AN OPEN LETTER TO THE LEAVERS:

WE HAVE TO TALK

**From a Young Remainer and an**

**Old Remainer.**

The Old Remainer kicks off.

Before we start, let’s try and make it clear who We are talking to. British society seems to have split into two new tribes, largely reflected in the Referendum vote to leave the EU. So we’ll call them ‘Leavers’ and ‘Remainers’, even though that’s probably not quite right. The writer David Goodhart pointed out in his book *The Road to Somewhere[[1]](#footnote-1)* that these terms are really the wrong way around, because typical Remainers are those who actually left their childhood communities and now feel comfortable anywhere. So Goodhart calls them ‘Anywheres’. More cruelly, Teresa May called them ‘citizens of nowhere’. In contrast, typical Leavers are people who stayed put in their childhood communities and have a positive connection with a particular place. Goodhart calls them ‘Somewheres’.

Goodhart’s labels are apposite and attractive but a bit clumsy, so we’ll stick to Leavers and Remainers, with capital letters. But we will borrow another phrase from Goodhart: **Decent Populism**. This interests Us the most: it excludes the wild racist extremes and the Eurosceptic intellectuals.[[2]](#footnote-2) Decent populists are a large body of ordinary people who are likely to read the *Mail*, the *Express* or *The Sun*, feel that things are moving too fast, slipping out of their control, who feel ‘forgotten’ or ‘left behind’, and patronised by a sneering elite. These are the real Leavers. And yes, they really have been forgotten by the clever-clogs class that have (up to now) assumed a God-given right to run everything. Not any more!

But hang on a minute. **We** are Remainers. We too feel misunderstood and pilloried as out-of-touch snobs. By you! We don’t like it. So We’d like to take the chance to explain where we’re coming from. OK?

PS In the text that follows ‘We’ or ‘Us’ with a capital means either Us personally or Us remainers. Small-caps we is all of us.

PPS Sorry about the tight-assed Remainer language. We don’t know any better. Do persevere.

OK, we get it now. You have spoken and we are listening. You are right that We forgot you, ignored you. We did. We thought you were too stupid and ignorant to vote, and were old and dying off anyway. We thought you were the fag-end of ‘the old ways’, destined for the dustbin of history, so what was the point in paying you any attention?

How wrong We were! There are far more of you than We ever imagined, and when you were given the chance to make a real difference, you took it. You came out and voted. And you got a result. Glory be! That’s just how it’s supposed to work: democracy in action.

But now what? Are We going to give in gracefully? If it were just an ordinary general election, yes of course, but this – this is a really big deal for Us, so we’re not coming quietly. We are also entitled to our views and they make a lot of sense to Us. Maybe to you to, if you would like to listen. You are perhaps used to thinking that the Remainers, the snobs, the metropolitan elite, the comfortable sneerers, the patronising bastards, have no real principles, but are just a self-satisfied, self-certifying, self-interested club that has run off with the country’s institutions in order to line its own pockets and keep other snouts (yours!) out of the trough.

Touché! But look, it is very hard for any human being not to grasp the opportunity to take sides and denigrate members of other teams. Think football. Sneering is horrible but it’s only human nature so try to laugh at it.

We (Peter and Fred) are not sneering. We are listening, respectful, and trying to understand. We want to build bridges. You can help us understand our faults and blind spots. Thanks. But don’t forget you have a few as well, so be ready for some home truths yourselves. We share this country and we all have to try and make it work.

We are assuming that both sides have plenty in common, but We are prepared for the fact that it might not be so. Perhaps interests are too divergent and no reconciliation is possible: just political civil war to the death. But we’ll be looking out for ‘adapter-plugs’ where there is so much to share that distinctions disappear. Of this, more later but we might cite the example of the 2012 London Olympics. We all loved it, and even the Queen mucked in, although toffs on the Remain side thought it too kitschy, and toffs on the Leave side deplored the Left-Wing bias of the opening ceremony. We can all do without the toffs, can’t we? Or do we simply mean pundits? And does that include us as well?[[3]](#footnote-3)

Let’s look at a few real issues that we appear to differ on. We can explain how We see them. You might well disagree, but at least you can accept that we do have a reasonable case, that We are not being daft or mindlessly tribal.

