



The Implications of the United Kingdom's decision to renegotiate the terms of its EU membership for the UK, Ireland and Europe.

Date: Friday 23 October 2015

Time 9.00 am to 13.00 pm

Venue: Ballroom Wynn's Hotel 35/39 Lower Abbey St Dublin 1

To attend please email: chartergroupseminar@gmail.com .There is no charge for this Seminar.

This Seminar will examine the implications of the UK's renegotiation of its EU membership and the impact of a Brexit for the UK, Ireland and Europe. For Ireland, even if the UK retained access to the Single Market the likely consequences are still significant. While overall Irish exports to the UK for goods and services are 16% to 18% of the total respectively, the indigenous sector, which is labour intensive, is 43% and the agri-food sector is over 50%. Currently, non EU countries in the Single Market do not have free trade in agricultural products, and significant tariffs apply. Even if a free trade agreement was possible in agricultural products, costly customs procedures would apply to all trade. There could be gains in areas such as financial services but the overall impact would be negative for jobs particularly in manufacturing. Also there would be major implications for North/South relations if Scotland were to exit the UK following a Brexit.

Brexit is now a real possibility because of the rise of euroscepticism in the UK and the opposition to free movement. Cameron is seeking changes in relation to free movement benefit rules, opt-out from ever closer union, protections for euro-outs, increased powers for national parliaments, less regulation and more free trade deals some of which will be very difficult to achieve. There is also a danger that the UK may seek to undermine workers' rights. There was little of real substance to the 1975 renegotiation but the vote was still 2: 1 to remain. However, today the UK economy is stronger than it was then in relation to other major EU economies so the economic arguments may not be decisive. It is likely that a more substantial renegotiation will be needed this time and it may not be available.

There are also major implications for the rest of the EU. The crises in Greece and the eurozone and over migration is severely weakening the sense of solidarity that has been a hallmark of the EU and undermining Social Europe. Brexit seeks to pull the EU towards a free trade club, while avoiding a potential Grexit requires a level of deeper integration that currently lacks public support. Europe is at a crossroads and the next number of years will be decisive in deciding its future.

Seminar Agenda

8.45 **Registration**

9.00 **Opening Address by Alex White TD, Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources**

9.20 **Address by Brian Campfield, President of ICTU and General Secretary of NIPSA**

9.40 **Examining the key issues involved for the United Kingdom, Ireland and Europe. Speakers:**

Owen Tudor, Head of EU and International Relations Trade Union Congress (TUC)

Paul Gillespie, Academic and Irish Times Columnist and Joint Editor of *Britain and Europe: The Endgame*.

Blair Horan, Secretary of the Charter Group

10.40 **Questions and Answers**

11.00 Coffee Break

11.20 **Panel Discussion**

Chair: David Begg, Director of TASC and former General Secretary of ICTU

Panelists:

Des Geraghty, Chair Charter Group and former President SIPTU

Owen Tudor, TUC

Shay Cody, General Secretary of IMPACT

Sheila Nunan, Vice President of ICTU and General Secretary INTO

Liam Berney, Industrial Officer ICTU

Gerry McCormack, Divisional Organiser Manufacturing SIPTU

12.30 **Closing Address by Brendan Halligan, former TD, MEP, Senator and current Chairman of the Institute for International and European Affairs (IIEA)**