

Pro-Brexit camp is lacking coherence - UK ambassador

11/02/2016

Colm Kelpie



Paschal McCarthy, president of Irish Exporters Association, Ambassador Dominick Chilcott, Tom Hall, AIB, Simon McKeever, chief executive, Irish Exporters Association, and Nicola Byrne, Cloud 90, in Dublin yesterday

The pro-exit proponents in the British EU referendum debate are fighting among themselves and lack coherence, the British Ambassador to Ireland has said.

Dominick Chilcott also told a conference in Dublin that if Prime Minister David Cameron gets a deal from Europe by next week, the referendum would likely be held on June 23.

But he said the UK government wasn't doing any work on what might happen if voters opt to pull out. "Without wishing to be rude about the leave campaign, they're fighting among themselves quite a lot and there's not a lot of coherence," Mr Chilcott told the Export Leadership Forum in Dublin yesterday.

"There are at least two separate organisations competing to be the designated lead organisation for the leave campaign. It's pretty unclear who you would want to follow."

He suggested the main face of the 'leave' campaign is UKIP leader Nigel Farage. "I suspect, emotionally, if you already like Nigel Farage you'll listen to him. But there's not another figure that has captured the public imagination," Mr Chilcott said.

He said "there will be a plethora of public figures who are respected who will be arguing on the remain side and it's quite hard to see how you would match that on the no side."

He said the lessons from the last UK election is that people are "conservative with a small c". "This is a change referendum and the choice would be between a defined status quo with the prospect of some improvements to it, against a future where there is no agreement as to what that might look like."

AIB chief economist Oliver Mangan said Ireland's UK exports and imports combined are worth 35pc of Irish GDP. He said the concern is that if the UK votes to leave the EU, it is not clear what this could mean.

Indo Business