European and External Relations Committee

The EU referendum and its implications for Scotland

Written submission from Jane McLaren

Like many I am devastated by the thought of the UK leaving the EU. Rather than give you my opinions alone I have tried to draw evidence from personal experience. I have lived in my current Edinburgh home since 1988 and have retired from a social work career.

Most of all I fear the impact of Brexit economically as this will impact the disadvantaged and impoverished first. I am angry in that this was a referendum that was not prompted by a real wish of the people but an internal party political feud. Representative democracy is asking MPs to represent our views not simply convey them. The behaviour of those campaigning for Brexit was that of demagogues and salesmen who in their absence of a plan, then disgracefully left the scene. We had five Remain votes from this household, one from an overseas voter.

I have three adult children, one of whom is settled in Europe and another whose whole educational focus has been towards working in France. She is in her final year of a French language degree here in Scotland. She enjoyed her funded Erasmus year in France which made her fluent in another language and widened her vision of society as only working abroad can do. There is the added value of examining one's own culture, rationalising cultural differences and being exposed to different social perspectives on inclusion, human rights, criminal justice, democratic processes to name but a few. She has made friends who have visited us here in Scotland. She is broken hearted that she may have no right to work in the EU in the future. She has watched her older sister find a problem in finding employment after the last recession and is aware another may approach in the UK. Many of my own peers have children settled in Europe. Brexit places a personal barrier within our family and insecurity which was not anticipated.

For over a year I have attended an excellent Edinburgh City Council Adult Learning class related to the ESOL programme, called the Culture Peer Project. We need more of such excellent inclusive projects. This brings locals and newcomers, many from the EU, together. Through this I have met people who have settled here working hard who must now face unfair uncertainty. I have met Grandparents who have now followed their now long settled, growing grandchildren in Scotland who are now fluent English speakers. Grandparents who are learning English and find work themselves and settle in Scotland to be close to family. I wonder whether I would now, since Brexit, be able to copy them if I needed to earn while being close to my own future grandchildren in the EU.

Since Brexit I have been made more aware by casual conversation on buses, in shops etc of a new status of "the other" who we are now naming "EU National". I find it insidious how quickly we turned to label through exclusion in the same manner we labelled people fleeing war and poverty and climate change as "migrants". Yet nationality is a poor determinant of anything and those within such labels do not feel a shared experience. This excluding tendency reminds me of how we used to stigmatise "people as "Single Parents" in the 60s and 70s. My youngest daughter is
currently working her summer in Germany. She works in a French cafe, talks to German customers and has a Spanish boyfriend and shares a flat with Germans in a Turkish quarter. This is the world we now live in and I see Brexit as a dysfunctional response from a fear of difference and competition for wages and services which can be handled in different ways.

We have family and friends both in N Ireland and Dublin and are very worried about the divisions there being reignited via Brexit. Very fearful also of the impact of Brexit on the EU itself and world peace generally.

Our family was split in the Indy ref in 2014. I joined The Labour Party and am happy to support Kez Dugdale and Jeremy Corbyn. My husband has also joined Labour. I am opposed to an independent Scotland rising from a fear of nationalism. All three of my adult children would however like to see an Independent Scotland. I think we all agree that there is not an economic possibility to vote for it at present and we do not believe that, if Independent, we could assuredly win EU membership status from the EU. We support all efforts currently cross party to explore Scotland retaining EU membership if that were at all possible. If we have a General Election which seems likely I would like to see an alliance opposed to implementing Article 50 on the manifesto. I would, like many, vote selectively for that as it is linked to securing so many other issues. In our global fight against terrorism, climate change and swift movements of capital impacting the poor we need large alliances and I wish our politicians would have the guts to fight this folly of a decision. I don't think I have felt so very strongly against a Government plan since my opposition to the Iraq war. I plan to join the March for Europe in London on 3 September if at all possible, with my daughter.