

Yesterday morning, I woke up the news that the rest of the world heard, too. And I was furious and when the fury subsided, frustrated. I posted a couple of clever-dick comments to Facebook during the morning and was admonished for being frivolous later in the day a close family member. So I decided to shut up online and subjected my dear wife be to an extended rant.

I slept well last night, which is a good sign that I'm getting used to EU sans UK. However, even though I shared a link a earlier today to a post by someone far better qualified than I am to write anything about the Brexit referendum, I won't be able to relax until I've written something myself. So for whatever it's worth, here goes.

When Cameron promised a referendum to placate his Tory Eurosceptics, I thought it was a bit rash. But when politicians make promises, who really pays attention? Once elected, some politicians have been known to renege on or to "re-evaluate" promises made before the voters had their say. But not honourable men. So when the Tories won the 2015 election and he announced that there would be a referendum, I thought that that was rather more than rash; it was potentially dangerous.

There were several reasons for my fears. First, referenda are often unpredictable. When I was a teenager in 1959, Irish voters were asked to elect Éamon de Valera as the figurehead president of Ireland and on the same day, to approve by referendum a change to Ireland's electoral system, abolishing the Single Transferable Vote proportional system and introducing the British "First-past-the-post" system. This would have made it much easier for de Valera's Fianna Fáil party, then Ireland's largest, to form a government without the need for coalition partners. The logic for the referendum, of course, was that the voters would elect de Valera while at the same time, voting for the change initiated by de Valera's party. De Valera was elected with a substantial majority but in the referendum, the voters, in their infinite wisdom, rejected electoral change. Enough said.

My second concern was that a simple majority in the Brexit referendum was deemed sufficient to invoke what is essentially a constitutional change. In other words, if the majority had only been a single vote, that, too, would have been fine.

Just compare this with the difficulties involved in amending the U.S. Constitution. This needs initially a joint resolution of both the House of Representatives and the Senate, approved by a two-thirds supermajority vote of each. If an amendment is approved, it is sent directly to the states for ratification. Three-quarters of the state legislatures or ratifying conventions must then approve the amendment. This is a deliberately difficult procedure, and given the state of politics in the U.S. today, one wonders whether another amendment might ever pass. But Cameron was quite happy to gamble with Britain's future on the basis of a simple majority.

Referenda are OK, I suppose, on straightforward issues, such as legalising divorce or gay marriage or legalisation of cannabis, where what is at stake is the happiness of unhappy couples or unhappy singles or just people who want to feel happier. But for something as complex as a state's relationship with a supranational body?

I tried to understand the issues and there are many things I didn't fully understand and I am supposed to be reasonably well-educated. Did most people really perceive the significance what they were voting about? At the risk of being called an elitophile (or is it élitophobe? — an epithet used by a friend yesterday), I think not. And anyway, in a parliamentary democracy such as the UK, there are 650 MPs elected to represent the people. Although some are perhaps better or smarter than others, they receive their salaries to represent people in their

respective geographical constituencies, to learn the issues of the day and to make or amend laws accordingly. Just one year after they had been elected, it is beyond my ken why they could not have been trusted to carry out their civic duty with regards the relationship between Britain and the European Union – except, of course for the simple fact, that a large majority of them wished the UK to remain in Europe.

It was always going to be an emotive issue and my guess is that many who voted to leave did so on the basis of how they felt about foreigners on Thursday. Although there were arguments about the economy and security, and many other important matters, I doubt whether they had much influence on the vote of those who wanted Britain out.

But all this begs the question of why I was (am?) furious and frustrated. After all, I'm not a British citizen (or is it subject??) and don't have a vote. Nevertheless, I have interests in Britain – family, for instance and I visit frequently and have always been an "anglophile" (having been educated at Trinity College Dublin, then referred to by some as "the last bastion of British imperialism in Ireland"). I am concerned about the health and welfare of my family and the education of my grandchildren. I think that the ramifications of this decision by the British electorate on Thursday will not be for the good. I'd like to be proven wrong but try as I might, I cannot see how people in general will be better off by divorcing Britain from Europe. And this divorce might very well lead to further divorces and for all its faults, the European Union has maintained the peace in what had been a war-troubled region for 60 years now.

So, having been first rash, and then foolish, Mr. Cameron announced that he is not the person to lead Britain in its negotiations over exiting the EU. Bravo! To his chagrin, even though he is apparently a clever man, he will probably go down in history as one of the worst Prime Ministers the United Kingdom has ever had. And, what is worse, he may leave the country in the hands of one of the most opportunistic politicians ever to ride a bike, even more opportunistic than Binyamin Netanyahu, and that's saying something! Someone for whom many of the leavers would never have voted under normal circumstances! (<https://www.1843magazine.com/features/knowning-boris>)

Meanwhile, many of the "Leavers" had perhaps realised by the end of Midsummer Day that there were more implications and knock-on effects to their decision than they had ever been aware of and that the politicians who lied to them in one of the shallowest and divisive political debates I have ever followed are now having to explain why and how they falsified facts and denigrated expert opinions and advice when offered. This was a debate of the kind that the widower of the murdered MP Jo Cox (whom I had never heard until last week but who must have been an extraordinary person) said in a brave interview at the beginning of the week, that she feared "for our political culture, not just here in the UK but around the world, ... [detailing] her belief that the tone of the debate has echoes of the 1930s, with the public feeling insecure, and politicians willing to exploit that sense."

So the referendum is over and the responsible adult Brits (and their children and grandchildren) will have to live with their decision. Self-inflicted damage and perhaps impoverishment – but their decision!

P.S. I had the distinct impression watching the TV news last night that Boris was in shock leaving home yesterday morning. Was it perhaps, that he didn't actually expect "Leave" to win? And that he might be the one entrusted with the exit negotiations with the EU? Well, well, well!

Oh ... And anything that appeals to Putin, Trump and Iran ... not to mention Farage ... has to be scary!