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**HOUSE OF COMMONS
OFFICIAL REPORT**

**PARLIAMENTARY
DEBATES**

(HANSARD)

Thursday 22 October 2015

House of Commons

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The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

BUSINESS BEFORE QUESTIONS

DEATH OF A MEMBER

Mr Speaker: I am sorry to have to report to the House this morning the death of our parliamentary colleague Michael Meacher, Member for Oldham West and Royton, who represented his constituents in this place without fear or favour for 45 years. Many colleagues here present will have known Michael well. He served his party, his constituency and his country with dedication, ability and commitment, holding high office in Government, but above all cherishing Parliament—the legislature—and the responsibility of Members, under whichever Administration, to hold the Executive to account. In recent years, he was a very prominent, active and effective contributor to the work of Parliament First. I was privileged to come to know him well over the past six years since I took the Chair. He will, I believe, be sadly missed, and at this very unfortunate and miserable time for Lucianne and the family, we extend to them our condolences and express the hope that they can look forward in the future to happier times.

TRANSPORT FOR LONDON BILL [LORDS]

Motion made,

That the promoters of the Transport for London Bill [Lords], which was originally introduced in the House of Lords in Session 2010-12 on 24 January 2011, may have leave to proceed with the Bill in the current Session according to the provisions of Standing Order 188B (Revival of Bills).—(*The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means.*)

Hon. Members: Object.

To be considered on Thursday 29 October.

Dr Rupa Huq (Ealing Central and Acton) (Lab)
rose—

Oral Answers to Questions

CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

The Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport was asked—

BBC (Charter Renewal)

1. **Dr Rupa Huq** (Ealing Central and Acton) (Lab): What assessment he has made of the appropriate scale and scope of BBC services to inform the charter renewal process. [901722]

9. **Emma Reynolds** (Wolverhampton North East) (Lab): What assessment he has made of the appropriate scale and scope of BBC services to inform the charter renewal process. [901731]

The Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport (Mr John Whittingdale): I commend the hon. Member for Ealing Central and Acton (Dr Huq) for her enthusiasm.

We have just consulted on the scale and scope of BBC services in the charter review consultation, which ran from 16 July to 8 October. My Department will provide a summary of responses and will consult on further proposals in the spring.

Dr Huq: Ealing has long been a BBC borough, with the wig and prop department in north Acton and many things filmed there. It has many BBC employees, hundreds of whom have contacted me wanting to safeguard its distinctiveness. The Secretary of State is a fellow music buff—we are both alumni of the all-party group on music—and was at the reception where it was revealed that 75% of music played on the BBC would not get exposure on commercial airwaves. Does he not appreciate that the people in that room and my constituents fear for the BBC's unique music output under his Government's plans for charter renewal?

Mr Whittingdale: I am conscious of the very strong creative industries based in Ealing. As the hon. Lady says, I was present at the BBC "save music" event a couple of weeks ago, where I expressed my surprise that anyone had felt it necessary. I am the first person to recognise the importance of music on the BBC. I believe that the BBC plays a very important role in providing a platform for genres and bands that would not otherwise be covered in the commercial sector. We are having a consultation, we have received 190,000 responses and we will analyse those responses. I share the hon. Lady's view of the importance of music on the BBC.

Emma Reynolds: "The Great British Bake Off", "The Voice", "Doctor Who", "Strictly" and "Match of the Day" are great British programmes made by our great British broadcaster, which is loved by millions here and around the world. Why do the Government seem so resolute and determined to diminish the role and the size of the BBC, weakening our influence abroad and undermining British programming?

Mr Whittingdale: Even if I wanted to tell the BBC that it should not broadcast "Strictly Come Dancing" or "The Great British Bake Off"—and I do not—I would not be able to do so. It is up to the BBC to choose. What I do think is appropriate is that, at the time of charter renewal, we should have a debate about the BBC's purpose, its scale and scope, its funding and its governance. That is what we are doing, and we are extremely pleased at the very high level of response that we have received.

Philip Davies (Shipley) (Con): May I associate myself with your remarks about Michael Meacher, Mr Speaker? Unusually, we shared a member of staff across the House, which I do not think happens very often. He was a great man and your words were very well said. I send my sympathies to his family.

Does my right hon. Friend agree that it would be far better for subscribers to the BBC to determine the scale and scope of its services, rather than the Government? If the BBC is as popular with the public as it claims, it has nothing to fear from moving to a subscription

model. Given its international recognition, is it not inevitable that, freed from the shackles of the licence fee, the BBC's revenue would increase substantially if it moved to a subscription model?

Mr Whittingdale: I am, of course, familiar with my hon. Friend's views on the BBC. He has made his case with customary strength and fluency. We are analysing the responses to the consultation and his view will be taken into account, as will the other 192,000 we have received.

Andrew Bridgen (North West Leicestershire) (Con): During the charter renewal negotiations, will the Secretary of State bear in mind the level of support for decriminalising non-payment of the TV licence fee across the country and across the House? Some 150 colleagues from all parties, including the hon. Members for Islington North (Jeremy Corbyn) and for Hayes and Harlington (John McDonnell), signed my early-day motion that called for decriminalisation.

Mr Whittingdale: I am aware of my hon. Friend's work in supporting the campaign for the decriminalisation of non-payment of the licence fee. I understand the strength of opinion on the subject on both sides of the House. We are looking at it carefully. However, as he will know, David Perry conducted a thorough review of the issue and came up with a number of important concerns that would need to be addressed if we were to go down that road.

Paul Farrelly (Newcastle-under-Lyme) (Lab): I share the sentiments expressed about Michael Meacher. He was, 30 years ago, the first Member of Parliament I ever met.

In a very interesting speech to the Society of Editors this week, the Secretary of State said, with respect to the BBC's intention to help local news, that it should not employ more journalists, but should commission content from court reporting, councils and the like. Was that a warning to the director-general of the BBC or a direction? Was it another attempt to top-slice the licence fee, this time in favour of local newspapers?

Mr Whittingdale: It was support for a proposal that was first put forward by the Culture, Media and Sport Committee, which I chaired and of which he was a member. He may recall our advocating this initiative that the BBC could take to help local newspapers. I understand the concern of the local newspaper industry that certain actions of the BBC are undermining it. This initiative could support local newspapers, both by making information available more generally and recognising that local newspapers provide an invaluable service in holding to account local institutions. It is still under discussion and I welcome the progress that is being made.

Mr Philip Hollobone (Kettering) (Con): The charter renewal process is a big challenge for the BBC, as is remaining impartial in its coverage of the forthcoming EU referendum. Many of us on the Government Benches are not confident that the BBC is up to that challenge. What is the Secretary of State's view?

Mr Whittingdale: I have followed with interest the discussions in the European Scrutiny Committee on that issue and am aware of the concerns that have been expressed. It is for that reason that I wrote to the chairman of the BBC Trust and the chief executive of Ofcom to re-emphasise the importance of the impartiality requirements on all broadcasters, particularly in matters of some controversy, of which I suspect the European Union referendum will be one.

