

## **Lord Glasman, TMA Advisory board member involved in House of Lords debate**

TMA UK members were treated to a top quality debate at the House of Lords on Wednesday evening (9th March). Lord Glasman, TMA Advisory board member and Labour Peer was invited to speak on the case for Brexit and, in his usual style, captivated an audience fed to date on political snippets and snipings from both sides of the debate. Instead, Maurice distilled it into the five key issues that business in the UK often raise with him.

1. Lower taxation. The dream for any business leader and one at odds in his view with the EU, where increasing centralised control "is an inevitable consequence of political membership". Higher taxes in Britain would be inevitable where the majority of states are poorer than the UK and the EU is driving the redistribution of wealth through fiscal and political policy. The Tobin tax on London's huge financial services sector is an example of this in action where Parliament was largely powerless. Taxation is a political issue but it would be increasingly administrative within an EU committed to ever closer union.

2. A skilled and reliable workforce. Lord Glasman drew on the history of the eastern EU states that benefited from the highly skilled labour pool that was an ironic legacy of the failure of communism. This has endowed the UK with lower wage costs as a consequence of inward migration and competition for jobs. Skilled labour in his view though is not a natural consequence of open borders and an EU directive for free movement of labour but a lucky and short term twist of fate. The consequence of a directive on free movement will ultimately conflict with cultural issues and the cost of welfare in the UK and business leaders should look longer term.

The UK should be promoting apprenticeships, qualifications and vocation to build its own pool of skilled labour and pointed to Germany where it is impossible to undertake skilled work without these qualifications. The mischievous irony of this is that this could actually be illegal under EU law as a restraint.

3 Less regulation. EU roots are in the European Coal & Steel Community agreements to protect jobs and the Common Agricultural Policy, which was there to subsidise jobs in small and (admittedly) often inefficient farms. He questioned the outcomes of this regulatory environment where the EU has actually moved away from a concern for local subsidies and governance towards central directives.

Increasing regulation through directives would be a consequence of an EU centralised administration based less and less on British political democracy and, quoting historical precedent, more and more on a system more akin to the Napoleonic code.

4 Access to capital. As a co-founder of the term "Northern Powerhouse" Maurice's views were predictable. Self-determination with local centres of capital, regional banking and savings institutions v concentration of capital in money centres such as Frankfurt or London. The EU as a centralised political project is proving itself as incompatible with regional subsidiarity and self-determination.

5. Stability and a secure peaceful environment. Maurice gave his view on the cooperation between nation states as not being dependent on EU political union and, moreover whether it would be right for the UK to cede control of its military bit by bit.

Summing up as questions were taken 45 privileged attendees were treated to a feast of no holds barred thought leadership! "The issue is an issue of trust as to whether you trust the national political culture of the UK or whether you prefer a more legalistic framework of European procedure". said Glasman, citing the upheaval that was Napoleon and the terrors

of Nazi rule, "both of which Parliament had the option of joining - but stood largely alone in resisting" - Lord Glasman declared he was "Comfortable staying with a political system that embraced values that have stood us well as a nation state for hundreds of years".

Adrian Doble, TMA Director, hosted the event

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