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May on a collision course with Brussels as EU demands WE pay £50BN for Eurocrat pensions

BRITAIN is facing a bitter battle with the EU over a £50billion bill for funding the pensions of thousands of British-born Eurocrats, it emerged today.

By MACER HALL

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Britain could be forced to pay into the EU pension promises

Brussels officials calculated that the total will be required to cover the liability retirement incomes for the officials once the UK leaves the EU.

And unions have suggested that the British government should hand over a lump sum as part of a departure deal.

Anti-EU campaigners last night suggested that Brussels should remain responsible for the payments.

Ukip MP Douglas Carswell said: "The European institutions hired them and so the European institutions should pay for them.

"We never wanted to hire these placemen on vast taxpayer-funded salaries and pension contributions.



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"Indeed, one of the reasons why we voted to leave the EU was to free ourselves from these parasitic elites."



Britain broke away from the EU on June 23

This could be horrible, ugly. I hope it won't be
EU source

EU insiders are predicting that funding for the pensions could prove to be among the most poisonous issues as Theresa May's Government negotiates the country's exit from the bloc.

One EU official said: "This could be horrible, ugly. I hope it won't be."

Around 1,730 Britons currently make up almost 8 per cent of the 22,000 retired EU officials.

They include former EU commissioners Lord Mandelson and Lord Kinnock, who both receive five-figure annual payments from Brussels.

Former MEPs are entitled to a pension worth 3.5 per cent of their annual salary for each year served in the European Parliament once they reach the age of 63.

In total, around 3,000 UK officials have worked for European institutions since the country joined the European Community in 1973.

Most are entitled to generous final-salary retirement schemes worth up to 70 per cent of their annual pay at the end of their career in the EU bureaucracy.

At present, the payments are paid out of the EU's Budget. But questions are being raised about future payments to retired British EU officials once the UK ends its annual membership contribution to Brussels.

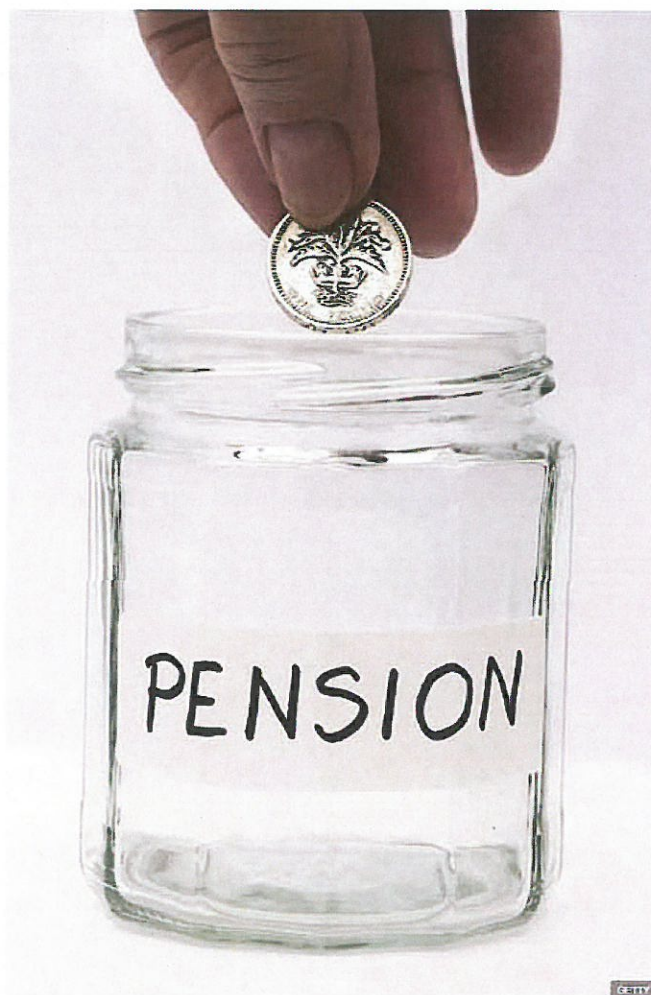
Felix Gerardon, deputy head of Union Syndicale-Bruxelles, the biggest EU trade union, said: "The UK is correct in its point that paying the pensions is the responsibility of the European budget. But the budget is a common responsibility of the member states."

EU diplomats are expected to fight hard in an attempt to force Britain to accept responsibility for the payments to retired British officials.

But UK Government officials argue that the cash is the responsibility of EU. Ministers have long argued that EU salaries, pensions and perks are excessively lavish.

Lord Mandelson receives an annual EU pension worth £31,000 after his stint as trade commissioner.

Former Labour leader Lord Kinnock is entitled to more than £89,000 a year after serving two terms as a commissioner.



Some 1,730 retired Britons make up around eight per cent of the 22,000 EU officials

Warnings of the looming pensions row were sounded last night as Britain's current commissioner in Brussels was put in charge of the EU's anti-terrorism effort.

Sir Julian King was appointed Commissioner for the Security Union by European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker.

He is due hold the brief until the UK quits the EU and gives up representation on the commission.

Sir Julian, a former ambassador to France, became an EU commission after his predecessor Lord Hill of Oareford quit following the Brexit vote in June's EU referendum.

A Downing Street spokesman said: "We welcome this decision by the President of the European Commission.

"The UK will continue to fulfil our rights and obligations as a member state until we leave the EU and the Prime Minister has been clear that we will be an active player, so it is right that we should continue to have a Commissioner role.

"Security is a vital issue for all member states and co-operation across the EU can help to better protect us all from the range of threats we face.

"The President called the Prime Minister yesterday evening to inform her of his decision. We now look forward to Sir Julian being confirmed in the role."