Can anyone outside the Tory elite explain what they wan...

Published: January 13, 2026, 8:08 am

I am aware that this blog post treads on contentious ground. But I think it only fair to say that I could not answer European's questions as to what Brexiters want, put to me last week.

I can answer why we got Brexit. Austerity and the attitudes of indifference that led to it can answer almost all aspects of that question in some way or other. If an elite does not care eventually the majority find a way to bite back. And they did. So I am not saying I do not understand why a majority voted as they did. I think I do. I am instead saying I do not know what Leavers want now.

It's clear that the government wants to pursue radical de-regulation on everything from worker to environmental, social and financial protections. Their goal is Singapore-on-Thames where they can show contempt for international norms and standards on every imaginable issue, and depart from previously hallowed ground on matters such as the NHS. Their desired outcome is a country with a more powerful and relatively richer elite, and they are indifferent as to whether that reduces the income of all else in the country. They, at least, can be understood.

But why do so many still support Leave when it is so apparent that this agenda is so harmful to them? And I mean harmful in the sense of very obviously imposing restrictions on their well-being? What is the trade off? Where is the gain? What advantage does the pursuit of English nationalism provide that makes it worthwhile having despite it making most worse off within the country, and by international comparison?

I know I am told, time and again, that I must seek to understand the Leaver. And I have tried. And no Leaver I have met has ever come close to being able to answer the simple question 'how will your life be better by leaving given that you know there are costs from doing so?' The best most do is deny the cost. But they still can't explain the gain.

I could not help those who asked me this question last week.

Does anyone really know?