

# Why do so many former senior civil servants want to stay in the EU?

The uniform voting of former senior civil servants in the Lords against Brexit mirrors the work of many interest groups and Remain supporters to seek to recreate our membership of the EU as we leave. The former civil service sees every change or withdrawal from an EU body or system as a problem, and they seek as an answer keeping it by proxy or opting back into it. This is not what we voted for. Ministers supervising work on Brexit need to push back harder on any advice they are getting which reflects the Lords critique of Brexit. The civil service of course has a duty to tell Ministers of any pressing problems, but also a duty to help Ministers push through good answers to those issues that result in implementing the agreed policy of Brexit. Neither side in the referendum will be happy if we recreate an EU membership by proxy from outside.

I have spent many years wondering why so many officials have been so keen on this institution. I concluded that they like its unique combination for them of unaccountable power and dispersal of responsibility. Officials do much of the detailed work with their opposite numbers in 27 other countries on the agenda, laws and programmes of the EU. UK Ministers have to work hard to have any influence on the process, and many don't bother, just accepting what the EU throws up as something they cannot control. EU laws and policies can be used by officials to block things elected Ministers want to do.

Even better the EU system means no-one is to blame. If you don't like one of their laws its origins are lost amongst the government of 28 states and the Commission. Try pushing for amendment or repeal and see how undemocratic it is. The legislative process is formally conducted around the Council of Ministers table without outside observers or press present, and the detailed and often effective legislative process is undertaken by Commission officials often in conjunction with big business and powerful lobby groups also without proper transparency.

We voted to leave this system because people cannot sack those responsible for its actions as you can the Ministers of a national government. A leave deal which doesn't understand this is a bad deal and should not be accepted.