Chi Onwurah (Newcastle upon Tyne Central) (Lab): I, too, attended the launch of UK Music's great Let it Beeb campaign, which calls on the Government to protect vital BBC music services from cuts during charter renewal. Despite numerous briefings to the press about wanting to cut the BBC down to size and reports that Radio 1 and Radio 2 will be sold off, the Secretary of State told the audience that he would be "very willing" to sign the petition. I hope that he has done so. Given his new-found enthusiasm for the BBC, will he use this opportunity to sign up to another vital characteristic—the BBC is and must be a great universal broadcaster that produces something for everyone? Will he make that promise?

Mr Whittingdale: One thing I do not want to do is reach conclusions on every question contained in the Green Paper before we have even started going through all the consultation. *[Interruption.]* I did express my support for music on the BBC, but we are looking carefully at all the responses that have been received. I share the hon. Lady's view that the BBC is a great broadcaster, and it is my intention that it should remain that way.

Creative Industries

2. **Alex Chalk** (Cheltenham) (Con): What recent estimate he has made of the contribution of the creative industries to the economy. [901723]

The Minister for Culture and the Digital Economy (Mr Edward Vaizey): I am delighted to tell the House that our most recent estimate of the value of the creative industries has put it at about £76 billion, and they have grown three times faster than the economy as a whole.

Alex Chalk: Through its famous annual festivals in literature, food, science, performing arts, jazz and poetry, Cheltenham is a cultural powerhouse, but what are the Government doing to support cultural hubs such as Cheltenham's Everyman and Playhouse theatres, which are so important for the town's cultural offer and its economy during the rest of the year?

Mr Vaizey: The Everyman is an outstanding theatre, which is why it is part of the national portfolio and receives a grant from the Arts Council—indeed, it has recently undergone a significant refurbishment and benefited from money from the Heritage Lottery Fund. The Playhouse, as an amphitheatre, no doubt would still potentially have access to capital grants or programme grants. Of course, we have recently introduced a theatre tax credit, which will help them all.

Mr Barry Sheerman (Huddersfield) (Lab/Co-op): May I associate myself with the tribute to Michael Meacher, with whom I worked for many years? He gave his life to public and political service, and was respected in all parts of the House.

Is the Minister aware that the UK is a world hub for creativity and the creative industries, but that certain lynchpins, such as the BBC and the Design Council, are at the heart of the creative sector. Please, do not sacrifice either of those. There are dark forces, such as certain media barons, who would like to see the BBC diminished.

Mr Vaizey: I agree with the last Labour Secretary of State, who said that we should not make the BBC a political football. The Government are asking perfectly legitimate questions about the BBC, but I note the hon. Gentleman's comments about the UK being a creative hub. I was concerned about his comments on the Bond movie on Twitter this morning. He attacked the Bond franchise, which employs thousands of people in this country and whose producers make such a fantastic contribution to our cultural life. I hope he will stand up for James Bond.

Ben Howlett (Bath) (Con): It is a little-known fact that Bristol and Bath have the second largest number of tech and creative industries anywhere outside Hoxton. What more work is the Minister doing with the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills to grow this sector even further?

Mr Vaizey: We continue to support tech hubs all across the country. I was particularly pleased to recognise Bath Hacked in a speech on smarter cities yesterday. Bath is leading the way in smart city technology and the internet of things; it is so high tech that it would be the perfect place to set the next Bond movie when it is made in the UK.

Ms Tasmina Ahmed-Sheikh (Ochil and South Perthshire) (SNP): The Minister will know that Scottish companies are leading the world in the design and export of video games. Does he agree with Chris van der Kuyl, the chairman of Dundee video games company 4J Studios, who told the Scottish Affairs Committee this week that UK immigration policy could prevent companies such as his from recruiting the very best of talent from overseas? Why is this Government's regressive immigration policy harming world-class Scottish businesses?

Mr Vaizey: We support the video games industry, not least with the £4 million prototype fund, which we recently launched with Abertay University, based in Dundee. I was delighted when Tech North announced last week our new visa policy to allowed highly-skilled people into the country to support the highly successful Scottish and indeed UK games industry.

John Nicolson (East Dunbartonshire) (SNP): The Secretary of State will recall that when he came before the Select Committee on Culture, Media and Sport on 9 September, he said:

"At the moment, there are no plans to sell Channel 4".

Shortly afterwards, on 24 September, one of his officials was photographed marching into Downing Street clutching a memo that said:

"work should proceed to examine the options for extracting greater public value from the Channel 4 Corporation...focusing on privatisation".

That is devastating news for the creative industries and current affairs. I have a simple question: when did his

officials break the news to him that they were working on privatisation proposals for Channel 4 behind his back?

Mr Vaizey: May I say what a joy it was to see the hon. Gentleman at the PinkNews awards last night at the Foreign Office where I was privileged to present the public sector equality award to the Ministry of Defence? I wish to put on record my congratulations to the Ministry—[*Interruption.*] I am pleased to hear the hon. Gentleman say from a sedentary position that it was a mutual pleasure. I can also say with pleasure that of course he would expect us to look at every option when it comes to considering the future of Channel 4.

Sporting Activity (Participation)

3. **Amanda Milling (Cannock Chase) (Con):** What steps he is taking to encourage more people to participate in sporting activity. [901724]

5. **Mark Pawsey (Rugby) (Con):** What steps he is taking to encourage more people to participate in sporting activity. [901726]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport (Tracey Crouch): The number of people playing sport hit an all-time high in 2012, but has since begun to decline. That is unacceptable. The last time the Government published a strategy for sport was back in 2002, 13 years ago. Later this year, I will be publishing a new, cross-departmental strategy for sport and physical activity which will deliver our vision for an active nation.

Amanda Milling: I hope that my local football club, Brereton Social FC, is bringing on the football stars of the future. The difficulty that the club faces is that, in the winter, the youth teams cannot play because the pitch is either waterlogged or frozen. It really needs a 3G pitch. What support and funding is the Government making available to clubs such as that to complete projects and, in turn, to help children participate in sport?

Tracey Crouch: Having been involved in grassroots football for many years, I have spent goodness knows how many Sundays wondering whether a stud will go into a frozen pitch or whether a muddy middle is fun or dangerous, so I sympathise with the hon. Lady's point. Shockingly, compared with the 4,000 plus artificial pitches in Germany, we have only 680 in England, but through the Park Life project we will see more than £60 million going into developing facilities, which will include major investment in, and the expansion of, artificial pitches.

Mark Pawsey: Notwithstanding the early departure of England, holding the world's third largest sporting event here was always going to provide a good opportunity to encourage people to take up rugby. The festival of rugby, which is running alongside the tournament, has already had 1,000 events and a million people taking part. The Rugby Football Union legacy programme has already achieved its target of introducing rugby to 400 secondary schools by linking with clubs. Does the

Minister agree that we have had a fantastically exciting tournament so far, and that these events are great ways to get people involved in the game?

