

SPEECH TO THE BRUGES GROUP BY JON GAUNT

Hi, good afternoon. So who saw me on Question Time? What were the rest of you doing?



Well thank you very much indeed for inviting me to speak to you today and it's a great honour. It's the first time I've ever really got involved in politics. Obviously I'm well known for having my views, people say they're outspoken, I don't think they are outspoken I just think I speak for the man in the street.

I'm a normal working class guy, my dad was a policeman for 30 years, I had a normal upbringing up to the age of 11 until my mum died tragically one Christmas of a brain

haemorrhage and left my dad alone to try and bring up three brothers, myself, my elder brother who was 14 and my younger brother who was only 5. My dad tried but he was an old fashioned copper, he was more Gene Hunt out of Life on Mars than Ian Blair and he found it very difficult and I ended up going into a children's home.

So I had a kind of fractured childhood after that and I think though that childhood actually shaped me and framed me and when you've been on your own at 12 in a bedroom with four other boys in a residential home not knowing what your future is, in the end nothing really scares you.

So that's why when I fell into radio after going gloriously bankrupt in the last recession when interest rates went up to 15%, I managed to fall into radio and I wasn't afraid just to speak my mind as people say. And I started on local radio in Coventry, so when these Councillors came on and started to lie, spin and twist the truth I would just say 'you're lying, tell the truth'.

And I didn't realise you weren't meant to do that on the BBC and also I didn't realise you weren't meant to have an opinion. But luckily for me the audience figures were going up at about the same level as the complaints were coming in.

So I managed to keep my job until they closed that particular station down in Coventry. The BBC closed it down only to reopen it again ten years later at a cost of £3 million but then that's the bloated Broadcasting Corporation for you.

I then went to Luton and in a way the old adage that bad news makes good news, the Luton car factory, the Vauxhall factory was closed down after about four or five years of me working on the radio. And so when the lads were losing their jobs and they began to push cars off the assembly line literally, who did they ring? They rang the local radio and that was me because I'd been on the radio for so long there.

And we made these programmes and I was very lucky because these programmes won three Sony Radio Awards and the Sony's are like, they call them the Oscars, they're more like the BAFTAs of the radio world. And that basically allowed my career to really take off and then I ended up in London and all the rest of it became an economist on the Sun.

So I had no ambition to be a journalist, I don't see myself as a journalist now, I see myself as a commentator, somebody who just says it as I see it. So I never say anything or write anything that I don't believe. I'm not a devil's advocate, some people like to describe me as that, I'm not. I don't take the contrary position just to cause a riot, I don't need to, my views are controversial enough without doing that.

And I don't want you to agree with everything I say when you listen or read what I say because I do know that as long as I'm honest you'll agree with one thing and disagree with another but hopefully you'll keep coming back to the debate. And I think in British public life, especially in journalism and in radio, we need more of that and if you don't like it, as far as I'm concerned put your hand on the knob on the radio, twiddle it and listen to another station. We're grownups, if papers can be partial I don't really understand why broadcasting can't be, which is why I got into so much trouble with Ofcom.



So how did I fall into politics? As I say I've never on the radio told anyone how to vote, I've never said you must vote this way or that way, I've just had the debate with people. And when I was first approached by the EU Referendum Campaign I thought uh oh that's UKIP. Not that I've got anything against UKIP but if I wanted to be in a political party I would join one and I don't want to

be in any one particular party, again as I say, no disrespect to UKIP.

But then I realised that this wasn't a political party that this was a campaigning group and it was going to go for cross-party support. And they then started talking to me about what the EU Referendum Campaign's aims are and it's a very simple aim. Tony Blair in a manifesto promised us it, Gordon Brown promised us it and David Cameron of course, the arch-hypocrite gave us a cast iron guarantee that we would have a referendum and have we had one? No we haven't!

And so then I realised this is a campaign I did want to be part of because when I went to bed the night before that I thought I was living in Great Britain, I suddenly realised perhaps I wasn't.

Why haven't we been given our democratic right? Why are the political elite so scared of giving us a referendum? Why can't the British public have a vote on this?

And then to add insult to injury, James Pryor, who is in charge of our campaign, told me about the AV referendum. Being a Coventry City fan I thought AV stood for Aston

Villa. But I'm laughing and joking but I'll tell you what I bet most people in the bloody country think that.

People don't know about constitutional reform, they don't know about AV and do you know what, they're not particularly interested. They don't wake up in the morning going ooh I really wonder whether we should change of voting system. But they do wake up in the morning thinking I've had enough of your EU bureaucrats telling us how to live our lives and literally telling us how many pieces of toilet roll we can use. So if we can't have a referendum on the Constitution why the hell can't we have a vote on the EU? Are you with me?

