**Has Brexit affected our tolerance?**

**By Alex Melvin**

Before the Covid pandemic, every day the news seemed to be dominated by Brexit. The 2016 Brexit referendum was held to settle a long standing question: should the UK leave the EU? The public voted 48% to stay and 52% to leave, splitting the country almost in half. Just one day later, as a Remain supporter, the Prime Minister of the UK at that time, David Cameron, resigned. This was the first time the UK government had ever lost a referendum and it caused protests from both sides.

Even my family had different opinions, sometimes within the same household, with their opposing votes cancelling each other out. I interviewed my Dad (age 43) and when asked why he wanted us to leave the EU, he replied “ I wanted to give the UK back control of its laws. “ When I pressed him further, he added “ The EU was a good idea at the start, when it was just a shared economic market, but now it’s more of a political establishment.” Finally, I asked him if he thought a Brexit deal could happen by the end of the year. He answered “ Covid-19 has distracted both the UK government and the EU from a deal, but if there is a compromise, probably yes.”

To help get an understanding of the different viewpoints, I also interviewed my Grandpa (age 69) as he was in favour of Remain. When asked why he wanted to remain in the EU he said ” There weren't enough advantages to leaving at the time.” He also revealed his thoughts on the referendum, saying, “ It was a bad idea to hold one as it would just cause controversy.“ He was right. Brexit tore the country in half as some people were intolerant of others views. Finally, I questioned him on the likelihood of a Brexit deal by the end of the year. He replied “ I’m unsure if we will have a Brexit deal by the end of the year but I’m now happy to leave with or without a deal.”

If both sides are intolerant of each other and some refuse to accept the vote then this could lead to protests and physical violence and the police may need to get involved. It could also cause tensions amongst friends and families so tolerance of others' viewpoints is important.

To move forward, a compromise must be reached, even though it seems unlikely just now. So, I asked the interviewees one last question: “How would you compromise on this issue?” I was surprised when they both had the same answer. My Dad said “The vote has been taken so people should just accept the result.” and my Grandpa said “ The referendum is over so people should just accept the result even if it wasn’t the way they voted.” Personally, I agree that if we want to move forward, we must be tolerant of others views. As described by Arthur Helps,

“Tolerance is the only real test of civilisation.”

**Hyperlinks**

ReferendumResults

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/politics/eu_referendum/results>

Protests

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-50108531>

Quote

<https://www.azquotes.com/quote/693110>