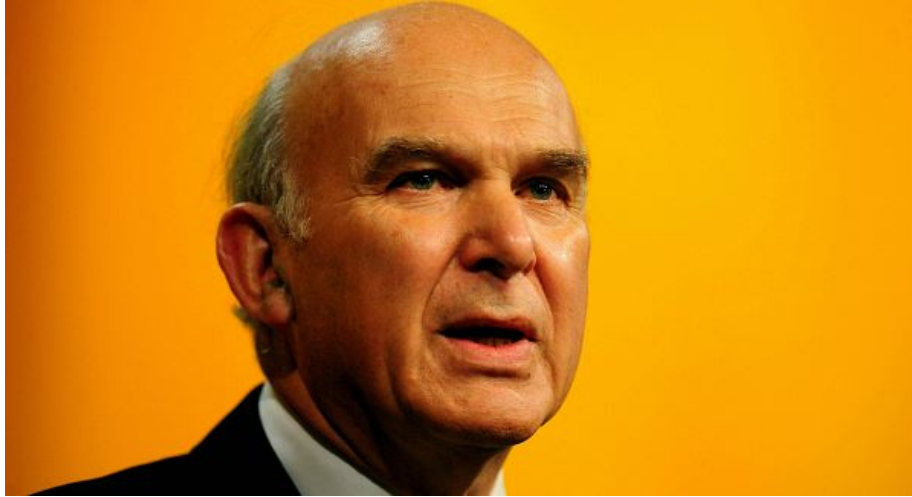


Irish Examiner

Vince Cable: Cameron out of touch with reality on EU

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By Ian Wishart

British business secretary Vince Cable said David Cameron is out of touch with the reality of EU membership and his aim of clawing back powers will be difficult to achieve.

The prime minister's desire to win more control over immigration may well be frustrated because other EU leaders don't want a change, Cable said.

Cameron's "strategy is actually quite dangerous – it is assuming that the other 27 countries will automatically agree to British requests", Cable told the Lisbon Council policy group in Brussels yesterday.

"Anybody who is expecting that our relationship with Europe can be fundamentally renegotiated is just utterly unrealistic."

The Conservative leader has promised a referendum on Britain's membership of the EU by the end of 2017 if he wins May's general election. Before the EU vote, he wants to renegotiate the terms of UK membership to give national authorities more power over issues such as welfare payments to migrants.

Cable, a Liberal Democrat member of Cameron's coalition government, said the prime minister risks "raising expectations" that would be difficult to fulfil. "Immigration has become a toxic issue in many of our countries and the UK is as bad, if not worse, than some others," Cable said.

"Politicians have to stand up and be willing to defend free movement within the European Union – freedom to work is absolutely fundamental."