

# Ignorant lawmakers

by Francis Bennion

You report that Mr John Baron MP has drafted a letter to David Cameron asking him ‘to pass a law promising a referendum on Europe in the next Parliament’. Nearly 100 Tory MPs have signed it.

These MPs should know better. Mr Cameron does not pass laws; Parliament does. No Parliament can bind its successor, so any such promise would be ineffective.

If the Act sought by Mr Baron were passed, the next Parliament would be free to repeal it. Mr Baron’s letter is pointless.

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On 5 July *The Times* published the following by Robert Rhodes QC: ‘Francis Bennion’s reproof of a Conservative MP for asking Mr Cameron [the Prime Minister] to “pass a law” raises an interesting point. [It used to be the case that prime ministers said that they would ask Parliament to legislate in respect of a particular point. Now, however, it is common for both prime ministers and ministers to announce that they will enact legislation, taking Parliament’s consent for granted. So much for the independence of thought of MPs.]’

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*The Times* 3 Jul 2012.

Any footnotes are shown at the bottom of each page  
For full version of abbreviations click ‘Abbreviations’ on FB’s website

## References:

None