

# Want populism? Here's how to get it.

British vote shows what happens when voters get fed up with the establishment



Ted R. Bromund

Earlier this month, Britain went to the polls in local elections. So far, it's been immune to the electoral turmoil that has affected Europe from Greece to France. But not this time. The British elections show that a simple way to create a political disaster is for the major parties to not keep their word.

Given the disappointment at how the British government has handled Brexit, you might have expected that many unhappy British voters would stay home.

You might also have expected the opposition Labour Party would gain votes at the expense of the governing Conservative Party. Yes, these were local elections, not a national one, but in Britain as elsewhere, local voting is partly a referendum on the national parties.

Both expectations were reasonable. And both were wrong. Turnout was down, but only by a percentage point. And far from

gaining seats, Labour lost them, dropping 63 local council members (out of 2,270 seats). That's far better than the Conservatives, who lost a whopping 1,269 councilors (out of 5,521 seats).

So if the two big parties lost, who won? The answer, in essence, was none of the above. The Greens took 185 seats, independent candidates took 285, and the Liberal Democrats took 676.

The Greens and the Liberal Democrats are political parties for people who don't like politics and want their consciences clean and their answers simple.

The Liberal Democrats, in particular, used to be a major force, but after a spell in government from 2010-15 forced them into making compromises, their snow-pure supporters deserted them in droves. They did better this time not because they won back the public, but because everyone else did poorly.

There was one big winner on election night in Britain: spoiled ballots. In the pleasant North Yorkshire council of Malton & Norton, Labour was in



Election counting is underway on May 3 in Brighton, England.

second place with 19 percent of the vote. The winner? Spoiled ballots, with 39 percent.

And no, spoiled ballots aren't common in Britain. In the last local election in Malton, only 1 percent of ballots were spoiled. Nor was this the result of confusing, Florida-style, butterfly ballots. Across the nation, thousands of voters wrote "None of the above. Deliver Brexit!" in the polling booth.

One party riding high in the

British polls didn't take part in the elections because it got organized too late: the Brexit Party. You have to think that most of those spoiled ballots would have gone to the Brexit Party if it'd had candidates.

This is how you get populism. I'm not happy about using that word, because in common parlance, it's just a term of abuse. But something is clearly happening across Europe: Old parties on the left and the right are los-

ing votes to new parties that are giving people what they want.

That's called democracy. There is a lot to be said for traditional parties that balance being responsive with having a clear sense of their values and heritage. But if those traditional parties forget to be responsive, they lose votes. That's populism.

The British government has failed to learn the lesson of Europe: if you don't want populist parties to emerge, you have to respect the reasonable will of the people. The people aren't intolerant, but they don't want uncontrolled immigration. Nor do they like being governed by a European elite and the euro, a currency they don't control. And British voters want Brexit.

The slogan that won the Brexit referendum in 2016 was "Take Back Control." One way or another, that's what the people will do. Britain, like Europe, shows that if the politicians don't respond, the result will be populism. If today's politicians won't give the people what they want, someone else will.

Ted R. Bromund is a senior research fellow in The Heritage Foundation's Thatcher Center for Freedom.



Tiger Woods and President Donald Trump at the White House after the golfer received the Presidential Medal of Freedom on May 6.

Castillo was fatally shot when he tackled a gunman on May 7 at a high school in Colorado. Howell died after tackling a gunman at University of North Carolina at Charlotte on April 30.

I believe posthumous medals of freedom should be presented to the families of these

deserving and courageous men.  
Beth Rose Macht,  
Long Beach

Explain to me why the president awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom to Tiger Woods merely because of his great comeback in golf. The award is supposed to be given

to individuals who demonstrate "an especially meritorious contribution to the security or national interests of the United States, world peace, cultural or other significant public or private endeavors."

This same president criticized Sen. John McCain because he was captured in Vietnam, where Trump avoided service. With all due respect to Woods, does he deserve this medal more than McCain or any other soldiers who were injured, died or imprisoned?

Michael McBride,  
Moriches

## Death camps were built by the Nazis

Accuracy is important, so it is critical to point out that Auschwitz was not a "Polish extermination camp," as it is described in the May 8 news story "The horror on display."

That and other such camps were built in occupied Poland

by Nazi Germany.

Oswiecim, Poland, was the location of camps where more than a million Jews and thousands of Poles were killed. The younger generation must be taught the truths of the horrors of the era so that this darkest chapter in history and complete inhumanity never happen again.

Geraldine Proferes,  
Mount Sinai

## The Derby narrowly missed a pileup

A reader wrote there was no blatant interference by Maximum Security at the Kentucky Derby, and the horse's actions did not alter the outcome of the race ["Controversial end to Kentucky Derby," Letters, May 9].

Well, he must have been watching a different race. Any horseman knows that whether it is the first race at Aqueduct in mid-December, or the Kentucky Derby on the first Satur-

day in May, the rules apply — and the stewards at Churchill Downs made the correct call.

If horses had gone down at the top of the stretch in the biggest race of the year, there would have been devastating results. Not only would there have been an outcry to ban the sport because of the deaths of multiple horses at Santa Anita, but a pileup of these magnificent animals due to the actions of one jockey would put a major black eye on the industry. The disqualification of Maximum Security was valid.

Jim Donnelly,  
Franklin Square

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