Freedom is the prize

The endless and repetitious debate about the consequences of Brexit put out before and after the vote by Remain campaigners is depressingly narrow as well as wrong. They concentrate all the time on alleged short term economic losses. They have been comprehensively wrong with their gloomy short term forecasts for the aftermath of the vote, and are busy revising the timelines for the same old false forecasts. They are unwilling to engage in the much bigger issue of how we can now restore our democracy and reinstitute our freedoms.

Fortunately we do not have to choose between economic loss and freedoms gained, as Brexit can secure economic gain with the right domestic policies. We need to remember just how important our vote and voice used to be, and h0w they can again count for more when we have cast off EU lawmaking.

The history of England and the United Kingdom that came together in 1485,1603,1707 and 1800 is the history of the long march of every man and every woman to gain voice and vote. As we work to restore the sovereignty of the people and to give powers back to the UK Parliament and to devolved administrations and Councils we would be wise to remember the struggles to get us our democratic system.

Freedom from the tyranny of a monarch who ignored Parliament was the cause of the Parliamentarians in the civil war. The 1660 settlement entrenched rights and powers for the limited franchise of voters and their MPs to control a wayward King. The 1688 settlement when a new King and Queen were invited to assume the throne added to these limits on arbitrary power further. The early nineteenth century saw popular pressure to widen the franchise to all men, leading through the Reform Act to later completion of the task. In the early twentieth century the cause of female suffrage took to the political stage and finished the revolution.

These gains were hard fought and should be valued. The campaigners were right to dedicate their lives to ensuring all adults had voice and vote, that governments had to heed public opinion and needed the approval of elected representatives who could demand redress of grievance and improved conduct of public policy.

Membership of the European Union reversed part of this process. The country was signed up to a system which meant laws could be created and taxation raised and spent without the UK public and their directly elected representatives having the final say or even an effective voice. The proponents claimed that the European Parliament met some of the democratic deficit, but in truth a single country block of MEPs was never strong enough to assert the UK public will when this was at variance with the EU wishes. Nor does the European Parliament have sole or even at times any sway on things that matter. They claimed that Ministers and the Prime Minister represented us at the Councils of the EU,but they were often outvoted or persuaded not to oppose something the UK public did not want.

The UK Parliament became a bystander, watching large volumes of law passing through which Parliament could neither amend nor reject. The voting public became powerless to change any of that law. If they voted out of office one party who had allowed the EU laws and taxes to pass, they voted into office another party that would do the same and uphold the EU laws and taxes.

When we leave the EU our vote to choose an MP and a governing party will once again have more power and authority. Government will no longer be able to say we have to tax green products and domestic fuel because the EU demands, or have to organise our fishery in a way which is damaging both local fishermen and fish. We will take back control. Either the elected government then changes things as we please, or it will be replaced by another government that will.

UK governments will not always be wise or get things right. What Brexit brings us is the ability to press them to change, or to change them if they refuse. The thing I most want to change as we leave the EU is to nurture this precious flower of freedom.