So that's why I decided to put my quite considerable weight behind this campaign because I realised this was about us, about ordinary people. And not just the people in this room, again no disrespect to you, you're fine people, fine, fine people. But if we're going to get this referendum we're going to need a few people who do ordinary jobs as well. We're going to need mechanics, we're going to need sparks, we're going to need people who have got their own businesses, we're going to need people who are plumbers, we're going to need builders, we're going to need the people who read the Sun and the Daily Mirror and the Star and the Express.

So we've got to get out and get to them and if that's so called dumbing down, well I'm going to dumb down as far and as deep as I can go because once you start explaining to people that we're spending £48 million a day giving it to the EU and we haven't even been given a vote people get angry.

We should take some sucker and some support from what's happened in America with the Tea Party, that doesn't mean I'm suddenly going to start telling you I'm a witch or that I'm a racist because there are some elements of the Tea Party that all of us could be uncomfortable with. But there's large parts of it we can be extremely comfortable and at ease with, it's a grass roots organisation, its bottom-up, its ordinary people saying enough is enough, the political elite are disconnected with the American people and they are as disconnected in this country as well.

They may think the expenses scandal has gone away, let me tell you in my local boozier it hasn't. People are still fuming about it. We've got to get those people, get to them, give them the message and mobilise them.

And we've also got to allow them to come forward with their views and their opinions and you might find some of them unpalatable, well get used to it because the only way you're going to build a mass movement is by allowing people to have their say.

This is a free country; this is a country where people, while we're wearing these poppies now, people fought for freedom of expression, for freedom of speech. So let's engage with the masses.

You're having the intellectual argument here at the Bruges Group and long may you continue to have it, but unless we mobilise the working classes and the other people, and I know I sound a bit like Bob Crow now although I'm a lot better looking, unless we mobilise those people we're never going to win.

And do you know the best thing about the EU Campaign, and I wouldn't have joined it the EU Referendum Campaign, I wouldn't have joined it if it was a campaign that was

saying lets vote to get out of the EU or if it was anti-European. I don't see the EU Referendum Campaign as being anti-European; it's saying lets have a vote. And I don't care when that vote happens which way people do vote and I won't be telling them which way to vote either, I'm just saying we must have a vote. Are you with me?

So how are we going to bring this about? I'll tell you it's a very simple process. We've got the EU Pledge. Now the EU Pledge is part of our campaign but we don't own it entirely at the EU Referendum Campaign. We want to get loads of groups, we're talking to homeopathy groups, we're talking to alternative medical groups, we're talking to Hell's Angels, we're talking to loads of different organisations that have all got their own grudges with the EU. We want them to build their campaigns in their way. All we want them to do, which is the same as us, is direct everybody to the Pledge.

At the back of the room you'll see some EU Referendum Campaign brochures with the EU Pledge on it; it's about getting people to sign the Pledge.

When we get people to sign that Pledge we're going to make a map up of the United Kingdom, we'll be able to track how many people have said they want a referendum in their area, we will then target the individual MPs in those areas and say did you know x amount of people want a referendum. We would then hope that the MP in that area saw sense and began to vote that way, if not then we would have to make it public that they weren't representing their constituents' views and perhaps put somebody up against them.

That's the technique we're going to use, that's how we're going to build the group but what we need to get is hundreds of thousands of people to sign it. We've got tens of thousands of people already; we're beginning to get traction.

We got on Question Time not just because I've got a big mouth and a bit of a profile but also because we've got a fantastic campaigning team with James Pryor and Bridget Rowe. It's amazing that within about six weeks of me joining we're on the premiere political programme.

But we wont win just be being on Question Time, we have to be on programmes like The Right Stuff, we have to be on programmes like Jeremy Vine, which I was on twice last week, we have to be on Sky News, we have to be on the Nicky Campbell show on BBC 5 live, we need to be in there on the programmes and in the papers that people read.

We need to mobilise them, we need them to make this simple gesture of joining our Pledge. If you agree with me go away from this meeting today, take some Pledge Certificates or send people to our website: www.eureferendumcampaign.com and ask them to sign the Pledge.

When you explain to them it's not about them having to vote no or in or out, it's simply asking for us to have the right to that vote, you'll be amazed at how many people begin to agree and say they want to have that vote.

I was listening to you this morning and some people were saying its about going out and explaining what this is all about, it is, that is the most effective way word-of-

mouth. We're also using social networks you know we're using Facebook and Twitter and everything else as well.

But our campaign is simple, let's have a vote. Three leaders have used different ways to describe about whether we can have a vote and then used weasel words to get out of that commitment. That's why let's stop all the messing about; let's have a simple yes or no.

The Lib Dems should understand that of course because it was in their manifesto. Mind you so was university fees and look what they've done there. But you understand my point, it's simple. If anybody asks you what are you campaigning for, we at the www.eureferendumcampaign.com we're campaigning for a simple yes or no vote. We want our democratic right, we need to start not a Tea Party in this country but we certainly need to start a grass roots bottom-up movement, we need to get ordinary people involved in the politics of life, real politics and as I say, we want cross-party support.

Thank you for giving me the chance to speak to you today, cheers.