

29th January 2018

Dear Mr Rees-Mogg,

I have it on good authority that a pupil at a local school last week took the opportunity to engage with you where I have so humiliatingly failed.

The school's Twitter feed reported, "We welcomed Jacob Rees-Mogg to school last week as part of our Careers Week. He led a fantastic debate with students and answered questions about his career as a politician!" Trivial? Not at all!

I understand that the enthusiastic youngster asked the following question: "*Do you consider that Edmund Burke was wrong in his address to the electors of Bristol in 1774?*" Your response, I am told, was vouchsafed in the negative. Then, I'm told, you said that you thought you knew what the young stalwart's next question was going to be ... Have you been secretly reading my emails to you, Mr Rees-Mogg? Well *have* you?

I am going to assume that you have and that you do; and that, unless you challenge my version of events, we can take my version of the exchange as agreed. I also conclude, on the grounds of your answer to your young communicant, that you agree with the representative principle Burke set out in 1774. So far, so good. But the answer simply begs for a follow-up question, which it would appear that you dodged in that school last week.

So I now refer you again to my email to you of 25th November 2017 in which I challenged as disingenuous and evasive your reply to a constituent who had put to you both the questions I've been asking since last June. I'm sure you have it on file but here it is again. Your constituent had asked you my two questions:

1. *Do you consider that Edmund Burke was wrong in his address to the electors of Bristol in 1774?*
2. *If so, with what principle would you replace that which he set out in it?*

Here is your reply:

Dear _____,

Thank you for your email regarding the role of an MP.

I do agree with Edmund Burke that "Parliament should be the servant, not the master of the people" and I consider myself a servant of my constituents. This ties in with Burke's other comment that "Your representative owes you, not his industry only, but his judgment; and he betrays instead of serving you if he sacrifices it to your opinion."

Thus the role of an MP is to work hard for his constituents and offer his judgment to them clearly. That is why I am forthright about my views which allows the electors of North east Somerset to decide whether they like them or not.

It may amuse you to know that Burke only told the electors of Bristol of his understanding of an MP's role after he had been elected and was subsequently defeated at the next election.

*With every good wish,
Jacob-Rees Mogg*

And now, having read your letter, the relevant part of my reply to you, which as usual you didn't answer:

Firstly, Mr Rees-Mogg, you seek to evade my first question with a deliberately loose use of the term “servant”. We can all agree that Parliament should serve its citizens. But as you well know, on 20th June you stated that Parliament should be the people’s servant in a very specific way: by neither opposing nor rejecting the result of last June’s advisory E.U. Referendum. That is to say, it should take the result as an instruction from the people and vote accordingly in the lobbies. Can you tell me how and why Burke would have concurred with you? I don’t think he would have, and I don’t think you can. Please will you address this?

Secondly, you also try to muddy waters in the matter of an MP’s judgement. Of course MPs should make clear to their constituents what their judgements are. But – and again, as you well know – that’s not the point here. *“Your representative owes you, not his industry only, but his judgment; **and he betrays instead of serving you if he sacrifices it to your opinion.**”* Parliament is not – or perhaps I should say not just – a talking shop; nor is an MP’s relationship with his or her constituents a mere conversation. MPs vote and, since Parliament is our nation’s sovereign body, those votes matter because they express and employ that sovereignty. You and others defended and asserted Parliament’s rights most eloquently during the Referendum campaign, although you have appeared to hold them pretty cheap ever since. What would Burke think of an MP who makes his judgement plain to his constituents but sacrifices it when he comes to vote? Very little. In fact he would consider them guilty of betrayal. Perhaps Traitors. Mutineers. Enemies of the people, even!

Yet you challenge MPs’ rights to vote with their consciences and judgement while still claiming to agree with Burke. No, Sir. Please will you address this too?

Thirdly, I’m well aware that Burke was thrown out by the Bristol electors at the next election, though neither you nor I can know whether, as you imply, it was on account of his belated and perhaps cynical admission of his intention to ignore them if his conscience dictated. He was, after all, a politician! But frankly I care little: it does nothing to advance or hinder an argument that its bearer is a charlatan or has an interest in holding it. If the case is good, it’s good. Burke’s was, and you claim to agree with it. You just happen to be a charlatan whose case is bad, and since I can’t see anything that improves it in your letter to your constituent, I again ask you to address my two questions again.

Fourthly, that Burke’s electors threw him out indicates precisely where the people’s instruction should be issued and must be accepted. No doubt Burke didn’t like the result and thought they were wrong; but he accepted it. For it is in Parliamentary elections held under our system of representative democracy where electors make their reckoning and following which their will is unquestioned. Their decision to kick Burke out was not advisory; it was mandatory so he had to pack his bags. That’s just the point: if we don’t like our MP – if we disagree with the exercise of their conscience and judgement in Parliament – we have the right to throw him or her out. Thus our system allows for peaceful change and peaceful reconsideration over time and under rules which both sides – the people and the politician – agree to accept.

How sad, therefore, that you and others portray an advisory referendum which permits no future change as an “instruction” while traducing the principle of representative democracy by claiming that MPs have no right to vote with their judgement and consciences!

Then to play with words in an attempt to suggest that Burke would somehow have agreed with you is downright dishonest. I hope your Redeemer will one day give you the attention you deserve.