Tracey Crouch: May I take this opportunity to congratulate Scotland, Wales and Ireland on reaching the quarter-finals of the rugby world cup? Some might argue that at least one of our home nations should still be in it. *[Interruption.]* I know how to play the crowd. The 2015 rugby world cup has been the biggest ever, with attendance and tickets outstripping previous cups. Nearly half a million people have visited the Fanzones to which my hon. Friend refers. I am sure that the whole House will join me in congratulating all those who have helped to deliver such a successful tournament.

Derek Twigg (Halton) (Lab): Although some schools make a really good effort in ensuring that their sporting facilities are available to the wider community, others do not. What discussions has the Minister had with her colleagues in the Department for Education to ensure that schools do a much better job in ensuring that their sporting facilities are available to the wider community, particularly in the winter months?

Tracey Crouch: I assure the hon. Gentleman that I meet regularly with my counterpart in the Department for Education and we discuss all matters relating to school sport, including facilities. It is important that we ensure that our schools are properly equipped to deliver an appropriate and adequate physical education curriculum.

Cat Smith (Lancaster and Fleetwood) (Lab): I wish to put on record my thoughts and appreciation of Michael Meacher. He was a great support to new MPs in this House.

What plans do the Government have to include transgender people in sport, as they are often excluded? It is important that sport is an inclusive activity.

Tracey Crouch: I am grateful to the hon. Lady for her question. The recent consultation on sport ensured that we looked to see that everybody is included in participating in sport and physical activity, and it contains a significant section on discrimination. The responses to that consultation will form an important part of the sports strategy.

Football Supporter Ownership

4. **Mary Glendon (North Tyneside) (Lab):** When he expects the expert working group on football supporter ownership and engagement to report. [901725]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport (Tracey Crouch): The expert working group was set up a year ago yesterday and I expect its report, with a strong set of recommendations, by the end of November.

Mary Glendon: It is four years since the Select Committee on Culture, Media and Sport reported on football governance, requesting changes from the FA Premier League and the Football League, but we still have not seen those changes come through. Will the Government now consider legislation on supporter ownership?

Tracey Crouch: I know that the hon. Lady is a keen football fan and has worked closely with the Newcastle United Supporters Trust, and I know that this issue is very important to her and to her Magpies-supporting constituents. The working group's report will be published

next month and I expect it to contain strong recommendations. We will consider those recommendations when they are given to me next month.

Clive Efford (Eltham) (Lab): It is five years since the Government stated that they would make changes on fan ownership. Since then, we have had two Select Committee reports and, after four years of waiting, the Government finally set up the expert working group, the report from which is imminent. Does the Minister agree that it is time for bona fide fan groups to be given the right to elect and remove representatives on club boards and the right to buy shares in their clubs? For too long those with vested interests have been allowed to stand in the way of progress on these issues and we must not miss the opportunity that the expert working group offers us.

Tracey Crouch: We all share the view that football fans are the lifeblood of the club they support and many people feel frustration about club ownership. I have been pleased with the level of engagement with the supporters' representatives group and I am confident that the final report will provide a structured approach for greater collaboration between clubs and fans. That might well include some of the issues that the hon. Gentleman has raised. The working group report will be published next month and before his ten-minute rule Bill comes before the House in December. I hope that he will look at the report and support us in implementing the recommendations.

Sporting Activity (Participation)

6. **Ruth Smeeth (Stoke-on-Trent North) (Lab):** What steps he is taking to increase the participation of women and girls in sport. [901728]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport (Tracey Crouch): Women's participation is up by more than 500,000 since we won the Olympic bid in 2005, but recent figures show the beginning of a decline since the high point in 2012. We know that lots of women regularly take part in physical activity that is not measured at present, but we also recognise that various obstacles put women and girls off playing sport. The new sports strategy will help to remove those obstacles.

Ruth Smeeth: My great city of Stoke-on-Trent will be the 2016 European city of sport. That is brilliant news for my constituents, but we need to ensure a strong legacy from that accolade. Research suggests that families on low incomes have only £2.55 a week to spend on active leisure activities. Young women prefer to participate in organised indoor sports, but many are precluded from doing so on the basis of available funds. What is the Minister doing to ensure that young women are actively encouraged to participate, regardless of their parents' pay packets?

Tracey Crouch: I feel very strongly about this issue, having coached a girls' football team for many years. As a football club, we have made sure that cost is not a prohibitive factor in involvement. It is important that we ensure that there are many activities out there in which women and girls can participate, and Parkrun

has become one of the fastest growing. It has a huge amount of support from women and girls all over the country. There are many different reasons why women do not participate in sport and cost might well be one of them, but we must consider all those issues as part of the wider sports strategy.

Mr Nigel Evans (Ribble Valley) (Con): Does the Minister agree that parents have a huge responsibility? At about this time parents are thinking of what to buy their daughters for Christmas. It might not make parents the most popular people in the household on Christmas morning, but they might consider buying their daughters gym membership and a pair of trainers.

Tracey Crouch: As someone who is hopefully producing a future sports star, I do not think it is for me to dictate to parents what they buy their children for Christmas. It is important that parents understand that their girls might want to get involved in sport, and perhaps not in traditional girls' sport, and that they should be as supportive as possible.

Barbara Keeley (Worsley and Eccles South) (Lab): There is a significant drop-off in girls' participation in sport from 49% in year 7 to a surprisingly low 31% in year 9. Does the Minister agree that more research is needed to understand the reasons for that drop-off, and that we need to start taking action much earlier to make sure that girls are growing up with sport as a normal part of their lives?

Tracey Crouch: There are many reasons why girls stop participating in sport at certain ages and it is important that we understand what those may be. We know that 14, for example, is a key age when girls start to lose interest in sport. It is important that schools and clubs outside schools understand all the competing pressures in a girl's life at that age and can support them into sport and physical activity at appropriate points. Good places will do that and be as adaptable and flexible as possible, but it always worth looking in more detail into why people stop playing sport or participating in physical activity.

World Football (Governance)

7. **Stephen Phillips** (Sleaford and North Hykeham) (Con): What steps he is taking to promote good governance and the elimination of corruption in world football. [901729]

The Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport (Mr John Whittingdale): The Government take very seriously the issue of good governance in sport, at both national and international level. Combatting corruption in sport requires a co-ordinated and international approach. The Government are therefore discussing the issue of good governance with our colleagues in Europe, the Commonwealth and the wider international community to explore what more we can achieve by working together. The UK is due to host a round-table discussion on tackling corruption in sport at next week's Open Government Partnership global summit in Mexico.

Stephen Phillips: Before it even knew who the candidates would be, the Football Association came out in support of Michel Platini as the next president of FIFA. He is now under investigation, like Sepp Blatter, for corruption. What conversations has my right hon. Friend had with the FA about its support for Michel Platini?

