

## **If Remain had won...**

Would I have expected us to stay in Europe if my side had won 52% rather than 48%? By golly, I would. 'We have won', I would have felt. Job done. Would I have cared or spared a thought for the losing side? I might have had a moment's compassion, but not much. Mostly I would have felt, 'it was a fair scrap – and we won it on the night.' Now let's get on with it.

So how can I expect the Leavers to pause to consider their victory in a different light – when I would hardly have done so myself? The answer is that I can't. Only the winners themselves can choose to act in a magnanimous or compassionate manner. Only the winners can, perhaps in the light of things that come to pass in the next months, review their victory and decide to implement or revoke it.

Could that come to pass? Will they do it? Somehow I doubt it, because they were voting for the decline of their communities and loss of their solidarity to come to an end. They opted for Englishness to be restored, for immigration to be suspended or reduced, for a return to monoculturalism.

Unfortunately, that monoculture has been unraveling for nearly half a century, sometimes thrust upon us by events and interpretations in the press and the House, but mostly by ourselves as ambitious working class parents fought for their sons and daughters to go to University, to have a chance of working at something other than manual labour, whether skilled or unskilled.

As a child of such circumstances myself, once at University I began to look down upon my parents who had endured hardship that I might get my chance. I was fond of them sure, I loved them even, but I did not really respect their culture or conversation. And I drifted away from them, step by step. And came to look down upon them from my new 'heights'.

I was lucky – and ungrateful to my shame – but many families travelled different roads where sons and daughters found themselves following in mum or dad's footsteps, working side by side with their relatives and schoolfriends. Where those footsteps led to traditional industries, demonization from the 1970's onwards was to discredit the bonds or unions that provided a collective voice to bargain for a better share for those workers in their towns, mines and factories bonded by labouring side-by-side and speaking out for each other.

Forty years later we ended up with people just in work, where JOB means Just Over Broke and millions who have seen their own prosperity decline dramatically in comparison with others. And that is the key measure, the one that matters. Well-being is not an absolute quality or quantity. It is a comparative measure of how we are doing compared to others. And if you were on the wrong side of that comparison, you voted out.

So we must endure for a time the possibility that this change in national circumstances will

engender a new solidarity, hopefully one more compassionate and thoughtful than the jingoistic 'xxxK you EU, I voted out!' we have heard in the past week.

Will it happen? The signs are not good, I cannot see Michael Gove or Boris Johnson reaching out to the blighted highstreets of Hull or Hartlepool or any of their inhabitants can you? I'm not sure these high-minded Tories have any connection with the less well-off nor any mission to better their lot.

And if those who won realize that their victory was Pyrrhic, that it has wreaked terrible consequences upon them, creating a situation even worse than when Brexit started, what will they do?

It is unlikely they will turn to a rejuvenated left - that left has been decimated by what has been called, rightly I think, the building of a little conservative party within the Labour movement (Blair & Co). I fear that in their understandable rage and disappointment they will be marshaled by shrill, more violent voices who will turn their bitter disappointment into hatred. And may even give them uniforms to wear to rebrand their solidarity.

We have already seen the precursors of it this week in attacks upon immigrants, including children.

I fear for my country.