

# What do they know about the nature of the beast? Only the colour of its money!

The latest group to nail their colours to the Remain camp consists of some 250 actors, writers, novelists and other celebrities who have signed a letter urging us not to leave the European Union.

Their move was co-ordinated by the Britain Stronger in Europe group, but although some of the signatories are well-known names, the content of their letter adds nothing of substance to the debate.

The Guardian may not be the favourite newspaper of most supporters of Leave, but this article by Simon Jenkins is a superb exposé of the shallowness of their arguments for remaining in the EU.

Basically, it boils down to money. Withdrawing from the EU would deprive us of access to “vital EU funding,” complain these celebrities. Mr Jenkins cynically comments, “A few lucky people have done well out of European subsidies. There is no reason for such subsidies to be decried. But that lucky people benefit from Brussels’ largesse is hardly a clincher for everyone else. It is also absurd to imply that British actors excluded from the EU would be ‘outsiders shouting from the wings’. Most do far more work in America anyway, which is outside the EU’s open borders.”

The letter also claimed that we are “more imaginative and more creative” as a result of being in the EU and “our global creative success would be severely weakened by walking away.” Rubbish, says Jenkins. The letter “merely shows what we know: that most people vote with their wallets.”

Precisely. Compared with the vital question of whether we want to be part of a federal superstate controlled from overseas or to regain the ability to determine what goes on within our borders, concerns about the nation's creativity are, to quote one very well-known pro-withdrawal campaigner, "piffling".

Furthermore, these concerns are not based on any substantive analysis. On what basis does, for instance, Tracey Emin believe that on 24th June, withdrawal from the European Union will cause her creative talent to take a nosedive that she will no longer be capable of producing masterpieces like *My bed*? (see above) Why should Brexit result in a drop in artistic talent among the next generation of young people in this country compared with earlier generations? Such assertions should be taken for the complete and utter twaddle they are, especially when another of the signatories. Emma Thompson, called her country a "cake-filled, misery-laden, grey old island". This is all about money, pure and simple.

As a post script, just as these UK actors and artists sing the praises of EU largesse for the arts, it has been recently been announced that the European Youth Orchestra is to be closed down from September of this year due to – yes, a lack of funding. The EU had funded the orchestra from its foundation in 1976 until 2014, when the EU's cultural programme *Creative Europe* took over but that support has now also been withdrawn.

Photo by Karen V Bryan