Mr Whittingdale: I have regular discussions with the FA and, unsurprisingly, the subject of the presidency of FIFA comes up frequently. Although the decision on which candidate to support is ultimately a matter for the FA, the Government have made it clear that we expect to see a new FIFA, with a new president who can drive reform and not one tainted by the problems of the past.

Graham Jones (Hyndburn) (Lab): The Secretary of State says that the issue of FIFA governance has come up regularly in his conversations. Is it not masking the issue in Qatar, where workers continue to die? In the study up to 2013, more than 1,300 people were reported to have died. What representations have the Government made on the humanitarian crisis in that country resulting from the preparations for the World cup in Qatar in 2022?

Mr Whittingdale: I am aware of reports of concerns about the workers who are preparing for the World cup in 2022 in Qatar, but I understand that Qatar has put in place measures to ensure that their welfare is protected. We will no doubt continue to monitor that matter carefully and I will certainly look at any further concerns that have been expressed.

Damian Collins (Folkestone and Hythe) (Con): Many people believe that FIFA will be incapable of reforming itself and that an independent reform commission should be established. Would the Secretary of State welcome the establishment of such a commission and would the Government be prepared to offer any assistance that that commission needed?

Mr Whittingdale: I share my hon. Friend's view that those currently involved in FIFA are probably least equipped to advise on how it should be reformed, and there may well be a case for the kind of independent body that my hon. Friend advocates. We would be happy to discuss that further, should FIFA ask us to do so.

Tourism

8. **Steve Double** (St Austell and Newquay) (Con): What progress the Government have made on implementing their five-point plan for tourism published in July 2015. [901730]

The Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport (Mr John Whittingdale): This Government back tourism and want to spread the benefits throughout the country. That requires concerted and sustained action across Government, and in partnership with the sector on jobs and skills, transport, regulation, and the great British welcome. Last month, I chaired the first meeting of our inter-ministerial group on tourism to co-ordinate work. The new Tourism Industry Council and Business Visits and Events Board will be meeting later this autumn to advise on our approach.

Steve Double: I assure my right hon. Friend that the Government's new focus on tourism is hugely welcomed across the west country. He highlighted the fact that part of this plan is the promotion of skills and jobs in the tourist sector. Is he aware that, as a result of our booming food and hospitality industry in Cornwall, there is currently a large shortage of qualified chefs? Can he assure me that the promotion and provision of skills in the food and hospitality sector will be part of the strategy?

Mr Whittingdale: I very much agree. We are indeed aware that some of the finest restaurants in the world are based on these shores, not least in Cornwall. All tourists want something good to eat, and we should try to ensure that they get it. We are taking action in this area. For example, one of the Government's trailblazer apprenticeship programmes announced by the Prime Minister centres on professional chefs, and we will be looking further at the important issue of skills as part of a reformed Tourism Industry Council. I would be happy to hear any other ideas that my hon. Friend has on the issue.

Bill Esterson (Sefton Central) (Lab): Tourism is worth £3.8 billion and 49,000 jobs to the Liverpool city region. Attractions include the Gormley statues on Crosby beach in my constituency, which I hope the Secretary of State will visit, if he has not already done so. However, those who go to the VisitEngland website would be forgiven for thinking that everything is about London; apart from the odd reference, there is nothing about the rest of the country. Will he address that point and ensure that Government investment and support goes to the tourism industry across the country?

Mr Whittingdale: I welcome London's success in attracting international visitors—it is the most visited city in the world—but I agree that our next challenge is to persuade visitors to this country of the fact that there are many attractions outside London, not least in Liverpool. I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his invitation to see the Gormley statues, which I hope I will have an opportunity to do.

12. [901736] **Mark Spencer** (Sherwood) (Con): Does the Secretary of State recognise the importance of infrastructure in promoting tourism? Will he lend his support to the Robin Hood line so that more people can come and enjoy Sherwood forest and all it has to offer?

Mr Whittingdale: A key element of our five-point plan for tourism is ensuring that tourists visit places outside London, as I have said, and that requires good infrastructure covering road, air and, of course, rail. Of specific interest to my hon. Friend and his constituents will be the work that the Rail Safety and Standards Board is doing on a "rail for tourism" programme, which we hope will be launched in January.

National Museums (Free Entry)

10. **Judith Cummins** (Bradford South) (Lab): What his policy is on maintaining free entry to national museums. [901733]

The Minister for Culture and the Digital Economy (Mr Edward Vaizey): We made a manifesto commitment to keep access to our national collections free, and we intend to honour that.

Judith Cummins: Bradford is widely known as a centre of cultural excellence and is rightly proud of the National Media Museum, which is one of our cultural treasures. Over the years the free entry policy has helped support the museum and allowed thousands of families to access a much loved museum and cultural activities that they would not otherwise enjoy. Will the Minister assure my constituents that the future of the museum and the free entry policy are safe in his hands?

Mr Vaizey: I am happy to give that assurance. I am also happy to note that the National Media Museum—part of the Science Museum Group—has through the new Treasury loans scheme refurbished its IMAX theatre and partnered with Picturehouse. The Science Museum is planning to put £1.5 million of its own money into launching a free science Launchpad, and a new marketing drive saw admissions rise over the summer. It is thriving.

Topical Questions

T1. [901742] **Mr David Hanson** (Delyn) (Lab): If he will make a statement on his departmental responsibilities.

The Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport (Mr John Whittingdale): Since the last Culture, Media and Sport Question Time, the England team has won the ashes; the English, Welsh and Northern Ireland football teams have all qualified for the European championships; Team GB has won four gold medals at the world athletics championships; and, although the home nations are no longer in the hunt for the rugby world cup, the tournament has enjoyed record-breaking attendances and been an organisational triumph.

Mr Speaker: And Britain is in the Davis cup final, to boot.

Mr Hanson: I am sure that all that is very fine, but people need tickets to see those events. The Consumer Rights Act 2015 was supposed to enforce measures on ticket resales, but yesterday's Which? report has shown that there are major holes in that. How does the Secretary of State intend to enforce the Act, and what steps will he take to address the concerns expressed by Which?

Mr Whittingdale: As the right hon. Gentleman might be aware, the Government are conducting a review of secondary ticketing and have recently appointed a chairman to undertake it. We will obviously look carefully at its findings when it reports.

T2. [901743] **Sir Simon Burns** (Chelmsford) (Con): Will my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State assure me that during the current consultations on the BBC charter the vital role of local radio, particularly stations such as BBC Essex, will not be overlooked in a modernised BBC?

Mr Whittingdale: I share my right hon. Friend's admiration for BBC local radio, particularly BBC Essex, which does a magnificent job in keeping his and my

constituents informed. The BBC does local radio exceptionally well, and it is hard to envisage the commercial sector being willing to provide a similar service. On that basis, I strongly hope that it will continue.

Michael Dugher (Barnsley East) (Lab): On behalf of everyone on the Opposition Benches, Mr Speaker, may I associate ourselves with the fine tribute that you paid to Michael Meacher?

