

Taking back control should not mean abandoning an indep..

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I was not surprised by the resignation of Sir Ivan Rogers, the UK's ambassador to the EU, yesterday. Who in their right minds would want to be around for the shambles to come? And who would want to take the insults from the right wing press, however well you did your job, thankless as it might be?

I was, however, shocked by the reaction of Nigel Farage and the suggestion that many Tories thought that this was a late Christmas present. Farage was explicit: he felt Sir Ivan was the first of many civil servants who had to go to make Brexit possible. The implication is obvious, and I suspect shared across Brexit sentiment, and is that an independent, expert and qualified civil service is now an impediment to a government dedicated to defy all logic and leave the EU, whatever the cost. As [the Guardian noted yesterday](#):

Signs continue to abound that British Eurosceptics still inhabit an entirely different planet, let alone continent, from everyone else in 2017.

Worse, they inhabit a place outside the tradition which has underpinned the UK's democracy for much more than a century. [Sir Ivan's resignation letter](#) (which I had not seen when I wrote everything to this point) makes clear that is his concern:

For my part, I hope that in my day-to-day dealings with you I have demonstrated the values which I have always espoused as a public servant. I hope you will continue to challenge ill-founded arguments and muddled thinking and that you will never be afraid to speak the truth to those in power. I hope that you will support each other in those difficult moments where you have to deliver messages that are disagreeable to those who need to hear them. I hope that you will continue to be interested in the views of others, even where you disagree with them, and in understanding why others act and think in the way that they do. I hope that you will always provide the best advice and counsel you can to the politicians that our people have elected, and be proud of the essential role we play in the service of a great democracy.

Such public servants are, of course, experts. Some will undoubtedly have opinions I

would not agree with. Some will be no good. Others will be excellent. What they are is indispensable. In business it is normal for employees to follow their bosses' line, even when they can see it mistaken. This is the way in which disasters like RBS happen. In the civil service that has not been the case. Opinion has been offered instead. Counter arguments have had to be considered. It's not always worked, of course, but it's vastly better than the private sector 'yes man' alternative. And now it is clear that the desire is to sweep this away and we will all pay the price for that. It's as if taking back control means abandoning everything of merit.

2017 has not started well. And I am more worried now.