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The Fabricator is published in the UK by Profinder Ltd.

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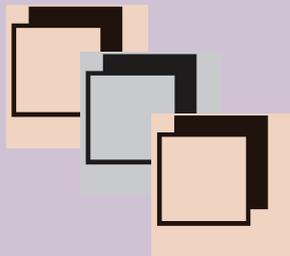
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Subscription rates: UK £45; rest of EU £60; worldwide £105

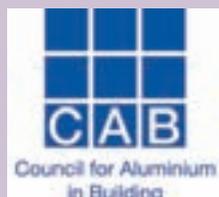
The Fabricator Vol 14 No 8
ISSN: 1752-2145

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THE FABRICATOR

Comment

This is what journalists call 'the silly season'. Politicians are on holiday so we don't have them prattling on trying to sound important every time you turn on the radio. Mind you it all rumbles on in the background and Trump continues to give good value. The issue of Brexit is down to a dull roar though the 'People's Vote' campaign seems to keep the momentum going nicely.

A subject that I haven't heard aired lately is the call to reduce VAT on replacement. This time last year I suggested that, by March next year, when we are scheduled to leave the EU, we will be free to set our own VAT rates. It means all of the usual excuses, where the government blames Brussels for everything even though it is complicit in the decisions, will no longer hold water. So, a reminder to the representative organisations that have influence in Westminster and Whitehall, let us ramp up our efforts and give the industry a boost.

As the deadly date approaches I get an uncomfortable feeling about our future. The Brexit campaign talked about repatriating powers from the EU to our parliamentary democracy. No more being told what to do by unelected officials. Well, the first thing that happened when the vote was won, by a very small margin I might add, was an attempt to sideline parliament and not allow our elected representatives to have a say in the shape of the leave deal.

The 'unelected' supreme court, fortunately, sorted that but since then we have seen wriggling and squirming as the Brexit lobby tried to block parliament from having anything but a token input. Unfortunately parliament as a whole seems as wavering and divided as the Conservative party itself. Tribal interests reign supreme and although, almost certainly, if the like minded ignored their party whips and remembered what parliamentary democracy is all about, the Brexit lobby would be beaten and firmly put in its place. They talk about the 'will of the people' as though there was a thumping majority to leave the EU when, in truth, it was only just over 50%. Those who voted to remain in the EU were thereafter made to feel like traitors and disenfranchised to boot.

The truth is that our 'democracy' is in far more danger now than it ever was while we belonged to the EU. (I know, past tense, we are still a member right now but unless the remain camp 'mans-up' and does something about it we are 'dead country walking'.)

And as far as the will of the people is concerned, the Brexit lobby which is effectively running the government is totally ignoring the developing demand by The People's Vote campaign to let us all have another say.

Whisper it in hushed tones, but can you think of any totalitarian regime in, say, the past 80 years, that was initially voted in by the will of its people?

(OK, that's my silly season rant. Next month back to windows – promise.)

John Roper