In a speech on Monday to the Society of Editors, the Secretary of State revealed that he is looking at shelving a central part of the Leveson recommendations, which would make it easier for people to bring libel and privacy cases against newspapers. Does he not agree that any backtracking on this issue would significantly weaken the incentive for publishers to sign up to a royal charter-backed regulator?

Mr Whittingdale: Let me begin by welcoming the hon. Gentleman to his position as shadow spokesman for Culture, Media and Sport. It is an excellent job that I am sure he will enjoy. The only job that is better than his is the one on the Government side of the House.

The hon. Gentleman will be aware that a key element of the Leveson proposals will come into effect at the beginning of November—that is, the exemplary damages provision, which can be awarded against newspapers that are not subject to a recognised regulator. That is a serious sanction, and we will want to see how it operates. However, we are also aware of the concerns that have been expressed about the potentially very punitive aspects of the cost provision, which could damage local newspapers severely—the very papers that are entirely blameless of abuses of the kind that were carried out over the past few years.

Michael Dugher: Speaking back in 2013 after the cross-party agreement, the Prime Minister said:

“If this system is implemented, the country should have confidence that the terrible suffering of innocent victims, such as the Dowlers, the McCanns and Christopher Jeffries, should never be repeated.”—[*Official Report*, 18 March 2013; Vol. 560, c. 636.]

If this essential part of Leveson is shelved, it would not only break a promise made by the Prime Minister; it would let down the families and the victims of phone hacking. Will the Secretary of State now make it clear that the Government still stand by the cross-party agreement and are committed to enforcing this key recommendation of Leveson?

Mr Whittingdale: The system enacted by Parliament remains in place—that is, the royal charter and the recognition body that has been set up—but it has always been made clear that it is a matter for the press as to whether it chooses to seek recognition, or for a regulator as to whether it chooses to seek recognition. I want to consider this matter carefully before reaching a final decision, but I am keenly aware that the priority for most people is that we have in place a strong, tough and independent regulator. Certainly the Independent Press Standards Organisation, which has now been set up, is a considerable improvement on the previous regulatory body, the Press Complaints Commission.

T8. [901749] **Mims Davies** (Eastleigh) (Con): As a former local BBC and commercial radio presenter and reporter, I am keenly aware of the vital work that all our local journalists do in scrutinising our councils.

Does the Minister believe that the BBC's bringing in 100 locally pooled journalists will help local journalism to flourish or hinder it?

Mr Whittingdale: As I said to the hon. Member for Barnsley East (Michael Dugher), at a time when local newspapers are finding it very difficult in the current economic climate, the BBC can play a role in supporting them. I was concerned by the suggestion that the BBC would directly employ journalists, as that would add to the pressure on local newspapers rather than reduce it. However, I understand that the News Media Association and the BBC working group are making very good progress in achieving an agreement that will be of real benefit to the local newspaper industry.

T3. [901744] **Mr David Crausby** (Bolton North East) (Lab): Will the Secretary of State and his team put heavy pressure on the Premier League to support grassroots football through the TV rights deal, instead of squandering it on already very rich footballers while our children get changed in the winter besides a muddy, often unplayable pitch?

Tracey Crouch: I read the hon. Gentleman's recent piece in *The Huffington Post* and agreed with not necessarily the tone but the principle of what he wrote. The Premier League is incredibly wealthy and we should celebrate that success, but it should contribute more to grass-roots football. The Prime Minister announced recently that he wishes the Premier League to double the amount of money it puts into grass-roots football. I will continue to have strong conversations with the Premier League over the forthcoming weeks.

Tom Pursglove (Corby) (Con): Much sporting participation is dependent on the volunteers who give up their weekends to officiate, so what steps are the Government taking to encourage more of that good local spirit of officiating?

Tracey Crouch: Many grass-roots sports clubs would not exist were it not for the volunteer coaches and others who run them incredibly well. We should celebrate the people who get involved. The forthcoming sports strategy looks at making sure that we encourage more people to get involved in delivering sporting activities through clubs and in their communities. I hope everyone will welcome that.

T4. [901745] **Pat Glass** (North West Durham) (Lab): The Arts Council will have more than £1.5 billion to invest in the arts across the country over the next three years. Of that sum, 43% will be invested in London at about £81 per head, but in my region the figure will be closer to £15 per head. That is just not good enough. What is the Minister doing to redress the balance between London and the regions?

The Minister for Culture and the Digital Economy (Mr Edward Vaizey): We debate this important issue regularly. It is important to stress that a lot of the money that goes to “London” arts organisations goes to organisations based in London that do work all over the country. The chief executive of the Arts Council has made it absolutely clear that he intends to ensure that more lottery money goes outside London. He is quite right and has our full support.

Mr David Nuttall (Bury North) (Con): On the issue of nuisance telephone calls, how does the Secretary of State plan to measure whether the steps the Government have taken have been successful?

Mr Vaizey: May I first record my shock at not being asked a single question about broadband in this Question Time? This is a red-letter day, although I am waiting to see whether the right hon. Member for East Ham (Stephen Timms) is going to get to his feet.

We have brought the Information Commissioner's Office into the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, so we now have a shocking thing—joined-up Government—and I will meet the ICO and Ofcom to keep a close eye on what they are doing to tackle the scourge of nuisance calls.

T5. [901746] **Roger Mullin** (Kirkcaldy and Cowdenbeath) (SNP): I want to press the Secretary of State further on some of his earlier comments. The *Central Fife Times*, *The Courier*, the *Dunfermline Press* and the *Fife Free Press* are local and regional papers that serve my constituency with diversity and distinction, but I am concerned that institutions such as the BBC, as they develop new platforms, may crowd out such local excellence. Will the Secretary of State therefore ensure that a local commissioning model for local content is put in place as part of the charter renewal process?

Mr Whittingdale: I am happy to join the hon. Gentleman in paying tribute to his local newspapers. I believe that local newspapers serve an absolutely vital function in supporting local democracy, and I want the BBC to support that. Any new BBC service has to undergo a market impact assessment, and we are keenly aware of the need to avoid doing anything that causes unfair damage. As I have said, I support the principle of local commissioning.

Mr Speaker: Perhaps we can speed up a bit.

David Warburton (Somerton and Frome) (Con): Have the Government developed a more detailed proposal on territoriality in the digital single market, given the huge impact any changes could have on the UK audio and visual sector?

Mr Whittingdale: We are in favour of the digital single market. In particular, we want increased portability in order to allow consumers travelling abroad to access services for which they have paid. I am aware, however, of the concerns expressed by the audio-visual sector that the principle of territoriality might be undermined. I am very keen that it should not be and that we do nothing to damage those industries, which make such a huge contribution to this country.

T6. [901747] **Cat Smith** (Lancaster and Fleetwood) (Lab): Will the Minister join me in commending the work of Greg Clarke, chairman of the football league, in encouraging more black and minority ethnic applicants for football roles, including managers and youth coaches, and will she call on the Premier League to follow that excellent example?

