

John Redwood: The 2016 Referendum & The Leave Campaign

We are pleased to be sharing an incredibly interesting extract from Member of Parliament for Wokingham Sir John Redwood's new Bite-Size book.

Titled 'We Don't Believe You: Why Populists and the Establishment See the World Differently', the book gives us fresh insights into why the populist movements and parties have been winning elections.

Sir John looks at how the experts and narrative pushed out by the established elites on both sides of the Atlantic have met with disbelief as well as with strong opposition. He shows how great parties have been all but destroyed as election winning forces as new movements and people sweep them aside. From the establishment himself as an expert and a member of one of the traditional parties, he seeks to show how the sensible elites adjust and respond to new moods and new ideas instead of confronting or denying them.

Enjoy an extract from the book below:



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BOOKS



WE DON'T BELIEVE YOU

WHY POPULISTS REJECT THE ESTABLISHMENT

JOHN REDWOOD

The Leave campaign had different problems to contend with. It all started very badly. The Ukip wing of the loose coalition to leave wanted to major on the issue of freedom of movement and migration.

Conservative and Labour forces for Leave were strongly against this.

The polling showed that the 20% or so support which Ukip could command did indeed worry a lot about immigration and wanted the UK to be able to close its borders to many low-income migrants seeking low-paid jobs and benefit top up in the UK from the continent. It also showed that concentrating on this issue would if anything put off the other 30% needed to win, as their preoccupations were wider.

With strong views on both sides the Leave forces spent the first months of the run up to the referendum battling over whether Leave EU or Vote Leave would be the official campaign.

Leave EU favoured the Ukip approach and was largely Ukip driven. Vote Leave favoured the main party approach and had representatives of Labour and Conservative in prominent positions on its board.

A long and often bitter battle ensued, with the press making much of a house divided. Leave was written off as the predictable losers Remain said it was, endorsed by the polling.

In due course Vote Leave won the nomination to run the official campaign and could begin proper planning and spending to build up its team and determine its key messages.

Sorting out the message proved easy. Dominic Cummins and the research proposed "Take Back Control". It received strong endorsement from the main people supporting the campaign. It summed up everything Brexit is about, and answered every question to a leaver's satisfaction. Whatever the problem, the answer could be we will take back control and adopt a UK solution. It was democratic, positive and active. It offered hope in contrast to the gloom of the Remain propaganda.

There were various other issues to resolve.

Some of the business wing of the Conservative party had over the years favoured deregulation, which would require repeal of various pieces of EU legislation once the UK had left. Some particularly favoured repealing some of the employment protections. The case was put strongly that Leave should recommend keeping all of those on departure, aware of the importance of them to the Labour supporters of Leave.

Many Brexiteers felt strongly that the UK did not want to leave the EU to bid down wages and bid up hours. They wanted to leave the EU to improve people's chances of a well -job. It proved easy to get buy in to the idea that Leave would back EU employment laws

Not a race to the bottom

Remain kept coming back to the threat of a "race to the bottom", a UK outside the EU ditching protections in pursuit of cheaper prices and lower wages.

Vote Leave was grateful to them for constantly ensuring they had an opportunity to explain they wanted the opposite, and the UK would be free to choose something better once we had left.

One of the possible benefits from leaving would be fewer migrants taking low-paid jobs, ending some of the downwards pressure on wages.

Remain ended up having to defend its enthusiasm for more low-pay migrants to flatter the profits of large multinationals. Leave confined deregulatory enthusiasm after the UK left to getting rid of VAT on items that should not attract it, and on sorting out the damage done to the UK fishing grounds by the dreadful regulations the EU imposed.

The well-rehearsed media interviewers told by Remain to ask what Leave would deregulate always gave up after a couple of examples that did not include a race to any bottom.

The fit between Conservative and Labour within Leave was on the whole a good one. Not only did the two parties agree on what they wanted to leave, but they agreed about the immediate areas for reform once out.

Both sides wanted to spend more of the money saved to boost public services, both wanted to help UK business through import saving and better trading terms with the rest of the world. Conservatives readily adopted Labour's colour for the campaign and got used to red ties and red posters.

There was a common sense that Leave were the outsiders, the ones expected to do badly. Being sneered at by the establishment helped bind the coalition together more readily.

Many within Vote Leave thought they would lose. Many of the people at the top of Vote Leave were in their day jobs part of the very same UK establishment that was bending most of its forces to defeat it.

Many of them allowed the establishment story line to rub off on them. They were playing for a decent defeat, an ability to return to their establishment roles saying well, we gave it a democratic run, but of course the establishment was bound to win.

We Don't Believe You: Why Populists and the Establishment See the World Differently is available now in Paperback and digitally on Kindle. [Find out more here.](#)