

Britain's parliamentary dictatorship, this zombie parliament is holding the nation to ransom

By Brendan O'Neill, Spiked Online, 26 October 2019

'Super Saturday', they called it. Which is ironic because the events in parliament on Saturday demonstrated just how pathetic and exhausted our parliament has become. Once again parliamentarians were presented with a [Brexit](#) deal, and once again they dithered and dodged and shirked their democratic duties. In backing the Letwin amendment, which says Boris's Brexit deal cannot be approved until implementing legislation has been passed, MPs signalled their desire to continue frustrating Brexit, and to continue using parliament as a weapon against the people's will.

This parliament is not simply out of touch with public sentiment – something we already knew from the fact that 70 per cent of MPs, and a staggering 95 per cent of Labour MPs, voted Remain, while 52 per cent of the electorate voted Leave. No, it feels increasingly *illegitimate*, too. It lacks all political and moral authority. It is a zombie parliament. It has no real democratic mandate to govern. 'But we voted for these MPs just two years ago!', Remainer apologists for the zombie parliament will cry. True, but 80 per cent of those MPs were elected on manifestos that promised to take the UK fully out of the [EU](#). And vast numbers of them are now renegeing on those manifestos. They are tearing apart their contract with voters and in the process obliterating their own right to govern. We have a Remainer parliament defying the wishes of a Brexit electorate. Numerous parliamentary devices have been deployed to the end of frustrating the people's will. From the speaker John Bercow's cynical manipulation of parliamentary processes to sideline the enactment of Brexit and boost the cause of Remain, to the anti-democratic Benn Bill that has now come into force and legally cajoled [Boris](#) to ask the EU for another extension, parliamentarians are using their power and their mechanisms not to enact the will of people, but to fetter it and block it. This is why they get so angry if anyone says the key divide in Britain today is between parliament and the people – because they know it's true. And somewhere deep in the recesses of their anaemic moral consciences, that truth still stings. 'Super Saturday' continued this foul process of using parliamentary devices to stymie progress on Brexit. This isn't about whether you back Boris's treaty or are sceptical of it ([as spiked is](#)). The important thing is that in triggering the Benn Act and forcing an unwilling PM to plead with the EU for a further extension, our Remainer parliament has once again put off the fulfilment of the people's will. The wild cheering among the reactionary middle classes of the 'People's Vote' lobby who were gathered outside parliament as the Letwin amendment was passed made it clear to the entire nation what was happening here. This was not about giving MPs more time to pore over Boris's deal, as they ridiculously tried to convince us it was. No, it was yet another underhand Remainer assault on the people's democratic desire to break from the EU.

MPs are now doing things in parliament that they explicitly told voters in the General Election of 2017 they would not do. The two main parties promised they would not prevent the enactment of the 2016 referendum result. Candidate after candidate in the General Election said they would not seek a second referendum. Millions upon millions of people voted for them on this basis. Now, numerous MPs are betraying – yes, betraying – those voters by doing the very things they said they wouldn't. They're blocking Brexit. They're campaigning for a second referendum. Many MPs are no longer even in the parties they stood for in 2017. They've switched to parties whose political positions, especially on Brexit, are entirely contrary to the outlook of their voters. This parliament, in the [words of the attorney-general Geoffrey Cox](#), is a disgrace.

And yet it stays. It cannot be moved. Why? Because, not content with frustrating the democratic will of 2016, these parliamentarians are also blocking a General Election today. The shamelessness is quite staggering. They plot ceaselessly against the people's democratic wishes and then they cushion themselves from our judgement by continually blocking a General Election. The end result is something like a parliamentary dictatorship. We now live under a parliament that is acting against the democratic interests of the people and which is preventing us from protesting about this fact at the ballot box. Such is their determination to stop Brexit that they have turned parliament into an entirely anti-democratic institution, into a tool of the elites against the public.

And then they say they are defending parliamentary sovereignty. This is a lie, and they know it is. In truth they are doing grave harm to parliamentary sovereignty. Parliamentary sovereignty derives from the will of the people. Where else could it derive from? And yet this parliament explicitly agitates against the will of the people, to the end of continuing to sacrifice this country's sovereignty and to outsource its law-making power to the foreign technocracy in Brussels. To sideline the British people and cling to the interfering technocracy of the EU is to trash the history and meaning of parliament, its sovereignty, and its relationship with the people.

In a sense, the events of the past few days – and of the past three years – have been valuable. They have made it clear that the greatest block to democracy in the UK is right here in the UK itself. It is our own out-of-touch and morally emaciated elites who represent the greatest threat to democratic life in this country. To use a radical old slogan: the enemy is at home.

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