Tracey Crouch: We should be doing everything we can to support BME coaches to the highest level, and the hon. Lady will join me in welcoming this morning's commitment from the FA to put more money into coaching programmes for people from BME communities

Mr Peter Bone (Wellingborough) (Con): Does the Minister welcome the National Football League establishing three international games at Wembley this year, and would she welcome a franchise based in London?

Tracey Crouch: As a fan of American football—the Green Bay Packers are doing incredibly well at the moment in the NFL—I welcome more American football, and I look forward to seeing more games here in London.

T7. [901748] **Debbie Abrahams** (Oldham East and Saddleworth) (Lab): May I pay tribute to my friend Michael Meacher, who in addition to being a parliamentary champion was also a great advocate for his constituency and his constituents—they always came first? My thoughts are with Lucianne.

Sport can play an invaluable role in enabling social cohesion. How will the Minister ensure that that is recognised in the new sports strategy?

Tracey Crouch: In the past we have judged success in sport by two rather crude measurements: the number of medals we have, and participation. Those aspects are incredibly important, but I am also looking at ways to consider social and community value when developing sport in future.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Mr Speaker: I will call Mr McCartney on condition he gives one short sentence.

Jason McCartney (Colne Valley) (Con): Does the Minister agree that our national museums that offer free entry—the National Coal Mining museum has free science shows this weekend—are a fantastic free day out for families over the half-term break?

Mr Vaizey: Yes.

Mr Speaker: Splendid. The same goes for Mr Timms.

T9. [901751] **Stephen Timms** (East Ham) (Lab): Does the Minister plan to increase competition in the superfast broadband market following last week's debate that highlighted lack of competition as the main source of current frustrations with the roll-out?

Mr Vaizey: Let me take one more—I have broken my duck. We have one of the most competitive telecommunications markets, and will continue to work with Ofcom to increase competition in the sector.

Mr Speaker: That was a superfast question and a superfast answer, for which we are deeply grateful.

LEADER OF THE HOUSE

The Leader of the House was asked—

EVEL

1. **Andrew Rosindell** (Romford) (Con): What plans he has to review the effectiveness of the Government's English votes for English laws proposals after implementation. [901712]

The Leader of the House of Commons (Chris Grayling):

The Government will carry out a review of the new system next year, subject to approval by the House today, and I will consult the relevant Committees, including those in the House of Lords, should this House agree the proposed changes. We will consider carefully any observations and recommendations that arise from those reviews, to ensure that the English votes mechanism works as effectively as possible. I expect that the House will return to this issue at that time.

Andrew Rosindell: What steps will my right hon. Friend take to ensure that measures on English votes for English laws do not damage the fabric of our cherished Union and lead to a situation where this House could be deemed to be the representative assembly of England, rather than the House of Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland?

Chris Grayling: My hon. Friend makes an important point, and that is why we have chosen not to go down the path of an English Parliament. As we devolve more powers to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland—we committed to that in our manifesto and we believe it is the right thing to do—we seek to ensure that the English also have a role in that devolution, but not in a way that removes any Member from any part of the current debating process in this Chamber.

Mr David Hanson (Delyn) (Lab): I find myself in the strange position of agreeing with the hon. Member for Romford (Andrew Rosindell) for probably the first time in my life, so that is a good thing. Will the Leader of the House ensure that in any review he undertakes, the position of border constituencies such as mine in Wales, and those in Scotland and elsewhere in the United Kingdom, are reflected carefully so that Mr Speaker's tight discretion on determining what is an English-only Bill is reviewed in the light of pressures on my constituents?

Chris Grayling: The review and the work we do in the next 12 months should take into account all concerns raised by Members. I give the right hon. Gentleman a commitment that we will of course listen to views from across the House on this and other matters.

Andrew Gwynne (Denton and Reddish) (Lab): I, too, find myself in agreement with the hon. Member for Romford (Andrew Rosindell). Does the Leader of the House not accept that unless he is very careful in the drafting of the new rules, there will be the unintended consequence of creating certain members of the other place who will be more powerful than Members of this House?

Chris Grayling: I do not accept that. We have taken great care in drafting the rules. We will monitor very carefully their operation in practice. If the hon. Gentleman and other Members have concerns over the next 12 months, they will undoubtedly want to raise them as part of our review process.

EVEL

2. **Kirsty Blackman (Aberdeen North) (SNP):** If he will take steps to ensure that proposals for English votes for English laws do not give English-only certification to Bills or clauses with consequential implications for Scotland. [901713]

The Leader of the House of Commons (Chris Grayling):

The proposed changes to Standing Orders would mean that clauses or schedules that Mr Speaker considers to relate exclusively to England, or to England and Wales, disregarding any minor or consequential effects for other parts of the United Kingdom, will be subject to the new legislative process.

Chris Bryant (Rhondda) (Lab): Minor and consequential.

Chris Grayling: Minor or consequential, and consequential. This will include any potential spending effects. Any decision on spending that will have a material impact on the allocation of funding to the devolved Administrations will always be taken by a vote of the whole House of Commons through either the estimates process or a money resolution.

Kirsty Blackman: In response to a question from me in June, the Leader of the House said that the Scotland Bill could be considered as “English votes for English laws”. When we debated EVEL on 15 July, the Leader of the House committed to producing a list of measures in the Queen's Speech that he thought might be subject to EVEL. I would very much appreciate it if he could tell me where I could find that list.

Chris Grayling: It will of course be a matter for you, Mr Speaker, to decide which measures are subject to this process. It is, as I will tell the House this afternoon, my view that there are probably two or three remaining Bills in this Session that are likely to prompt you to issue a certification decision. All this, of course, is entirely academic until the House has decided whether to accept the Standing Orders.

Patrick Grady (Glasgow North) (SNP): The Leader of the House mentioned the estimates process. Has he discussed with the Treasury the likely increased scrutiny of the estimates process as a result of the can of worms he is opening up with English votes for English laws? The Procedure Committee is very much looking forward to Treasury officials appearing before it. I wonder whether Treasury officials are looking forward to appearing.

Chris Grayling: Dare I say that it is Treasury questions next week and the hon. Gentleman is of course able to put that question to the Treasury?

Party Conferences

3. **Mr Philip Hollobone (Kettering) (Con):** If he will make it his policy that the House not adjourn for the period covered by the Conservative, Labour and Liberal Democrat party autumn conferences. [901715]

The Deputy Leader of the House of Commons (Dr Thérèse Coffey): We have no current plans to make changes to the conference recess. We periodically review the parliamentary calendar to ensure that it allows for Members and the House to carry out their work in the most effective way possible both in the House and in their constituencies, being mindful of other responsibilities that Members may have.

Mr Hollobone: Her Majesty's Government love it when Parliament is not sitting, because there is no one to hold them to account on the Floor of the House of Commons. Given that the number of days we have in recess is already far too large and that it is completely unnecessary to have an adjournment for the main party conference season, will the Deputy Leader of the House reconsider her remarks?

