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NO MORE SINGLE ISSUE – UKIP’S DRIVE FOR LOCAL ‘INDEPENDENCE’
By David Campbell Bannerman – UKIP Deputy Leader and Director of Policy

For some time UKIP has been criticised for being ‘a single issue party’. All we do is “bang on about Europe” says Dave Cameron. The logic goes: single issue parties have much to say on one thing; but “nothing to say on other issues”.

But consider this: The European Union has now imposed 120,000 directives and regulations on this country, with more added every day. 70% of Westminster laws come from the EU, and membership costs Britain £50 billion a year – draining resources from our own hospitals, schools and transport.

Fundamentally the issue is about who runs our country. The EU so profoundly effects our laws, freedoms, identity, taxes, trade and society, that only by leaving can we adopt the radical, fresh, positive policies we need to attract back the disillusioned British people: those 65% saying ‘None of the Above’ to the LibLabCon parties (You Gov poll). Here are some examples:

Why are rural post offices closing, when they’re so important to local communities ? Because the EU specifically prevents increasing aid to UK post offices under Article 88 of the Nice Treaty. And Postal Directive 97/67/EC forced us to change the whole system of postal sizes to advantage Royal Mail competitors.

Why is immigration out of control in Britain (a BBC analysis estimates 1.425 million migrants arriving since May 2004, the equivalent of another Kent) ? It’s because we lost our national borders to the EU under the Tories, signed asylum seeker policy away too, and must be open to all the EU’s 490 million ‘citizens’. EU Human rights legislation additionally makes it hard to deport foreign criminals.

Why is the City of London, so vital to our economy, being drowned in EU directives and regulations which drive up costs for no benefit, and force companies to relocate not just out of the UK but the EU ? Increasingly businesses, large and small, regard the costs of EU membership outweighs its claimed benefits. We’re at a tipping point.

But the UK Independence Party – I stress the word ‘independence’ - is about more than EU withdrawal. We are a much broader democratic independence campaign to return power to the people. Whilst keeping the ‘UKIP’ name, we will update our look.

UKIP already has 10 Members of the European Parliament who think it wrong that most UK law comes from unelected Brussels bureaucrats. But the same principles apply locally: local councils have no real power. Council tax only pays for a quarter of local services, and business rates are paid centrally.

The majority of funds comes from central government - with strings. We want councils to have greater control over their finances and to give people referendums on key local issues. Only by returning power from unaccountable bureaucrats and by restoring representative democracy can things change. For we are living in the rule of technocrats.

Consider how powerful the EU-inspired Regional Assemblies / Development Agencies are now. These chambers exist (The South East Regional Assembly is in Guildford). You’re paying for them, they have great powers, but there are no elections or accountability. They now set your housing targets, planning strategy and waste management policies, and want many more powers.

The intention is to replace old counties like Kent with regional bodies reporting direct to the Committee of the Regions in Brussels. England is being Balkanised, with its 9 EU regions already taking England’s place on official maps.

So UKIP and our local councillors believe in declaring independence for local people from the diktats of bureaucrats. We want greater financial and democratic control locally, and will scrap regional government.

We also believe local schools, policing, hospitals, social care and planning should all be more independent, more local and more democratic.

Take planning for example: as a former Tunbridge Wells councillor I saw how developers can abuse the planning system whilst councils have limited funds to stop them. This is wrong. We want to make local councils the ultimate decisionmakers on planning, abolish remote appeal authorities, and end John Prescott's arbitrary powers.

The current lack of democratic control is what makes people think: why bother to vote ? And in local elections, between 60-70% of the electorate don't. That's unhealthy.

We believe we can reengage local people and restore democracy by restoring local decision making and responsibility. That's the real significance of 'independence'.

And, yes, we will continue to bang on about Europe !