



Alliance EPP for 4 Freedoms

9 March 2016

The Rt Hon Gerald Kaufman MP
Ms Jessica Morden MP
Ms Bridget Phillipson MP

Mr Gary Streeter MP
Mr Pete Wishart MP

Dear Members of Parliament,

VISUAL BIAS ON EUROPE REFERENDUM BALLOT PAPER: THE ELECTORAL COMMISSION

This letter is written to you in your capacity as an appointed member of the Speaker's Committee on the Electoral Commission. It will be made available to the media, our protracted private warnings to the Electoral Commission having fallen on deaf ears.

The EPP is, as you will of course appreciate, Europe's largest political family: following the departure of the Conservative Party in 2009 for fields further to the right, we sustain the EPP's moderate and mainstream pro-Europe centre/centre-right cause within the UK.

You will presumably agree that the ballot paper in a matter of such constitutional significance as the Europe referendum should be clear and neutral. While we preferred the clarity of Yes/No choices in earlier referendums and of the 8 words on the Scottish referendum compared to the 51 words the Electoral Commission has now concocted, that is not why we are writing.

In previous referendums, visual neutrality between the two choices was sustained by vertically aligning them to either a notional left or centred margin. Now - without explanation, evidenced (we believe they have none) or otherwise - the Electoral Commission has aligned the two choices to a right margin. This is not normal in the primary indigenous British culture: we read from the left.

Because the two questions are of different length and there is relatively so much text, this creates a visual bias drawing the eye to the shorter Leave option. Despite our warnings - replete with the most vivid historic reference - this has emerged even worse in the Statutory Instrument: by about half a character, the Leave option stretches to the right beyond the end of the Remain option and is a clear (intentional?) subliminal prompt to vote Leave.

This - http://www.4freedomsparty.eu/uploads/1/5/0/3/15038738/160307_electoral_commission.pdf - is our latest (and strident: our anger is legitimate) explanatory letter to the Electoral Commission.

I should disclose that we are in dispute with the Electoral Commission: they unlawfully censored *EPP* and effectively eliminated us from the General Election. Without going into detail, this breaches the limit of their legal power but putting even that to one side, in 15 months they have failed to disclose who decided to censor *EPP* and the parameters that were applied. In our view, it says more about the Electoral Commission than about us that *TUSC* was not censored while *EPP* was: however, the most immediately pressing issue is this ballot paper before we get to *oh dear, they've already been printed: tough*.

Yours sincerely

Dirk Hazell
Leader

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