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Body

What the People's Vote faction does not realise is that if parliament decides on a second referendum, those of us who voted to leave the EU will take to the streets to fight for democracy. The revolt will make the opposition to the poll tax look like a tea party.

We voted to return sovereignty to parliament and expect parliamentarians to respect our choice and behave accordingly, not to follow their own self-serving priorities.

Bob Fairless, Woking

Call of duty

The hallmark of British constitutional democracy is the sovereignty of parliament. MPs take upon themselves a duty to protect and advance the interests of the electorate and the country as a whole. The 2016 referendum result does not legally bind parliament; nor would any further referendum.

MPs have a duty to consider public opinion. However, they have a further duty to do so without sacrificing independence of thought and judgment. If ever a fully sovereign parliament has been needed, it is now. To put the point concisely: leaders should lead.

Scott Morrison, Oxford

People power

In 1975 Tony Benn, the industry secretary, who was against joining the European Economic Community, said: "When the British people speak, everyone, including members of parliament, should tremble before their decision, and that is certainly the spirit with which I accept the result of the referendum."

It is a pity many of the shower who are trying to reverse the majority decision of the people, and in some cases their own constituents, are not of the same mind.

Anthony Prescott, Ormskirk, Lancashire

Unstable hand

David Smith writes: "Political stability is something we usually take for granted in this country" ("Something needs to turn up to get us off our sick bed", Business, last week). Not all of us - which is why we voted to leave the EU. It is the affluent metropolitan liberal internationalists who tend to take political stability for granted.

We elect politicians for five years, and if they do not measure up, they are removed. We voted to leave because we do not take anything for granted.

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Keith Spragg, Ashbourne, Derbyshire

Disputed point

Amber Rudd says there is a "plausible argument" for a second referendum. I assume that a four-point margin to leave the EU is insufficiently large to convince her what the nation voted for. This is an MP with a margin of victory at the last general election of less than one percentage point: I do not see the good people of Hastings and Rye calling for a second vote on that result.

Edward Baker, Tunbridge Wells

Battle plan

A church on Sedgemoor in Somerset has a dragon sticking out with a bare-bottomed person hanging from its mouth. A local archaeologist recently discussed this with a passing woman, who believed it echoed the defeat of a Viking incursion when nearly all the local villages co-operated to drive the raiders away.

"We still don't talk to the people of Lympsham," she said, referring to a village three miles distant. "They never joined in to help us." According to the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, this battle occurred in 835. So, Brexiteers, hunker down for the long haul.

Eric Wynter, North Curry, Somerset

ACT NOW ON CHILD SEX-CHANGE SURGE

As professionals, academics, teachers and parents, we are anxious about the 25-fold increase in referrals of children to the NHS gender identity development service since 2009.

We fear that the "born in the wrong body" ideology causes gender-non-conforming children to believe they need unnecessary medical treatments that lead to lifelong medication, infertility and risks to health. We call for a full public inquiry into the reasons for the upsurge as an urgent matter of child protection.

We are concerned about the role of Mermaids UK, a lobbying organisation that promotes the uncritical affirmation of children's self-declared gender identity and the use of powerful cancer drugs to halt puberty, followed by the administration of cross-sex hormones. The long-term prognosis for children placed on this novel and previously untested regime is unknown.

We therefore welcome the decision by the Big Lottery Fund to review the proposed £500,000 grant to Mermaids, and we further call for an open and transparent examination of the medical and social scientific evidence for the claims of Mermaids.

Dr Sophie Allen, Lecturer in Philosophy, Keele University; Dr Michael Biggs, Associate Professor of Sociology, University of Oxford; Julie Bindel, Justice for Women; Dr Heather Brunskell Evans, social theorist; Stephanie Davies-Arai, Transgender Trend; Kristina Harrison, HCP and transsexual; Dr Debbie Hayton, teacher and transsexual; Dr Jane Clare Jones, philosopher; Rae Kelcou, Intersex advocate; Dr Andy Lewis; Dr Susan Matthews; Lisa Marchiano, psychotherapist; Lily Maynard, writer and blogger; Prof Michele Moore, University of Oxford; Stella O Malley, psychotherapist; Councillor Louise Paine; Julia Robertson, author; Prof Kathleen Stock, University of Sussex; Melissa Symes, solicitor and transsexual; Helen Watts, former leader at Girl Guiding UK; Dr Nicola Williams, Fair Play for Women; Robert Withers, psychotherapist.

Direly needed support

I am a 33-year-old trans man who transitioned many years ago, and it was absolutely the right thing for me. But when I was at school there was no access to information or support. I still have vivid memories of sitting in my school library at the age of 14, going through medical dictionaries in a desperate attempt to find information.

I had no one I could confide in and felt utterly alone. A phone helpline or a drop-in space would have made my life better. Mermaids seeks to provide exactly that kind of support.

Michael Toze, Lincoln

EU TRAVEL FEARS ARE FLIGHT OF FANTASY

UK citizens can be assured that, even in the event of a no-deal Brexit, planes will still fly between the UK and the EU ("No-deal warning: don't go on holiday after March 29", News, last week).

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Both the EU and the UK government have made commitments on this. British people take more than 50m trips to the EU every year, contributing (EURO)37bn (£33bn) to the economies of EU nations. This tourism also generates £28bn in revenue for Britain and supports more than 200,000 UK jobs. Deal or no deal, both sides want to continue to enjoy these benefits. Maintaining good travel links is a priority.

