

## **Hawke EU Centre Annual Lecture: Europe, the World and the Challenges of the 21st Century by Baroness Janet Royall (Blaisdon PC)**

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**Allan Scott Auditorium, City West Campus, UniSA**

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In a post-Brexit world, Britain and the European Union face an uncertain future.

The planet is in a time of rapid change as we collectively head toward an unstable future and huge population shifts.

Baroness Janet Royall of Blaisdon PC was President of the House of Lords and is now sitting as a member in the opposition.

In the Hawke EU Centre Annual Lecture entitled **Europe, the World and the Challenges of the 21st Century**, Baroness Royall explored the issues of the future.

The lecture aimed to highlight the threats facing the European Union in light of the Brexit vote and why, now more than ever, we need the EU.

Baroness Royall began working for the European Union in 1979 when it was just 22 years old and the United Kingdom was one of only nine member states.

Next year the EU will celebrate its 60th anniversary and Baroness Royall remarked that the values of the EU are under assault.

This was exemplified recently with the UK membership referendum and the decision to leave the EU.

The economic effect of the Brexit decision was felt immediately with the pound taking a heavy hit after the vote.

Baroness Royall believes that the impact will be more widespread than only relating to economic interests.

She is concerned that universities in Britain may have trouble attracting students and academics from EU countries, as well as the potential withdrawal of EU funded research.

“I also think that it’s kind of made the horizons for many young people a lot narrower. They used to be able to think, when I grow up and graduate I can go and work in any part of the EU. I can live there, I can retire there, they won’t be able to do that anymore,” she says.

As an avid “stay” campaigner, Baroness Royall says Brexit posed simple solutions to complex problems and that it could be a manifestation of problems that arose after the Global Financial Crash in 2008.

“They’re bound to say, if getting out of the EU means that we’re going to have more jobs, that our pay is going to go up and it’s all those nasty foreigners then lets get out of the EU. Let’s take our borders back,” she says.

Immigration became one of the key battlegrounds of the Brexit campaign and xenophobia and racism were rampant.

This has only compounded since the referendum with rates of hate crime reported to police increasing by more than 40 per cent.

Baroness Royall says people who have never really supported the EU now blame it for their problems.

“People who haven’t done very well out of globalisation and they’re not blaming it on globalisation, they’re blaming it on the EU. They see that with the financial crisis in 2008. The bankers got away with it and nobody was put in to jail, but people suffered.”

“They feel like they’ve been left behind, that they’re not doing so well economically. It’s easy to blame things on foreigners, somebody who’s different,” she says.

Like Australia, the Murdoch Press is prominent in UK media and the Baroness says in the lead up to Brexit the media pandered to the public’s fears about immigration.

“If when people read the newspaper they have their views reinforced, it makes the situation worse.”

“What we should have is a media that discusses things that puts the pros and cons, but it doesn’t come down on one line. We don’t have that sort of press and they’re hugely influential,” she says.

Another consequence of Brexit is its impact on the integrity of the United Kingdom, with both Scotland and Northern Ireland voting to remain.

This is particularly true of Scotland, which in 2014 held an independence referendum.

Following Brexit, Scotland’s first minister Nicola Sturgeon said it is possible they would hold another referendum if the UK was to leave the EU free market.

The refugee crisis has exposed divisions in the EU and as Baroness Royall stated in her lecture this demonstrates that now more than ever we need the EU.

She also emphasises that these issues cannot be solved by one country working alone and that a global approach is needed.

“The world is very integrated now and globalisation has resulted in many good things, but it’s also resulted in many difficult things for people.”

“We can’t go back, we can’t withdraw into a world of nation states so we’ve got to find ways of working together,” she says.

*For more details and a video podcast of the lecture visit*  
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