Before we go on, We hope you don’t find the distinction between we and We too irritating. It’s just to make things clearer, a typical Remainer habit!

IMMIGRATION

This is perhaps the biggest one of all. Remainers look at the statistics and economists tell us it’s a net benefit, helps the economy, makes us all better off on average, runs the NHS, keeps the fruit and veg flowing…what’s not to like?

*This* is what not to like: *on average*. The *averag*e hides both high and low, and only too often We get the high and you get the low. So naturally We tend to think things are fine. But just look at how it really works. *Our* immigrants are urbane, cultivated and tolerant, and many of them are our dear colleagues, just like Us but with foreign accents. We all live in the nicer parts of town, to which our immigrants are a graceful ornament. In contrast *your* immigrants are uneducated, clannish and have weird, possibly deplorable, customs. They undercut your jobs and your homes and change the tenor of local life, sometimes beyond recognition. In some cases they have even forced you out to the suburbs.

Us Remainers simply don’t experience this. We just get the benefits of a wider range of shops and cuisines, and a multicultural buzz that can be left behind as We retire to the calm and safety of our smart ghettoes. And the NHS and all those foreign care-workers! We were so grateful they were there to look after granny, ever kind and diligent. Great, cheap – and somehow they don’t seem to live near Us. Can you see? We are not being deliberately mean or obtuse, We just don’t experience what you do, so to us immigration is a *positive* thing.

We should mention one thing we found puzzling in the Brexit vote. It seemed to be partly driven by a desire to reduce immigration, but leaving the EU will have no effect on *non*-EU immigrants. On the contrary, as there become fewer Poles, Germans, French and Spaniards there will be more Indians, South Africans, Nigerians and Chinese. We cannot believe that you really would prefer this, so our assumption must be that the Brexit vote was a symbolic signal to the governing elite that *all* immigration needs to be reduced. Well, We don’t like it but we cannot any longer ignore your views. Things have to be done.

**Round 1 to you.**

JOBS

Now let’s discuss **jobs**. On the whole the Remainers have done well with education, got decent jobs with prospects, settled down and sorted the kids out. Even if We lose our jobs We know how to work the system to get others, and We know how to make do while We’re looking. We have connections. We are treated respectfully at the job centre because Mr Jobsworth knows we might be mates with his boss. It is after all our system: we made it.

The things that really affect *your* jobs are partly immigrants, OK, but not as much as two other factors that affect you more than Us. **Globalisation** means that stuff is now made overseas. It’s much cheaper, and that’s why the business sector has closed the factories here and gone to China (etc.) to buy its stuff to sell to us. Of course it has, there’s no choice. But we all benefit. Blimey, what you can get for peanuts in Primark and Factory Shops and Pound Stores is absolutely astounding. The difference between Leavers and Remainers is that you have lost your job in the factory. There *are* no factories. In fact, the whole town has shut up shop, while We are laughing all the way to the bank. It does not affect our jobs because We are white collar people. We get the cream and you get the crud, but it’s not our fault – it’s the system, and yes, we all have to change it. And sorry, We really didn’t notice this was happening. Thanks for pointing it out.

Then there’s automation, which applies particularly to manual and simpler clerical jobs. Employers always try to replace people with fancy kit, and then leave society to pick up the tab. When I was a young fella, I worked in a builder’s yard with a dozen workmates, everything done by hand. Now two people with a fork-lift and a crane can do it all. It’s cheaper, and that’s good for all of us – except that *you* lose your long-term job so you can’t afford even the lower prices. And…the former labourer eventually left and went to University, got a degree etc etc, and went on to become a Remainer just as David Goodhart predicted. It’s not often remarked, but some of these significant manual jobs are taken not by immigrants, but by middle-class kids who don’t really need them. To them that hath…..

One outcome of all this is that the jobs left are not proper careers with prospects. They are short-term contracts where the employers set the terms and you can take it or leave it. It makes it hard to plan a life. It forces you into short life-bites and a kind of hope-for-the-best gambling mentality. Now surely it’s true that this kind of thing is happening all over, but it disproportionately affects the disadvantaged. We all benefit from the lower costs, but you get the anxiety and insecurity.

**Oh. Sorry we didn’t realise. Round 2 to you as well.**

ARE WE REALLY DIFFERENT?

