

Britain: No2EU and its rightwing bedfellows

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Currently support for the No2EU project consists of a handful of Rail, Maritime and Transport union functionaries, the Socialist Party, Scotland's Solidarity grouping and the Communist Party of Britain. It is not the result of any rank and file initiative. Its founding was not the outcome of "grassroots" demands, and no mass meetings attended its launch. In the time-honoured fashion of the trade union bureaucracy, it has been unveiled as a finished product.

Who drafted its statement, nominated RMT leader Bob Crow as its head and is selecting its candidates for the European elections? No one knows. But while the specific origins of No2EU are unclear, it is firmly based on that wing of the political spectrum associated with the Conservative Party and "little Englander" nationalism.

According to reports, a letter to Trades Council secretaries from "Trade Unionists Against the EU Constitution" was circulated in February outlining the launch of No2EU along with its political platform. The group was endorsed by the RMT executive on March 4, and launched in London on March 18.

The Trade Unionists Against the EU Constitution website states that it was set up in 2004 "by activists from dozens of unions with differing views on the EU" to campaign against the ratification of the European constitution "which has been renamed the Reform Treaty or Lisbon Treaty".

TUAEC complains that the treaty would make it "significantly harder to direct UK government investment into essential industries and services" and would be the "main obstacle" should "we want to ensure that we had a merchant fleet again"! It seeks a referendum on the treaty and the "return of national democratic rights".

Who are these "activists"? The only member of TUAEC identified is Bob Crow—now appointed headed

of the No2EU campaign. A diehard Stalinist, Crow was a member of the Communist Party who joined former miners' leader and fellow Stalinist Arthur Scargill's Socialist Labour Party, before leaving it to support the now defunct Socialist Alliance, which included the Socialist Party. No names or list of contributors is supplied. TUAEC welcomes invitations to speak, but does not identify speakers.

However, TUAEC's website does link to a number of cross-party "EU-critical" organisations and campaigns. These include "TEAM—the European alliance of EU-critical movements", which describes itself as an information network of 60 organisations in 20 countries "from the centre, left and right of the political spectrum".

It includes "Free Europe", founded by "a diverse group of individuals" and "aimed at bringing the EU down all together". "In the darkest days of the Cold War", Free Europe writes, Radio Free Europe "started broadcasting to the Soviet-occupied and Soviet-controlled countries of Europe", to guide their "aspirations for freedom and independence".

"Now that the communist threat of the Soviet Union has moved to the scrap heaps of history", it continues, the EU has taken over as the latest "threat to our Liberty".

The UK Independence Party is also linked with TEAM. UKIP was formed in 1993 out of former supporters of the Anti-Federalist League (AFL), with the aim of ensuring complete withdrawal from the EU. Most of its prominent members are former members of the Conservative Party, and its three representatives in the Commons and the House of Lords were all originally elected as Tory candidates.

The Bruges Group is another TEAM affiliate. Again closely associated with the Tory Party (right-wing Labour politician Frank Field is also a supporter), its honorary president is former Conservative premier and

“neo-liberal” ideologue Margaret Thatcher.

Like TEAM, TUAEC is listed as an affiliate to the Campaign Against Euro Federalism. Founded in 1991, it states, “Our nation state can only be democratic if it has the right to self determination”, and says it “will work to retain Britain's right to pursue independent economic and peaceful foreign policies and restore sovereign control over its own military forces geared to defence only”.

Again, no names of individuals or organisations associated with CAEF are identified, but it is affiliated to the Campaign for an Independent Britain (CIB) and has representatives on its national executive committee. CIB is purportedly “aimed at those in the trade union movement and the left”. It has its roots in the Safeguard Britain Campaign and the Anti-Common Market League, which originated as a Conservative Party-only grouping. These and other anti-European groupings merged in 1989 to form the CIB.

The CIB claims that its affiliates come “from various ideological perspectives” and it “is proud of its all-party status”. But once again its associations place it firmly on the political right. Its vice president is Sir Teddy Taylor, a leading former Tory MP and supporter of the right-wing Monday Club who served under Thatcher. His fanatical opposition to the EU—as opposed to his demands for a return to capital punishment and birching—led to his expulsion from the Tories under John Major.

CIB’s president is Sir Richard Body, another former Tory MP and supporter of the Monday Club, turned member of UKIP.

The associations are not accidental. RMT press officer and No2EU backer Brian Denny was billed as a speaker for a public meeting called jointly by the CIB and CAEF. According to an advertisement for the meeting, promoted in the CP’s *Morning Star*, other speakers included Taylor and Henry Nitzsche, a right-wing populist German MP who broke from the Christian Democratic Union in 2006.

According to *Deutsche Welle*, he “caused an uproar in Germany when he said that Germany ‘should never again be governed by multicultural fags from Berlin.’ He was referring to the previous German coalition government consisting of the Social Democratic Party (SPD) and the Green party. Nitzsche also spoke about the German ‘cult of guilt’ in the way Germans deal

with their country's past.”

After the political character of his co-speakers was revealed, Denny made a tactical withdrawal and declined to appear.



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