Dr Coffey: This House already meets for over 150 days a year. I recognise the length of the recess. A decision was made in the previous Parliament to remove the extended recess so that we would sit in September. I think that is the right approach. It worked well in the previous Parliament and it worked well last month, too.

Pete Wishart (Perth and North Perthshire) (SNP): These are disappointing comments from the Deputy Leader of the House. There is now a real willingness in this House to reconsider its recess plans. It is simply absurd that we abandon our business for one week to accommodate eight Liberal Democrat Members of Parliament. When we come to consider the recess period, may we also look at when the recess starts? Surely it is within the wit of this House to have a summer recess that includes all the summer holidays of every nation of the United Kingdom, including Scotland.

Dr Coffey: The hon. Gentleman has made this representation before. I note that the Scottish Parliament reconvened the week before we did in September and, as a consequence, did not quite cover all its school holidays. Dare I say that the result in May 2015 was not exactly predicted when the parties set up their initial conference arrangements? As Deputy Leader of the House, I always listen to representations.

Philip Davies (Shipley) (Con): My hon. Friend the deputy Leader of the House, the Leader of the House and the Conservative party chairman are talented people, and it cannot be beyond their wit to organise the Conservative party conference into a Friday, Saturday and Sunday so that the House can continue sitting. May I urge her to reconsider this suggested initiative, rather than dismiss it out of hand?

Dr Coffey: I never dismiss Members' contributions out of hand. Like my hon. Friend, I enjoyed our party conference in Manchester this year. I am not conscious that I am the chairman of the Conservative party and therefore make our conference arrangements, but, as always, we are a listening Government, and I am sure we will take representations appropriately.

Melanie Onn (Great Grimsby) (Lab): I do not entirely agree with the suggestion from the hon. Member for Kettering (Mr Hollobone) about the party conference season, but there is an issue about how suitable parliamentary scheduling is for modern families, both for Members and House staff. For example, next week is half term, yet we are taking recess the following week. What is the deputy Leader of the House doing to modernise how House business is scheduled to address this problem?

Dr Coffey: I appreciate the hon. Lady was not here, but in the last Parliament the House resolved to make some changes to its hours. I am conscious of the responsibilities people might have—whether with families,

children, parents or other extenuating circumstances—but, as I have advised new Members already, the Procedure Committee looked again at this and decided not to recommend any changes to the House. It is open to the Committee to make further investigations, however, and I am sure that her comments will be passed on to its Chairman and that she can make them directly.

HOUSE OF COMMONS COMMISSION

The right hon. Member for Carshalton and Wallington, representing the House of Commons Commission, was asked—

Restoration and Renewal

4. **Tom Pursglove** (Corby) (Con): What estimate he has made of the expected cost of restoration and renewal of the Palace of Westminster. [901717]

7. **Stephen Phillips** (Sleaford and North Hykeham) (Con): When the Commission plans to bring forward proposals on the restoration and renewal of the Palace of Westminster. [901720]

Tom Brake (Carshalton and Wallington): On behalf of the Liberal Democrats, I would like to echo the tributes to Michael Meacher, who gave outstanding service to the House. The House of Commons Commission and the House of Lords House Committee asked for the independent appraisal of options and costs for restoring and renewing the Palace of Westminster that was published on 18 June. The range of costs for each option is given and explained in the document. The two Houses have appointed a Joint Committee, which will report to both Houses in due course. In the meantime, essential and urgent work to maintain the Palace continues.

Tom Pursglove: Many people up and down the country recognise and appreciate the value of this place, in terms of both our national history and it being at the heart of our democracy and its tourism value. I have been asked locally whether there are any plans to establish a fund that members of the public can contribute to in order to support those restoration works. Does the right hon. Gentleman have any such plans?

Tom Brake: I thank the hon. Gentleman for that suggestion. I am happy to take it away and see whether there is any mileage in it.

Mr Speaker: I call Mr Stephen Phillips. He is not here. Extraordinary.

IT

5. **Bob Blackman** (Harrow East) (Con): What assessment he has made of the adequacy of arrangements for meeting hon. Members' IT requirements. [901718]

Tom Brake (Carshalton and Wallington): The Administration Committee considered this matter in the last Parliament, and its relevant recommendations have been implemented. The most significant changes include offering more choice of equipment, the introduction of a financial limit and the provision of a tablet computer

to all Members to facilitate paperless and mobile working. It is possible to secure more centrally provided equipment within the £5,945 allowance than in the last Parliament. Some 75% of Members have placed orders for new equipment.

Bob Blackman: My staff diligently worked through the options and came up with a direct replacement that exceeded the budget by £5. I offered to top up the budget to allow my staff to operate, only to be told that it was not possible because of bureaucracy. Will the right hon. Gentleman consider this matter so that equipment purchased with office budgets in the last Parliament is not just thrown away and Members can use it in conjunction with other equipment?

Tom Brake: I thank the hon. Gentleman for raising that issue. I was aware of the background to his concerns. As I understand it, there needs to be a limit, and many Members, myself included, have worked in such a way that they come in just below that limit. I understand that, from an accounting point of view, significant costs would be attached to ensuring the flexibility he asks for.

LEADER OF THE HOUSE

The Leader of the House was asked—

House Business Committee Proposal

6. **Mr Graham Allen** (Nottingham North) (Lab): What progress is being made in establishing a House business committee; and if he will make a statement. [901719]

The Deputy Leader of the House of Commons (Dr Thérèse Coffey): There was an absence of consensus on this matter at the end of the last Parliament, and there is still no consensus now. We discussed it in Westminster Hall last week with the hon. Gentleman and two other hon. Members.

Mr Allen: The Wright Committee reported to this House and created a Backbench Business Committee, the election of Select Committee Chairs and the election of Select Committee Members. The House approved all those issues. The one issue that it has not been able to approve or has not approved is the creation of a House business committee by which Members rather than the Government or alternative Government can be represented on it. Will the Deputy Leader of the House allow the House of Commons to make a decision in Government time on whether we should have a House business committee or not?

Dr Coffey: As I explained at length in the Westminster Hall debate last week, one of our predecessors, the noble Lord Lansley set our four tests. We have yet to

receive a recommendation or create a proposal that can pass the four tests that we believe necessary for the creation of a House business committee.

Mr Peter Bone (Wellingborough) (Con): I will take that as a no—that the Minister will not bring forward a motion on this matter. The Backbench Business Committee, however, has put down such a motion and Members will have the opportunity in a week's time to vote on whether they want to discuss proposals for a House business committee. Does the Minister agree that that is an excellent way forward?

Dr Coffey: My hon. Friend is a member of the Backbench Business Committee, and I know he has an interest in this issue. He displayed his knowledge of Standing Orders in Westminster Hall last week, and I believe he advised the hon. Member for Nottingham North (Mr Allen) to contest the decision. Of course, that situation has arisen in this Session because we used to adjourn in Westminster Hall but it now considers motions. The Backbench Business Committee has decided that this is a good use of parliamentary time next Thursday—it is a judgment that it has made.