Mark Tanzer, chief executive, The Travel Association (Abta)

Emission creep

London's ultra-low emission zone will penalise motorists who cannot afford new cars while ignoring the thousands of planes flying over our heads ("Emissions tax for health, not wealth", Letters, last week). Research found that aircraft landing at Los Angeles airport cause as much ultrafine particle pollution as all the freeways in the city. Although Theresa May once said expanding Heathrow would devastate her constituents, she put a three-line whip on the third runway. The health of millions will be affected.

Richard Bloore, Twickenham

MIGRATION CURBS HURT SMALL FIRMS

In its determination to cut EU migration to the UK, this government risks putting political expediency before economic necessity ("Javid bids to slash EU immigration by 80%", News, last week).

One in five small employers rely on staff from the EU, most of them low or mid-skilled. Job vacancies remain unfilled. To turn his immigration blueprint into a workable model, Sajid Javid must listen to small firms.

The home secretary should bear in mind that minimum salary thresholds for international staff will cut our access to vital mid-skilled workers; that one-year visas do not lay the foundations for loyal workforces; and that immigration healthcare surcharges are hugely damaging.

Mike Cherry, national chairman, Federation of Small Businesses

NURSE SHORTAGE

PUTS STAFF AT RISK

The attacks on staff at Broadmoor highlight perhaps the most extreme consequence of the country's 42,000 nurse vacancies ("Broadmoor nurses feel at risk on wards", News, December 9).

Understaffed A&Es and overstretched community services put patients and staff under huge pressure. When this erupts into violence, it is often staff who pay the price.

This year we secured legislation to toughen the penalties for attacking NHS workers. But the real solution is to make government legally accountable for staffing levels and to invest in nursing education to encourage more to join up.

Patricia Marquis, southeast regional director, Royal College of Nursing

- Send your letters and feedback to

letters@sunday-times.co.uk

POINTS

Disabled access

Ethnic-minority high achievers deserve the recognition of being pictured on banknotes ("Call for minority star on new banknote", News, last week), but those with disabilities are equally deserving of consideration: they represent an even higher percentage of the UK population (19% at working age), have faced comparable life challenges and have also been undervalued by society in the past. I suggest the Bank of England depicts Stephen Hawking, since this would send a clear message that disability is no longer to be seen as a bar to achievement. It would be appropriate, too, for him to appear on notes used for filling black holes.

Peter Saunders, Salisbury

Granny bond

We grannies do not merely "babysit", as your report claims ("Babysitting grans 'owed £19,000'", News in brief, last week). We feed and potty-train; we teach our grandchildren to count and kick a football, to grow sunflowers and paint rainbows. Most important, though, we forge a bond that is beyond price.

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Pam Gough, Little Eaton, Derbyshire

Cruel sports

Nicholas Hellen's report on a bloody pheasant shoot in Llechweddygarth, Mid Wales, described the reality of such meetings very well ("Pilgrims' fury at shoot carnage", News, last week). Here in Leicestershire, of the four maimed and disfigured pheasants that landed two Wednesdays ago on my property, about 250 yards from the guns, one had had half its face shot away but was still running to find somewhere to hide. People should know about the barbarity, cruelty and ignorance of these flat-capped, waxed-jacketed shooters.

Philip Sullivan, Lutterworth, Leicestershire

Spread the love

Andrea Williams, a member of the General Synod, believes that "homosexual activity departs from God's good design" ("The gospels and homosexuality", Letters, last week). I suspect the Almighty has much greater things to worry about, such as how to encourage us all to love one another.

Jonathan Walsh, Dorchester

Unstinting praise

Instead of being used "judiciously" ("Spare the praise, help the child", News in Brief, last week), praise should be given as often as possible. Young people, particularly in special-needs schools, thrive on encouragement and praise for trying their best to succeed. It is also something that should be done in later life to show more appreciation when others help us out.

Brian Gibb, Ottershaw, Surrey

Drawing inspiration

Another brilliant cartoon from Morten Morland, showing a miserable-looking Theresa May and Jeremy Corbyn frightening little children in Santa's grotto (Comment, last week). It has been a bumper year for cartoonists, whose merciless lampooning of our beloved politicians has enabled us to see the funny side of the farce that is Brexit.

Stan Labovitch, Windsor

SCOTTISH LETTERS

Collaboration should have been

key word

I wonder how Brexit would have progressed had the expression "collaboration" been used from the very beginning rather than "negotiation". A completely different discussion style would have resulted: instead of neither side achieving half of what they desired, with collaboration each side could achieve more - working together to a mutual benefit rather than working against.

It is hardly surprising that the negotiations have turned out the way they have. The House of Commons is a prime example of how confrontation does not lead to satisfactory progress.

Ian Harkness, Linlithgow, West Lothian

Street fighting man

What the People's Vote faction does not realise is that if parliament decides on a second referendum, those of us who voted to leave the EU will take to the streets to fight for democracy. The revolt will make the opposition to the poll tax look like a tea party.

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Bob Fairless, Woking

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James II flees to France after the Glorious Revolution

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Artist Vincent van Gogh cuts off his left ear

1920

Government of Ireland Act passed, leading to the partition of Ireland

1929

Jazz trumpeter Chet Baker born

1972

Earthquake in Nicaragua kills 10,000

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