

UKIP: no deals with the Tories

In December *eurofacts* asked the question, "is it (UKIP) a campaign group merely seeking our exit from the EU, or a broader political party? Potential voters should be told". This follows Lord Pearson's revelation in *The Times*, the day after his election as UKIP's new leader, that some months ago he had offered to stand UKIP candidates down if the Conservatives would give a referendum on the Lisbon Treaty/EU membership. Unsurprisingly the offer was rejected.

Lord Pearson has come in for severe criticism for this offer, including from me, but he is not primarily to blame. He was merely acting as a messenger for our previous leader, Nigel Farage. The issue of a UKIP deal with the Tories is one that keeps coming back from the dead with as monotonous regularity as Count Dracula.

Such offers achieve nothing. If the Tories want to offer a referendum on EU membership, they have no need to be prompted by UKIP. Indeed, David Cameron has knowingly damaged his electoral prospects in 2010 by breaking his "cast iron guarantee" of a Lisbon referendum.

If the Tories really want an

overwhelming victory in 2010, they only have to offer a referendum on EU membership, or outright withdrawal. A majority of voters believe Britain would be better off out. This strategy applies equally to Labour. It will never happen because the cross-party political elite believes in the European project, whatever the financial, economic or democratic damage to Britain.

The only thing the major political parties take notice of is the loss of votes and seats. That might even one day make them change their policies. UKIP has to keep up the pressure. It doesn't matter which of the three main parties forms the next Government because our real government is in Brussels.

When Lord Pearson made the offer, the Tory promise of a referendum on Lisbon had not yet been withdrawn. So why make it at all? The offer was against our Party Constitution, which clearly states that the Party will contest elections – it says nothing about doing electoral deals. It would be just as unconstitutional even if it had been authorised by the Party NEC.

When the prospects of such deals are

put to the UKIP membership, they overwhelmingly reject them, as they did at the 2004 Party Conference. This most recent offer has done the party no good. How can we expect our candidates to put in time, effort and money for months prior to the election if they are uncertain whether they might be stood down?

Such offers send out the wrong message. UKIP is not a stick to beat the Tories with. The vast majority of our activists, members and voters want it to be a serious political party. Even when Britain leaves the EU, who among our members and voters wants to go back to voting for the parties who have betrayed our country for decades?

Lord Pearson has an easy solution to this problem. His position merely has to be: he made the offer as a messenger for the previous leader; it was rejected, and no such offers will ever be contemplated again under his leadership. The whole issue would then be dead and buried – with a stake through its heart. UKIP can then go forward and achieve our best general election vote in 2010 and grow stronger still.

Article by Gerard Batten MEP

Brussels goes to law to give itself a pay rise

One effect of the Lisbon Treaty was supposed to make the EU a more democratic institution, but this appears to have fallen at the first hurdle. The unelected Commission is taking the elected governments of member states to court to force through an inflation-busting pay increase for its 50,000 or so featherbedded civil servants.

They earn basic salaries of between £2,289 and £15,898 per month, enjoy tax rates ranging from 8 per cent to 45 per cent (the latter only on earnings above about £72,000 a year). Their pay is based on rates in Brussels and civil service salaries in the eight richest EU countries and they receive generous pensions and allowances.

The civil servants are demanding a pay rise of 3.7 per cent, at a cost to us taxpayers of some £81 million. We are, in the midst of the worst recession

since the 1930s, but this did not appear to deter the EU officials. It did, however, give the leaders of some member states – including the UK – pause for thought. Mindful of the fact that many of them would have to cut the pay of their own civil servants, they agreed that the European crew could receive no more than 1.8 per cent.

This infuriated both the functionaries and the Commission – after all, the Commissioners themselves will benefit from the same pay increase. The civil servants organised "warning" strikes and threatened to disrupt the work of the European Parliament. The Commission, however, had another trick up its sleeve: it would take the member states to court.

"We are talking here about the respect for agreed rules," Commission spokesperson Pia Ahrenkilde Hansen

said sanctimoniously. "It is not an issue where political discretion is at play." When tens of millions of people across the EU are losing their jobs or else struggling to pay their bills, there is no room in Brussels for political common sense or sentiment for the feelings of suffering populations?

Apparently not. The Commissioners were unanimous in the decision to refer the countries upon which their positions and livelihoods depend to the European Court of Justice. They have asked the court for a "speedy" judgement, that is within six months, but experts say the case could drag on for a year, by which time the lower rise will have been paid.

The judges might wish to give the matter longer consideration since their incomes, too, will be affected by the outcome.