Are you starting to get the idea? We are not mean or daft: We just experience the rapid changes of modern life in a different way, foolishly imagining it applies to everybody. And We wonder why all those ‘others’ are making such a fuss. But now you have spoken, and the penny has dropped, We need to think what the hell to do. It seems that many of us thought ‘the working class’ was simply withering away. But goodness it’s still there, as large as life clearing its throat, with intent!

We need to talk.

Well then, for a start, do we have a common language? Can we actually communicate without making each other want to throw up? Just look at the way We’re writing. Sentences, grammar, proper spelling, style, punctuation – dripping with snotty education and uptight mannes. And look, no clichés or references to popular culture. Weird!

POLITICAL CORRECTNESS

Sorry, We can’t help it. We are not looking down on you, just doing things the only way We know how. Make allowances.

Look at it the other way round: what upsets *Us*? There are simple differences of taste: the gambling, the swearing, the violence, the obsession with stuff, the toxic food. To which you might reply ‘huh, get real’. OK, perhaps these are just matters of taste, and as Jacob Rees-Mogg would say, *de gustibus non disputandum*. (Oh God, there we go again!)[[4]](#footnote-4) But much more important, We are genuinely horrified by routine racism, sexism, and homophobia. What is often called **political correctness,** We take for granted. To you it’s a club code to keep you out, but to Us it’s fundamental. Let’s explain this.

As humans we are pretty well hard-wired to be suspicious of ‘strangers’ or anyone who is not like us. That’s our biological past speaking. It makes us denigrate out-groups, so naturally we’ll bad-mouth the tribe next door and punish any deviants who don’t join in. This works in tribes and helps them survive. But---this is the point---it doesn’t work in complex industrial societies. To run a modern society you need to tolerate everyone else and have lots of complicated rules to make everything consistent. If it’s not consistent it falls apart in practice and in the law. **The Law** is fundamental. Well it is for Us.

We understand that for you perhaps, the Law is something imposed by toffs for their own benefit, and is therefore something to work around. You cherry-pick what you can get away with, and of course there are plenty of rich bastards who do the same, in spades. But you need to appreciate the role that Law plays in keeping the whole think ticking over. Without the Law it’s the wild west and gang rule, protection rackets, corruption, the Mafia. We’ve got to have it, and for better or worse we all have to obey it, most of the time anyway, or else the whole thing falls apart.

True, the law and all the regulations are complicated and formal, and that makes you nervous. You are not good at it, are you? But We are! So once again We have a built-in advantage. We are trained from early on to deal with complex formalities, so the official world is easy to manage. In contrast, you tend to live in a different sphere where most matters are local and can be dealt with through traditional customs, people you know, family connections and so on. This works OK locally, and of course We do it too in our own way, making sure that our own little Samanthas and Ruperts get the leg-up they need at the right time. But it does not work on a bigger scale for running a modern state. It’s got to scale up, and be consistent.

Consistency translates into political correctness and then ‘political correctness gone mad’. Well it looks mad to you, and there are plenty of journalists out there willing to mock it without explaining the grave underlying reasons why these things occur. You are suckers for your journalists! But then, so are We; we have the posh journalists pressing our buttons too, and trying to fire up our own primitive tribalisms, urging us to think you are all oiks and racists and thick as two short planks. They know how to feed our egos and make Us feel superior. Yes, there are unscrupulous muck-rakers on both sides.[[5]](#footnote-5)

‘Political correctness’ is about trying to keep above all this. Not giving in to Neanderthal urges. It is trying to be consistent, to be fair, inclusive and nice to everyone. What’s wrong with that?

What’s wrong with it, is that it often prevents us calling a spade a spade, and (We have to admit) that is one of your strengths. When Donald Trump refers to ‘shithole countries’ you know what he means, and you might well applaud his saying it. Straight shooting! How nice to hear someone ‘up there’ speaking plainly ‘just like us’.

But look, to Us this is terribly disturbing because the people in ‘shithole countries’ are *also* just like us. They have their pride, honour, history, customs, jokes. It is as offensive to them as the Remainer sneering of Radio 4 comedy shows to you, as offensive as being called a hillbilly, a guttersnipe or a thicko. Decent people do not do it.

