

# Campaign for UK exit from the EU dominated by nationalism and big business interests

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8 March 2016

The Leave campaign in Britain's June 23 referendum on continued membership in the European Union (EU) is led by a virulent nationalist block of right-wing political forces and big business figures.

It consists of three main groups: Vote Leave, Leave.EU and Grassroots Out. Their policies and agenda are framed from the standpoint of the most parasitic sections of the City of London, with its position as a global financial centre held out as offering the prospect of revisiting the halcyon days of empire.

Vote Leave includes Business for Britain representing over 1,000 business heads, Conservatives for Britain and Labour Leave, representing those within the Labour Party who support the UK's withdrawal from the EU.

Tory Mayor of London Boris Johnson has endorsed Vote Leave, along with six Conservative government cabinet ministers, including Justice Secretary Michael Gove. According to the *Financial Times*, Vote Leave has the backing of more than 100 Tory MPs.

The main demand of Business for Britain, when it was founded in 2013, was for "fundamental changes" to "the terms of our EU membership" and "a flexible, competitive Europe, with more powers devolved from Brussels."

Its CEO, Matthew Elliott, is the founder of the right-wing TaxPayers' Alliance. Business for Britain is heavily backed by the Conservative *Daily Telegraph*, which sponsored a half million-word document titled, "Change, or Go. How Britain would gain influence and prosper outside an unreformed EU."

Conservatives for Britain is stuffed with arch-Thatcherites, including its president, Lord Nigel Lawson, a former chancellor, Lord Norman Lamont,

another ex-chancellor, lifelong euro-sceptics John Redwood and Lord Norman Tebbit.

The Vote Leave campaign from the outset was explicit in representing the most parasitic sections of finance capital. Last October, Paul Stephenson, a spokesman for the campaign, said, "We are confident that hedge funds and many other financial firms will support 'Vote Leave, take control.'"

It is backed by the billionaire London-based hedge fund manager Crispin Odey, a founding partner of Odey Asset Management, and other financial institutions. John Caudwell, the billionaire founder of Phones4U, Joe Foster, the founder of sportswear manufacturer Reebok, and other CEOs, are listed as supporters.

The Labour Leave campaign states that it is "funded and staffed by Labour, Trades Unions and Socialist Society Members." John Mills, a former councillor who made his fortune as a household goods retailer, is a co-founder of the group, as is MP Kate Hoey, a former member of the now defunct International Marxist Group and former Home Office Minister. Another leading figure is MP Kelvin Hopkins.

Previously Labour's largest private donor, Mills stopped financing the party when Jeremy Corbyn was elected leader. He declares on the Labour Leave web site, "42 years of reform have produced a wasteful, undemocratic bureaucracy sucking the life-blood from our economy."

The Vote Leave board includes Mills and Labour MP Graham Stringer. It has established a cross-party parliamentary committee including two Tories, three Labour MPs, one from the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) and Douglas Carswell, the only MP of the UK

Independence Party (UKIP).

Its documents state, “After 40 years of membership, only around 6 percent of British companies export to the EU, but all have to comply with the full burden of EU law.”

It adds, “If we Vote Leave and take back control of our trade policy, we can speak for ourselves and sign new deals with countries all over the world...”

Leave.EU was set up by insurance millionaire Arron Banks, a financial backer of UKIP, and Richard Tice, a former CEO of FTSE 250 multinational group, CLS Holdings PLC and the current CEO of Quidnet Capital Partners.

Banks, a former Tory donor, gave UKIP £1 million before the general election. On founding Leave.EU, Banks said, “We are in talks with lots of high profile business people.” £7 million was immediately pledged from six millionaires, with £20 million scheduled to be raised by the end of 2015. Among its backers is Isle of Man-based fund and asset manager Jim Mellon, said to be worth £850 million.

Leave.EU claims to have the support of over 1,300 councillors, including 531 Conservatives, 134 Labour and 194 from UKIP.

Grassroots Out (GO) was founded in January 2016. It is seeking to be designated the official Leave campaign by the Electoral Commission as the GO Movement (an umbrella group comprised of forces from GO, UKIP and Leave.EU).

GO was established by Tory MPs Peter Bone, Tom Pursglove and Liam Fox, Labour’s Kate Hoey (after she defected from Vote Leave), UKIP leader Nigel Farage and a DUP MP Sammy Wilson. Last month, George Galloway, a former Labour Party and Respect MP, joined Grassroots Out, appearing on the platform at its London launch meeting to deliver a nationalist diatribe in support of the political bonafides of Farage and the Tory right. Also present on the platform were Tory MPs Bill Cash, Bone and former Shadow Home Secretary David Davis.

UKIP and GO speak for a layer of the British ruling elite that regards the EU—and the economic and political domination of Germany in particular—as a constraint on the pursuit of Britain’s national interests. Hoey stated recently, “We have a global market at our feet if we can free ourselves from Brussels.”

If GO wins the designation as the official Leave

campaign it is entitled to £7 million in public money to fund its campaign. As a political party, UKIP could also spend a further £4.4 million in the campaign.

Britain’s pseudo-left are playing a central role in concealing the overwhelming domination of the Leave campaign by far right, pro-business interests, with the Socialist Party and Socialist Workers Party citing the pro-exit positions of a handful of unions as proof of an independent “left,” “progressive” alternative.

These unions, they insist, are guarantors that the right-wing Tories and UKIP will not be able to dominate the referendum campaign and that they provide the working class with a voice.

This is a political fraud.

The claim that these eviscerated bodies, which have sold out one industrial struggle after another, can represent the interests of the working class in the referendum is patently false.

The Leave campaign of the trade unions is organised primarily through the *Morning Star* newspaper of the Stalinist Communist Party and its front group, Trade Unionists Against the EU (TUAEU). Its nationalist programme differs in no essentials from that of Galloway. “For National sovereignty” is one of the main planks of TUAEU’s propaganda.



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