

# In the surreal world of current politics ignoring the f...

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I've known Jolyon Maugham for a while. We worked together on tax policy before the 2015 general election. The debate on domicile that was one of the rare successes for Ed Miliband in that election was something that we pretty much created between us. Jolyon was relatively unknown back then. He isn't now, as he is at the heart of the Remain campaign

Jo has an article in the [Guardian](#) overnight in which he says:

*We now know the Electoral Commission [believes that Vote Leave](#), the “official” leave campaign, broke the law. This comes in the wake of its conclusion that Arron Banks’s Leave EU [broke the law](#).*

I am not going to reiterate all Jolyon's arguments as he ably makes them himself. Suffice to say, he points out that it is now known that the Leave campaign set out to abuse the law on referendum spending; it did so and it won the referendum. Now criminal prosecutions may follow. But the referendum result stands. Bizarrely, the result of the referendum was not binding according to parliament and so it cannot be legally over-turned because it has no legal force.

Of course, it should be overturned. As Jolyon notes:

*Our own courts [have said](#): “In elections, as in sport, those who win by cheating have not properly won and are disqualified.” The rules that parliament decreed to ensure the referendum was not captured by oligarchs will have been breached.*

The argument of politicians - even Labour politicians, whose job it is to provide effective Opposition - is that this is all well and good, but ‘the people have spoken’. As a result, they say, the referendum cannot be ignored. If it is, they argue, then democracy will be undermined.

I am old enough now to have heard a great deal of nonsense during my lifetime. This argument takes some beating when appraised against that experience.

First, the result was secured by cheating. That is an affront to democracy.

Second, democracy is all about changing minds.

And third, no one is saying that the result should be laid aside. Because the reality is that what has happened cannot be undone. Come what may, the UK has tried to leave the EU and untold harm has already been done as a result. And no one is saying it should not even complete that process now. All that anyone, Jolyon included, is arguing is that there should now be another referendum so that now that people know they were cheated upon; know that their jobs and living standards are at risk; know that peace in Northern Ireland is at risk and know that the UK itself is at risk, they can have another say. That's what democracy should demand.

Unless you're a Tory or Labour MP, of course, when democracy apparently demands that you abandon the principles of Burke, you suspend your judgment, you vote for something that you know will harm the UK and your constituents, and you tell them that you're doing so because that's what they want, even though you don't know that.

In the surreal world of the absurd that now passes for politics this is as surreal as it gets. At least, until things get worse.