We know what you are going to say next. “Are you saying we are not decent?”. Yes, you might well want to preserve the right to relax and indulge your gut feelings on the sofa and probably nothing would work if we all didn’t do this sometimes. We sneakily admire it. BUT this is an important thing for you to understand about Us: we have realised that gut instincts are often very nasty and incompatible with running a modern society. We *like* modern society and are trained to think in the contorted, uptight terms that correct for all the gut distortions, and make things work.

I know this looks weird to you. Why can’t we just call a spade a spade? Well you just can’t, not in public anyway. Spades are not spades, they just look like it at first sight. Political correctness is going beyond that first sight to something we can all share, in principle anyway. It’s a fair question to ask Us: are We suggesting you gotta change your spots? Well, maybe not, but at least accept that We have good reasons for talking and writing like this, and running the show like this. If everyone were like you it would fall to bits pretty quick. Even if we talk primitive at home and indulge our meaner sides, we must all allow the ‘public domain’ to operate in its necessary formal way. And tolerate the inevitable cockups, failures and downsides.

What to do then? If we really do need these fancy complicated rules to run things in all our interests, doesn’t it make sense to let those who can, get on with it? Like letting plumbers and doctors and airline pilots get on with it. Sounds plausible: someone’s got to do it. The only trouble is that the power has gone to our heads and We think We’re superior. We need a dose of political correctness ourselves. It’s time We stopped sneering. So thanks for going to the polling stations and kicking Us in the arse. We needed it.

**Round three: score draw.**

FOOD

We Remainers know we are looked on as the muesli-eating classes, while nanny-state busybodies try to stop other people eating proper food what they really like.

Each to her own you might say (no you wouldn’t say exactly that would you? Too PC). But look, here again it’s not just a question of snobbery or posh food, although there is an element of that. It’s a matter of **health**. Food does make a lot of difference. Some foods are good for you, but some really make you ill and feel rubbish, especially over many years. Is that obvious? Or just trendy bollocks? Check it out. Did you ever see that ITV series ‘The Food Hospital’? Patients came in with all manner of dreadful ailments, and the hospital cured them all *just by changing their diets*. Invariably the patients had been trying to live on the cheapest, tastiest foods with lots of sugar and fat and mostly highly processed.

Let’s confess that Remainers often have more money, so they can afford to buy more expensive food. *But they are not being snobby*. Well not usually. They are just trying to keep themselves alive and healthy. Of course there are hipsterish fads and hipsterish restaurants and even whole hipsterish parts of town where you cannot get ‘proper food’. But what passes as proper food these days is slowly making you ill and shortening your life. A hard one to swallow? Please, eat what you like, but you should accept that what look like faddy and snobbish diets, five a day and less sugar and fat, make long-term sense.

**Round Four: We’ll take this one – you’ve simply got it wrong.**

THE EU

Here’s another big topic, **the EU itself**. One notion you think We are being especially daft about, is giving away Britain’s precious sovereignty. Having spent a thousand years getting modern Britain together, we’re now selling it down the river – and to a bunch of foreigners!

We don’t see it this way at all. As We see it, ‘shared power’ is how we got here in the first place. Having a well-functioning modern state is all about shared power. We in Britain delegate pretty well everything – education, transport, defence, health etc etc – to enormous bureaucratic machines that provide us with efficient services. We trust the nurses, teachers and soldiers to get on with their jobs on our behalf. And---you might be amazed at this---We Remainers regard the ‘bungling Brussels bureaucrats’ in exactly the same light, as clever experts. Of course we do: they are people like Us, and we trust them to deliver in the best interests of us all. Do they, though? Well, they do manage some spectacular cock-ups (the Eurozone!) and it’s hard to decide one-size-fits-all policies for 28 countries and half a billion people, but on the whole, We think they do pretty well. Perhaps We are mistaken, and there’s plenty of argument to be had. We (We) are listening to your gripes.

But does this amount to a loss of sovereignty? The bungling bureaucrats are still subject to control by the European Parliament and members states via the Council of Ministers. They are not a power unto themselves. They are necessary cogs in a large machine. As We see it, sharing stuff with the neighbours is just a logical extension of national government, which is wildly beyond our own personal ‘sovereignty’ but which we all agree is a good idea. You get a vote every five years for the national government, and the same for local government. That is the extent of your ‘sovereignty’.

