Action plan to help new and expectant mothers

UK women should have protections similar to those in Germany after a "shocking" increase in workplace pregnancy discrimination over the past decade, a committee of MPs says.

The Women and Equalities Committee demands urgent action, calling on the government to publish an ambitious, detailed plan within the next two years or risk a further rise in pregnant women and mothers being forced out of their work.

The committee says it is "shocking that the number of new and expectant mothers feeling forced out of their job has nearly doubled in the past decade".

MPs have been persuaded that additional protection from redundancy for new and expectant mothers is required. The committee recommends that the government should implement a system similar to that used in Germany under which such women can be made redundant only in specified circumstances.

"This protection should apply throughout pregnancy and maternity leave and for six months afterwards. And the government should implement this change within the next two years," the committee says.

In Germany, women are well protected from loss of employment due to dismissal – from the beginning of pregnancy until four months following childbirth through a dismissal ban. Only in extremely rare exceptions are employers permitted to dismiss a pregnant employee during this time.

Other recommendations include that, within the next year, the right to paid time off for antenatal appointments should be extended to workers, such as expectant mothers who are casual, agency or zero-hours workers. This right should be available after a short qualifying period.

There should be a substantial reduction in tribunal fees for discrimination cases. And the committee urges the government to publish the findings from its review of the impact of the introduction of tribunal fees as a matter of urgency, and should set out in its response to the committee's report the action it will take to reverse the adverse effect of fees.

On women's health and safety, the report calls for employers to be required to undertake an individual risk assessment when they are informed that a woman who works for them is pregnant, has given birth in the past six months or is breastfeeding.

The Health and Safety Executive should include this requirement in its guidance to employers by the end of 2016 and should ensure that it is properly enforced. It should also support employers in meeting this requirement by ensuring that model risk assessments for particular sectors and occupations are available to employers by the end of 2016.

Furthermore, new and expectant mothers who are concerned that their health and/or the health of their baby is being put at risk by their work should have an easily accessible, formal mechanism to compel their employer to deal with such risks appropriately.

There should also be a formal mechanism by which an employee can ask a doctor or midwife to confirm that specific risks at work need to be dealt with. The government should consider how best to provide those mechanisms and commit to implementing them by the end of 2017, the committee says.

Finally, the government should publish a strong, specific communications plan for the awareness-raising and attitude-changing work it has agreed to undertake in response to the Equality and Human Right Commission's recommendations. The plan should include clear timelines and should set out where accountability for implementation will lie. The communications campaign needs to be underpinned by a strategy to provide practical support, as well as clear incentives and disincentives to encourage greater compliance by employers.

Committee chair Maria Miller commented: "The arrival of a new baby puts family finances under

extreme pressure yet, despite this, thousands of expectant and new mothers have no choice but to leave their work because of concerns about the safety of their child or pregnancy discrimination."

TUC general secretary Frances O'Grady said: "Pregnancy discrimination forces tens of thousands of women out of their jobs every year. It is not just confined to a few workplaces, it is happening on an industrial scale.

She said the report must lead to action. "As well as extending protection for pregnant women and new mums, the government must stop charging women up to £1,200 to take a pregnancy discrimination claim. The introduction of tribunal fees has been a gift for Britain's worst bosses and allowed them to get away with mistreating pregnant women and working mums."

www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/women-and-equalities-committee/news-parliament-2015/pregnancy-and-maternity-report-published-16-17/

www.tuc.org.uk/equality-issues/pregnancy-discrimination-happening-%E2%80%9Cindustrial-scale%E2%80%9D-warns-tuc

GMB files claims against Addison Lee

The GMB general union has instructed law firm Leigh Day to take the first step in launching legal proceedings on behalf of three workers of private car hire firm Addison Lee whose contracts were terminated following a GMB protest in London in May.

GMB lawyers have lodged a number of claims with arbitration service Acas including unfair dismissal, detriment on grounds related to trade union activity and failure to pay the National Minimum Wage.

The dismissals took place within hours of a static protest in May that saw private hire drivers block off Berkeley Square in London. GMB members, along with members of the United Addison Lee Drivers (UALD), were protesting against an increase in commission levels from Addison Lee and changes to terms and conditions for drivers.

GMB regional officer Gary Pearce said: "This naked attempt at union busting has no place in the modern world of work."

Chris Benson, head of employment at Leigh Day, said: "These three men were trained by Addison Lee, they were required to work on standard terms which were dictated by Addison Lee and had to work to detailed practices, policies and proce-

dures imposed by Addison Lee. They cannot then be sacked without notice or reason.

“Employers cannot be allowed to have all the financial benefits of employees and none of the responsibilities to these people’s livelihoods.”

In April 2013, the firm was taken over by private equity giant Carlyle, which also owns the RAC, in a deal worth close to £300 million to its founders and shareholders, the Griffin family and the family of Lenny Foster.

www.gmb.org.uk/newsroom/gmb-launches-addison-lee-legal-proceedings
www.independent.co.uk/news/business/news/addison-lee-founders-get-300m-fare-as-they-sell-cab-firm-8581130.html

BECTU to merge with Prospect in 2017

BECTU, the media and entertainment union, is to merge with Prospect next year after its membership voted decisively in favour of joining forces with the professionals’ union.

The ballot closed on 30 August with 83.4% of members voting in favour and 16.6% against. The merger will come into effect on 1 January 2017.

BECTU will become the largest sector within the merged Prospect union when its 27,000 members join with 14,000 members in Prospect’s communications media and digital division, where BT is the biggest of several employers.

The new 40,000-plus sector will continue to have industrial autonomy within the new union, with its own executive reporting to the union-wide and enlarged Prospect executive.

Gerry Morrissey, BECTU’s general secretary, said the decision by members will strengthen the new BECTU sector going forward.

“The pooling of our resources and experience with those of our new colleagues in Prospect will enable BECTU to provide an even better service for members; we’ll also be able to reach out to even more of the thousands of creative sector workers across media and entertainment who need advice and representation,” he said.

On behalf of Prospect, general secretary Mike Clancy said: “Joining forces puts us in the strongest possible position to deal with the challenges we

face as well as securing the best possible service for the combined membership.

“The two unions have much in common, not least in our expertise in the fields of communications and media, and we will quickly adapt to working together.”

www.bectu.org.uk/news/2619

www.prospect.org.uk/news/id/2016/August/30/Prospect-BECTU-unions-hail-merger-vote

Economy grows in second quarter

The UK economy expanded in the second quarter of the year, updated official figures show.

In its second estimate of gross domestic product, the Office for National Statistics said the economy, increased by 0.6% in the April-June quarter on the previous quarter. The growth figure is unrevised on the preliminary estimate published at the end of July.

Output increased in two of the four main industrial groupings within the economy in the second quarter. Services increased by 0.5% and production output increased by 2.1% – both figures are unrevised from the preliminary estimate.

Manufacturing, the largest component of production, saw output up by 1.8% in the second quarter compared with the first.

Two industrial groups – agriculture and construction – posted decreases in output of 0.3% and 0.7% respectively.

In the second quarter, GDP was 2.2% higher than the same quarter a year ago.

www.ons.gov.uk/economy/grossdomesticproductgdp/bulletins/secondestimateofgdp/quarter2aprtojun2016

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