

According to a study quoted by the FCO, the economic advantage alone of being part of such a large market is worth £300 a year to every person living in the UK.

**8. The French and the Germans want an EU superstate!** A few may; most don't. Most, like the British, want their countries to retain their own national characteristics inside a Union which allows them to co-operate in the areas where co-operation works. But if the threat were real, we would be most unwise to leave the EU, as UKIP would like. Membership is our best guarantee against the emergence of a superstate; as long as we are part of the EU there is no way Europe can evolve into a superstate unless we, and every other member, want it to. But if UKIP's fears materialised following Britain's departure from the EU, a European superstate would be a very uncomfortable neighbour!

**9. Thanks to the EU we can no longer control immigration.** Wrong! We do control immigration, as long as it originates outside the EU. Some EU members (the 'Schengen' countries) have decided to create a common external border. The UK is not one of them.

**10. European law can over-ride British law.** All EU members agree to make their domestic laws consistent with EU agreements. Companies and individuals who disagree with decisions taken by their national courts in areas where the EU is entitled to act may appeal to the European Court of Justice (ECJ). The European Commission can refer member states to the ECJ for failure to comply with agreements, too, as it did in the case of France's refusal to admit imports of British beef.

The European Court of Human Rights (ECHR), which receives more attention from the British press than the ECJ, is an organ of the Council of Europe, not the European Union. If we were to leave the EU our courts would still recognise the authority of the ECHR.

**11. The European Parliament wastes money maintaining buildings in Brussels and Strasbourg, and moving between them.** Yes; even UKIP has to be right about this extravagant arrangement!

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## **The ten rotten planks in the UKIP platform**

UKIP's programme is entirely negative. Its sole policy, withdrawal from the European Union, is supported by scare stories and distortions which exploit Britain's traditional suspicion of Europe. The purpose of this leaflet is to open the way for discussion of the EU's many achievements and advantages by disposing of the bogies.

**1. We wuz robbed!** According to UKIP, our political leaders lied to us when we joined the EEC. They told us we were joining a customs union. They knew the EEC was more than a free trade area, but they kept it secret.

This insult to the memory of those who took us into Europe crumbles on examination. There was nothing secret about the political aspirations of the EEC. The preamble to the Treaty of Rome, which Britain signed in 1973, clearly stated the determination of members 'to lay the foundations of an ever closer union among the peoples of Europe'. It was obvious to all, pro- and anti- alike, that Europe was going to evolve into something more ambitious than a common market. Campaigning for a 'yes' vote in the 1975 referendum, Margaret Thatcher said 'I believe that the paramount case for being in is the political case.' The argument of those in favour was that from inside could we influence Europe's development in a way that favoured our own interests as well as those of our neighbours. Thirty six years of experience has shown they were right.

**2. Decisions are made by 'faceless bureaucrats'**, according to Nigel Farage, UKIP's leader. This allegation, surprising from a member of the European Parliament, is just plum wrong. The EU's bureaucrats, - that is to

say the staff of the Commission – do not decide on matters of policy. Like our own Civil Service, they administer and monitor decisions taken by the representatives of the people. When necessary they can also make proposals. Decisions are taken by the Council of Ministers, which is composed of government members from all the member states, and in most cases also by the democratically elected European Parliament.

Critics sometimes accuse the EU of being undemocratic. But compare this procedure, which is admittedly cumbersome, with our own parliament at Westminster, one whole House of which is made up of men and women who sit by virtue of birth, office or nomination.

**3. 75% of British legislation is imposed on us by Brussels.** (Nigel Farage again). Leaving aside that 'Brussels' has no power to impose anything on us – see above – this figure is preposterous. A study by the House of Commons Library of all legislation introduced in Britain between the years 1998 and 2005 found that decisions taken in the EU were responsible for 9.1% of new laws. Another study showed a higher figure for the ten years before that, 15.8%. Many new laws which originate from EU decisions are to do with the administration of the Single Market, and affect businesses. EU decisions very seldom influence the laws passed by our Parliament in vital areas of national interest such as health care, education, social security, housing, local government, defence or pensions.

**4. The EU can't even keep control of its own expenditure!** UKIP supporters take it as read that the EU's accounting methods are sloppy. But in November 2008 the European Court of Auditors, which has standards as high as those of our own National Audit Office, provided a positive statement of assurance, without qualification, on the reliability of the EU's 2007 accounts.

UKIP's criticism arises because since 1994 the Auditors have been unable to provide the same level of assurance about EU money spent in member states. But this is a reflection of the different, and sometimes incompatible, accounting practices used by members. It is not evidence of fraud.

For many years Britain's National Audit Office has been unable to approve the accounts of the Department of Work and Pensions, which has a very much larger budget than the whole of the EU.

**5. British jobs for British workers!** UKIP argues that at a time when unemployment is again rearing its head, workers from the EU, and especially the eastern states, are taking jobs from British workers.

The free movement of goods, capital and labour between the countries of Europe has long been an ambition of Europeans. Speaking in 1948, Winston Churchill said “I hope to see a Europe where men and women of every country will think of being European as of belonging to their native land.” The right to live and work where we want in Europe is one of the great achievements of the EU. Millions of British people have taken advantage of it, and would be dismayed if they were forced to return to Britain, as one Italian newspaper recently suggested following an outcry about Italian workers at a British construction site. British agriculture would be in a sorry state without labour from Europe. Then there are the doctors, the nurses, the specialist NHS staff, the care home workers, the plumbers .....!

**6. The Lisbon Treaty.** Speaking at a meeting in Plymouth, Trevor Coleman, UKIP's top candidate for the European Parliament in the South West, described the Lisbon Treaty as 'the final nail in the coffin'. If Britain were to accede, he said, the last vestiges of our independence would be extinguished.

The truth is that the Lisbon Treaty poses no threat whatsoever to Britain's independence. But it will make the EU more effective. It will make the EU's decision-taking procedures, which were designed for a union of 6 members and now have to accommodate 27, less cumbersome and less obscure. It will increase the roles of the European Parliament and national parliaments. And it will allow EU members to take joint decisions to deal with problems such as climate change and international terrorism which were not anticipated fifty years ago.

**7. Membership costs a bomb,** £40 million per day, according to UKIP, over £14 billion per year. The party quotes no authority for this figure. HM Treasury tells a different story. According to the September 2008 Statement on the EC Budget, the UK's gross contribution of just under £10 billion for the year was expected to cost a net figure, after receipts, of nearly £4 billion. This is the price we pay for the economic and political benefits of being part of Europe.