It is true that the UK is obliged to accept many EU rules as its own, and at first sight this looks like a clear loss of sovereignty, but for every eccentric straight-banana case there are a hundred that are simply about harmonisation of standards. They are simply rules that make little difference, but someone needs to make so we can move on, like the gauge of railway tracks Did you ever lose sleep over that? All that matters is that we all do the same thing.

The EU seems benign to Us. It feels cosy, friendly, neighbourly; and by a freak of history, it even speaks English! We know you don’t feel this way; that when you see that blue flag with its little stars you shudder a bit. Perhaps this is no different from supporting Milwall or Arsenal: the Other Side is alien and malign, and we have all unconsciously chosen sides.

We have to recognise though, that attitudes to the EU are not as arbitrary as supporting a football club: In the terms we are using here, Remainers are often culturally different from Leavers, so passions for and against the EU have a political edge. We know that the papers you read have fed you with a diet of EU-bashing and mockery. Who could survive such a barrage of propaganda? And on our side, We have shamefully neglected to talk the EU up. It’s always been far too easy for politicians in all parties to blame any problems on the EU, assuming it will always be there to take the knocks and carry on regardless, much like the UK government itself.

It is indeed very hard to make a sexy case for the EU. It is boring and bureaucratic, but that’s the whole point. Modern societies *need* boring bureaucratic machines to keep everything humming so we citizens can get up to all our crazy antics. Let Us confess briefly that We, personally, are persuaded by the sentiment expressed on all sides at the end of the second world war: Never Again! The EU, We feel, has grown out of the determination that from now on we will not fight, but cooperate. We enjoy the sense of solidarity this engenders, that we are all Europeans. But yes, We accept this is just our perspective, one that you do not share.

Here’s another thing that perhaps troubles you about the EU: are we being taken for suckers? We’ve often heard it said that Britain pays oodles into the EU coffers and then obeys the rule, while other countries bend the rules to get more benefits. It might well be partly true, but then that’s another funny thing about Us Remainers. We do believe in rules and following the rules, and we have a touching faith that in the long run it’s for the best. Is this daft? Perhaps, but if we British don’t set an example, it’s a race to the bottom. And it means that others trust us. This is *our* sovereignty: that we are good people in a good country, that pays its way, helps others and obeys the rules.

This might seem sentimental guff to you, but the alternative is, well, Berlusconi. At least accept that Our views are not just idiot conformism or being a bunch of suckers taken for a ride by cunning foreigners. Oh, that might have been a mistake…you probably *like* Mr Berlusconi, and Donal Trump for that matter.

**Round 5: Perhaps another score draw.** We might agree that the EU is riddled with ‘fraud, corruption and incompetence’ and for you that’s the end of the story, but for us there’s enough else to make us accept the downsides. And do you *really* think British institutions and bureaucrats are that much better?

WHAT NOW THEN?

Tricky.

You have demonstrated you can outvote us. We cannot get our Cunning Plans through without your help. You might not like Our cunning plans, but do you really know what *you* want? Whatever it is, you’ll probably need Our help to deliver it, because We know how the system works. Is it immigration? Jobs? Let’s have a quick look.

Leaving the EU probably implies non-European immigrants, over which the UK already has control, but has not exercised it much. Should it? Although it sets Our teeth on edge, we’ll have to discuss it. You won that round. Top of the agenda might be much greater investment in areas with high levels of immigration, and extra benefits (of various kinds) for longer-term residents.

What about jobs? We have already noticed that your jobs are disappearing through globalisation and automation, and to some extent immigration. But the old manufacturing jobs are not coming back. Even if the immigrants disappear the jobs left will be largely in the caring professions, the NHS, and agriculture. OK? If this is what you want, you could unionise and campaign for improved wages and productivity. It would certainly help some. But if not, what can be done?

Here’s an idea that could work, but you will hate: a low-income, low-expenditure lifestyle. Simplify life, spend carefully, more swapping and bartering, bulk buying, DIY, mutual aid in the local economy, job-sharing, voluntary work for people who really need help, less work and more leisure.

“What? That’s all hippie stuff! No thanks.”

