

Double standards – no democracy on EU matters

Most people in the UK currently pay for and take instructions from at least three or four governments – EU, UK, County, District or Unitary Council. Many also have Parish Councils.

One of the reasons people voted to get rid of one of the layers of government is that we have too many competing layers, seeking more money and imposing more rules on us than are needed. Sometimes the competing layers seek to achieve different things or impose contradictory rules and requirements. Defra, the Agriculture Department, often lost cases in the ECJ because they found it impossible to implement EU policy in a way which did meet with the satisfaction of the European Court. They were trying to comply!

One of the odd things about UK Opposition politicians and the media that feeds off them was the complete absence of any informed opposition to the EU government whenever the Conservatives were in office. All the government had to do was to claim some law, payment or decision had come from Brussels, and the Opposition parties backed off. They either acquiesced in not even debating it, or they went through perfunctory motions of asking a few polite questions and then voted with the government or abstained so the measure could pass. Bill Cash, aided by a few good Labour MPs who did wish to probe and question, led his European Scrutiny Committee to require the important issues to be debated in the Commons chamber itself. These debates were usually peopled by a stalwart group of Eurosceptics pointing out the problems or undesirable features to a disinterested House. Government Ministers whichever side was in office always sought to make the debates low profile and could avoid answering any difficult question, safe in the knowledge that there was always a front bench consensus so they would win easily any vote we forced. The media rarely covered them, on the grounds that government and the official opposition both supported whatever measure it was.

This lack of democracy on EU matters allowed Ministers to push through a vast library of new laws and controls, and large amounts of public spending with effectively no democratic check or balance. Whole areas of government, from fishing and farming, through the environment, to trade, energy and business received this treatment. The EU was brilliant at extending the *acquis* by increasing the occupied field -their language for the process of establishing their dominance in area after area. Once the EU had legislated on a subject, the UK Parliament then had to leave it alone or work round the EU laws and rules, never contradicting or modifying them in unapproved ways.

It will take years for successive Parliaments to review and modify where it wishes what was done in our name without our proper consent. Legislation and decisions are better for a probing and sometimes hostile opposition forcing Ministers to think things through and sell them to the public as necessary and desirable. EU laws were pushed through on a vast scale in a lazy way. It meant many people in our country had little idea just how much is now

controlled by the EU, and how little room for change the UK has all the time it accepts this legal framework.