In short, I repeat that I don't think you *can* reconcile your belief in Burke's representative principle with your demand last June that our sovereign Parliament roll over and take us out of the European Union because of the result of the referendum of 23rd June 2016. Your case is further weakened – as I've also noted in more than one unanswered email to you – by your personal statement that your religious conscience overrides the will of your electors when deciding how to vote in the House of Commons. Pure Burke: I applaud you!

BUT: if Burke's principle applies to you, how can you claim it doesn't for that majority of MPs who are keen – as a matter of THEIR consciences – to remain in the European Union?

Will you now at long last come clean with an answer – and a straight one this time, please?

4th February 2018

Good evening, Mr Rees-Mogg!

What a week! You. Steve Baker. Even Liam Fox was allowed within half a day's march of a microphone. It's as if the Nazi leadership had decided that by April 1945 there was only one way out of the bunker and that was stand-up comedy.

Which brings me seamlessly to the House of Commons. You are very clever in whom you select as your patsies. I blame myself: I shouldn't have told you that Steve Baker isn't all that bright. (I should know: he's my MP, and among other things he seems to think that all Muslims drive taxis.) I suppose I just naturally assumed that you didn't associate with people whose name betrays origins in the manual trades, and that if your nanny didn't – or, worse, doesn't – tell you that regularly then she was – or, worse, is – from Rumania or somewhere but you're not letting on. Anyway, Steve Baker can't even find his way to High Wycombe church at 2pm on a sunny Sunday afternoon with the bells ringing and the tower peering splendidly over a bright, beautiful sea of EU members' flags – let alone the words to reply to my regular invitation to come and debate the nation's future with me and my mates. That said, you should still watch Baker more carefully than you do: he's the kind of guy who flies the Union Flag upside down and, when challenged, claims that it's because the nation is in peril. (A neat response and for feeble souls unanswerable; but you know as well as I that, like most of them, he probably disinterred the convention from the Britain First website.) I'd steer well clear if I were you. Of both Baker and Britain First – who appear to be setting themselves up as your very own *Sturmabteilung*, whether you want them to or not.

But I digress. I just watched last week's Commons footage of Baker putting his foot so deep in his mouth that it came out the other end. Your alleging – without supporting evidence – that the civil service fabricated the case that leaving the European Union would be disastrous is just what Parliament's for, I suppose. It doesn't seem to be of much other use at the moment. But one has to ask, even if the British Civil Service were as sly and corrupt as you say – and you should perceive such misdemeanours better than most – why should they go to the trouble of making up evidence when it's all around them? Planting your immaculately seeded question in

such a wombat as Steve Baker must be like stealing sweets from children. You looked like Fotherington-Thomas wasting all your foie-gras on that Aylesbury duck when a slice of Slimcea and marge would have done nicely, but BOY was it worth it: you haven't been off the airwaves for days!

Mind you, having to feign imperturbability while Baker swallowed it whole must have tested even your celebrated *sang-congelé*, though jumping up and down is probably not your thing. It certainly got David Davis, though: what a wince, Mr Rees-Mogg! For that wonderful, too brief, unchoreographed second he looked like he'd just staggered in from last night's orgy and crashed arse-first onto the sofa only suddenly to remember where he'd left his gerbils. That man could wince for England. And no doubt will over the coming months. As shall we all. You, I fear, most especially, Mr Rees-Mogg!

Northcote-Trevelyan, is it? Do you REALLY think that Baker even knows what that is, let alone sees any more value in an independent and neutral civil service than you do in a well-educated and discerning electorate? Steve Baker doesn't know his Northcote-Trevelyan any more than he knows his Burke. (I can say that because, being less savvy than you, he was also dumb enough to enter into a correspondence that proves it.) But give the poor man a break. For a start, unlike you he wasn't even born in 1854 and he MOST certainly isn't related to him. And as for Northcote-Trevelyan, who outside of Stoke on Trent or Britain First trusts people with double-barrelled names these days? I know I don't – but I never have. For a start, thanks to the divorce rate among the working classes most are footballers and even richer than you. Ruben [sic] Loftus-Cheek, Ainsley Maitland-Niles and Obi Wan-Kenobi make you sound like one of us, for God's sake, and the Tawk-Spawt classes have swallowed it hook, line and sweeper. Mr Northcote-Trevelyan must be spinning in his grave.

You're not, of course. One of us, I mean; you're not yet in your grave and I'm certain you won't be for many centuries to come, and that you would never contemplate anything so active as to spin in it. I know you want to be. One of us, I mean, not in your grave. Yet. But you're not one of us, even if those you otherwise despise have become convinced that you are. You're a fake. We don't all see it yet. But we will. Hopefully before it comes to civil war. And then you'll be lonely again – and with only the lonely and the long, ungrateful dead for well-deserved company. Come to think of it, very soon the grave may seem an unattainable blessing to you.

These are strange times, Mr Mogg; very strange, though not unprecedented: the judiciary are “enemies of the People”; those MPs who vote with their consciences are “traitors”; the civil service is “unpatriotic”; and parliament is there simply to rubber-stamp “the will of the People” ... I have YOUR word for that.

Very strange times – and so worrying that a traditionalist like you should surely question not foment the dominant mood.

Perhaps it is still not too late for you to act in accordance with the self-image you advertise by answering the two simple questions that I asked you last June, when I – and even you – were so much younger than today:

1. *Do you consider that Edmund Burke was wrong in his address to the electors of Bristol in 1774?*
2. *If so, with what principle would you replace that which he set out in it?*

Yours, Peter Roberts