



Scrap the House of Lords

by Simon Belt

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The House of Lords has once again declared itself at odds with the process of democracy and seeking to overturn and thwart the will of the people who voted by a majority of 52% to 48% in favour of leaving the EU. The scrapping of the House of Lords is overdue and needs to be discussed openly as a course of action by all sides in favour of strengthening the democratic process in the UK. So why isn't it?

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I guess we're experiencing one of the oddest moments in politics for living memory. The toffs and more recently 'better than you' chamber is a historical hangover from the days of Lords and Ladies and heredity honours. It should have been dispatched to the history books a long time ago, but recently it seems to have encountered a new lease of life as politics becomes more managerial, and the electorate are pushed further from the democratic process by the middle class 'better than you' types. Whatever you think of politicians, surely it's better to be able to elect the ones you want rather than have to have the ones foisted on us.

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The vote by the House of Lords was on an amendment to the EU Withdrawal Bill giving MPs the power to stop the UK from leaving without a deal, or to make Theresa May return to negotiations. This is clearly an attempt to thwart the capacity of the government to fulfil the electorate's desire to leave the EU. Remainers say the move represents democracy by making parliament sovereign rather than ministers, but this downplays the fact that parliament didn't feel able to make the decision on EU membership as the country seemed at odds as their own personal views on the matter. Indeed, the electorate voted to leave the EU and so it's now up to the government to deliver on that. If that means leaving the EU without a trade deal then so be it. The unelected House of Lords should not act over the heads of the electorate and thwart their will in this way.

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That there is a muted political response to the actions of the House of Lords indicates how little respect for the democratic process there is with political commentators and parties alike. For the House of Lords to try and use Parliament to frustrate the will of the people being acted upon is a scandal and profoundly dangerous approach for the political institutions of this country. The vote to leave the EU was above all else a vote for politics and political institutions to be accountable and for a stop to be put on the trend to sideline the electorate from discussing their own future and those desires to be acted upon. The House of Lords has snubbed the electorate at the very moment the electorate have demanded a say.

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It is time to scrap the House of Lords forthwith, but how exactly can that be achieved when the institutions and representatives of the democratic process seem to be in league with gutting those institutions of any democratic content? The leader of the opposition, Jeremy Corbyn, actually agrees with what the House of Lords has just done, so where will the advocates of the people being sovereign come from if not the old left?