OK then. Would it be cheeky to suggest that what you really want is loadsamoney so you can have all the stuff you see on the telly – cars, sofas, holidays, gadgets? Close? At the moment, it seems that a gambling strategy is favoured. It’s my impression that Remainers don’t gamble much, except perhaps on horses sometimes. Leavers gamble more, and use the National Lottery to express their aspirations. A few win big, and it gives everyone hope that their time will come. If this generates widespread satisfaction, it’s a cheap way to do it, and who are We to argue?

As an aside – a typical example of Remainer thinking -- I might remark that in this case it’s *you* who are being taken for suckers. The £7 billion a year you spend on the Lottery is really a voluntary tax, which We get to spend on all our lovely art, heritage and environment projects. Thanks!

Sorry, where were we? What about taxing you less? Probably plenty of Remainers would back wealth and income distribution, and it would help a bit. But there is not enough money or productivity in the whole system for everyone to live like the rich people you see on the telly. And anyway, at the moment we don’t divvy it all up, we let it rip, and some people get very rich and most of us are left with the crumbs. It’s partly a matter of luck so we’re back to gambling again.

But it’s not all a matter of luck. We all have choices as people and households, occasionally communities. What Remainers do is *get on with it*. If they’ve got jobs they save (perhaps for sofas). If they haven’t got jobs they spend their time improving the house, gardening, repairing, finding ways to save, and building up credit with friends, neighbours and relatives. They conserve their resources. They reduce their expenditure. They don’t go on holiday. They make do and mend. Their hope of something better will never win them the jackpot, but it’s much more likely to deliver noticeable improvement.

Probably the most realistic policy is the so-called Citizen’s Income or CI, which everybody gets, now being trialled in Finland. It would be like having a state pension, but early, and no questions asked. It would give you security, but not the luxurious lifestyle you might be dreaming of. The CI might be the best we can do, collectively, as we enter an era of more automation and globalisation.

That was bad news on the economic front. What about the social side of things? There might be even worse news here. Social scientists are starting to understand that the top 20% of income earners and wealth holders – the metropolitan elite – have become a self-contained, self-propagating minority that has found invisible ways to maintain its privileges and prevent entry by others. It is becoming a new hereditary aristocracy. There is social mobility, but only within the lower 80%. It’s very difficult to break into the top 20%.[[6]](#footnote-6)

These top people are nearly all Remainers, and the Leavers, along with less-wealthy Remainer allies, have got to exert their voting power intelligently to restrain them. And they have, at last. We *all* need to think how to solve this growing menace of the self-propagating elite.

**We should probably stop here. Is there anyone out there who would care to join a fight?**

**THE YOUNG REMAINER REMARKS AS FOLLOWS**

Fred says to Peter: Like many middle class Remainers, especially in university circles, you probably don’t know many actual Leavers. You seem to be following various stereotypes about The Working Class. You should not imagine that all Leavers are council-house estate dwellers; many are prosperous and have their own businesses.

A good example I came across is a couple who run an employment agency for East Europeans somewhere on the south coast. Their flourishing business is entirely dependent on a generous flow of workers from Eastern Europe; it would be ruined by Brexit, yet they are staunch Leavers. It just goes with certain groups, and is not particularly a Class thing, although you might say Leave sentiments are stronger in the less-educated lower-middle class.

Just as we encounter ‘thoughtless Leavers’, so too there are ‘thoughtless Remainers’. What about Us for example? We don’t need to think about it, the answer’s obvious. Why? How did this come about? Think about it. ‘Remain’ arguments seem plausible and just common sense. ‘Leave’ arguments seem stupid and arbitrary. Are We actually victims of our own echo-chamber?

It seems to be largely a social and media thing. The media are very polarised, and few try to give a ‘balanced’ picture. We all believe what we read. Which media people follow are probably the best predictor of their inclination re the EU, and it can drive them to extreme views. Granny’s a good example. She always read the *Mail*, and in her 90s, if taken out for a ride she would always express surprise that there was so much pristine countryside. When pressed, she would say that somehow, she expected the country would be covered with immigrants. Of course, this is ludicrous, but you can see that for many unreflective people, the kinds of metaphors commonly used in the tabloid press could be taken literally and converted into a nightmare vision. It must have been quite common, would turn into unquestionable certainties, and become a badge of belonging to a particular community. It would never change.

But are we not ourselves in the same boat? We live in a thoughtlessly Remain world. We have to work really hard to encounter Leave sentiments, and when we do they are immediately dismissed as totally wrongheaded.

Having said this, there is clearly some asymmetry in the Remain and Leave propaganda. It is easy to create a bogeyman of the EU – indeed bogeymen of all kinds. It is much harder to find a dramatic trope to defend the EU. It’s just the default case, the air we breathe. And I think there are probably more reflective and informed Remainers than Leavers.

It is certainly not a question of income. There are many technically ‘poor’ Remainers that we might call Bohemians, generally educated and low-income by choice. Can there be Bohemian Leavers? There must be – an interesting demographic to ferret out, but I never met any.

What would it take to make us change? Or at least to become ‘economic leavers’? I’m a musician, used to working certain hours under certain conditions for certain rates of pay. But look, what if my clients and employers can get Polish musicians, better than me, to work longer hours under worse conditions for lower pay? I’d be forced to up my game, experience a serious drop in my quality of life, or leave the industry. Wouldn’t I vote to keep those bastards out? This is what has happened to many British workers. You can’t blame them!

[The Old Remainer strokes his beard].

*Ach du liebe Gott*. Of course you are dead right, I have got caught in a daft stereotype imagining that Leavers all have Blue Collar culture. The simple existence of Granny should have put me right. So lots of it was mis-aimed. Damn and blast. But it will allow Leavers a due measure of contempt for yet another Patronising Bastard – not, I fear, that any are likely to read it.

Yes, We are fundamentalists aren’t We? At least you, Fred, have found a hypothetical situation that might make you vote Leave. I can’t really think of anything. This is terrible.

Perhaps in the end it is a kind of tribal thing. In the memorable words of Aron Banks, the Referendum was a delicious moment of “Fuck You!”. If there is another referendum and it went the other way, millions of people would feel that the only political victory they ever truly savoured, had been rudely snatched away from them, not by some neutral Act of God, but by those sneering bastards they had so recently, and so satisfyingly, discomfited.

So what about this idea then? Why don’t we have a Norway-style arrangement that is sometimes called BRINO – Brexit In Name Only – so that everyone can have a slice of what they really want? The UK remains in all the systems, frictionless trade and movement, Irish border fine, we can continue to staff the NHS and the agricultural industry, but the UK has no place at the table to decide policies. This is vilified as a ‘Vassal State’ by hard-line Leavers, but in practice the UK will have ways of making its preferences known and will not be without any influence at all. Like Norway in fact.

The main thing is *the UK will not be a member of the EU*, so ‘tribal’ Leavers can feel they’ve won the Cup. Tribal Remainers like me will get all the perks we like so much, but without much influence on moulding them. I can live with that, don’t need the badge or the flag.

It’s sort of stupid: we could have had a better deal by Staying In, but hell this is democracy and the Leavers need to leave a mark of their potential power tattooed on Our faces, so that We never forget.

**So, Leavers, you win The Cup! But We win the League. How’s that?**

1. David Goodhart, *The Road to Somewhere: The New Tribes Shaping British Politics.* Penguin 2017. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Of these there many. It is not merely a movement of the uneducated. My favourite is Sir Roger Scruton, see his *Where We Are: The State of Britain Now*, Bloomsbury 2018. This is partisan, but not *ad hominem*. For that, see Quentin Letts, *Patronising Bastards: How the Elites Betrayed Britain*, Constable, 2017. For what it’s worth I might be considered a Patronising Bastard myself: read on! [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. In the USA, the best ‘adapter-plug’ I have found is the work of the painter Normal Rockwell (1893-1977). Rockwell’s work was often denigrated as kitschy and cliché’d by bien-pensant taste, and thought to be intrinsically conservative. Yet he captured the high ideals and finest aspects of traditional American culture now being defended by liberals. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. It means ‘There’s no arguing about taste’ [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. If you want to see all this in print, pick up a copy of *The New European*. Good Sudokus though. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. There is a terrifying book by Richard Reeves, *Dream Hoarders: How the American Upper Middle Class is Leaving Everyone Else in the Dust, Why That is a Problem, and What to Do About it.* Brookings Institution, 2016. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)