HOUSE OF COMMONS COMMISSION

The right hon. Member for Carshalton and Wallington, representing the House of Commons Commission, was asked—

Staff Working Conditions

8. **Mr Barry Sheerman** (Huddersfield) (Lab/Co-op): What steps he is taking to improve the working conditions of staff on the parliamentary estate. [901721]

Tom Brake (Carshalton and Wallington): The Commission seeks to provide good working conditions for all its staff. Terms and conditions of staff are kept broadly in line with those in the home civil service. No staff are paid below the London living wage. A range of facilities, including welfare support and learning opportunities are provided. The 2015 staff survey showed increasing job satisfaction, with 86% of staff willing to recommend the House of Commons as a good place to work.

Mr Sheerman: The right hon. Gentleman knows that my campaign has been about not only the payment of a living wage in both Houses of Parliament, but ensuring that we are an exemplary employer—better than John Lewis, better than Waitrose, better than anywhere. We should also set an example in terms of pay, conditions and how we treat the staff of this House. We have not treated them very well in the past.

Tom Brake: I thank the hon. Gentleman, but I do not think he has asked me anything specific. I agree entirely with what he has said about setting an example for the rest of the country when it comes to staff conditions.

China (Human Rights)

10.37 am

Fiona Bruce (Congleton) (Con) (*Urgent Question*): To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on human rights in China, following reports that human rights lawyer, Zhang Kai, imminently faces a severe prison sentence or the death penalty for defending civil liberties.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr Hugo Swire): We are in the middle of a hugely positive state visit, which my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has said will benefit not just our nations and our peoples, but the wider world. Yesterday, the Prime Minister and my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary had extensive discussions with President Xi Jinping and his delegation. These discussions continue today, including when the Prime Minister hosts President Xi at Chequers.

As we have made very clear, the strong relationship that we are building allows us to discuss all issues. No issue, including human rights, is off the table. The UK-China joint statement that we have agreed commits both sides to continuing our dialogue on human rights and the rule of law.

Turning to the case of Zhang Kai, we are aware that he has been accused of “endangering state security” and “assembling a crowd” to “disrupt social order”, apparently in relation to his work with Churches in Zhejiang province. We are concerned that his whereabouts are undisclosed, and that he has reportedly been denied access to legal representation.

At the UK-China human rights dialogue, which was held in Beijing in April this year, we raised issues relating to religious freedom in China, including the destruction of churches and religious symbols in Zhejiang province. We raised a number of related individual cases. A transparent legal system is a vital component of the rule of law, and we urge the Chinese authorities to ensure that proper judicial standards are upheld.

Fiona Bruce: I thank the Minister for his reply, and I thank you, Mr Speaker, for granting the urgent question.

This is, of course, an urgent matter because of the imminent risk that the lawyer Zhang Kai could be sentenced to as many as 15 years in prison—or even the death penalty, given that he faces grave charges including threatening national security—and the risk that there could be a closed trial. Zhang Kai’s family do not know of his situation, and his lawyer has tried several times to ascertain it. The matter is also urgent because of wider concern that China’s human rights position should be raised directly with President Xi Jinping during his state visit, which ends tomorrow.

Zhang Kai’s case is significant not only in itself, but because he is one of nearly 300 lawyers and human rights defenders who have been detained since July this year. At least 20 are still in custody or have disappeared, their whereabouts unknown. We know from the example of the case of Gao Zhisheng—another prominent human rights lawyer, who defended, among others, members of the Falun Gong movement and who was “disappeared”

on several occasions and imprisoned in solitary confinement for three years, where he was severely tortured—that the consequences of secretive detention can be grave.

Lawyer Zhang Kai had been advising Churches in China’s Zhejiang province in connection with the demolition of churches and the forcible destruction of more than 1,500 crosses in Zhejiang over the past two years—a gross violation of freedom of religion or belief. The Churches affected include both unregistered and state-approved Catholic and Protestant Churches.

As we have heard, Zhang’s is not the only case. Nineteen-year-old student activist Joshua Wong faces court next week for inciting unlawful assembly, and I understand that among those who are also in secret detention is Wang Yu, a fearless defender of feminist activists and the victims of rape. Thousands of political prisoners also continue to languish in Chinese jails, the most famous being Nobel laureate Liu Xiaobo, who is halfway through an 11-year sentence for peacefully advocating democratic change. Members may well wish to raise other cases, including, perhaps, events in Tibet and Xinjiang, and the plight of the Uighurs.

As chair of the Conservative Party Human Rights Commission, I welcome the opportunity to engage with China. The Select Committee on International Development met representatives from the Chinese delegation yesterday to discuss the sustainable development goals, which include a commitment to promoting peaceful and inclusive societies and access to justice for all. I recognise the significance of the business relationship and the importance of dialogue with China on a range of issues, including trade, but I hope that dialogue on human rights, freedom of thought, speech and assembly, and the rule of law will also be placed at the centre of the relationship. It is well recognised that the promotion of such freedoms contributes to better business and economic outcomes for the peoples involved. The two go hand in hand.

As the United Kingdom’s relationship with China develops, it is good for us to remember the words of Martin Luther King:

“In the end, we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends.”

Mr Swire: I pay tribute to the work that my hon. Friend does in this area. We work closely together in relation to other countries. This evening’s Adjournment debate is on Burma, and she will no doubt take part in it.

In respect of China and human rights, I am sure that many Members on both sides of the House will want to know what was discussed and when. I shall do my best to answer that question, although I stress that the state visit is still under way. I know that the Leader of the Opposition used an opportunity to discuss these matters when he had a meeting with the President.

I do not think that it is really a question of what we have raised. What I find interesting is what the President said during yesterday’s Downing Street press conference when asked about human rights. He said—among other things—

“All countries need to continuously improve and strengthen human rights protection to meet the needs of the time and the people. And on the issue of human rights, I think the people of our respective countries are in the position—in the best position

to tell. And China is ready to, on the basis of equality and mutual respect, increase exchanges and co-operation with the UK and other countries in the area of human rights. Thank you.”

My hon. Friend is absolutely right. As the relationship between our two countries becomes ever closer, we are in a position to raise these matters continually, particularly the extremely concerning individual cases to which she referred.

Catherine West (Hornsey and Wood Green) (Lab): The freedom to practise our religion is one of the most fundamental of human rights. For many people around the world, including in China, religious belief defines who they are. It should therefore be a matter of great concern to this House when those rights are infringed wherever that happens across the globe.

As we have heard, since the summer a large number of lawyers and human rights activists in China have been targeted and detained, including Zhang Kai, whose case was raised by the hon. Member for Congleton (Fiona Bruce). Can the Minister give the House any further information about the circumstances that led up to Zhang Kai’s detention and that of other human rights defenders and activists?

Article 18 of the UN declaration of human rights, says that:

“Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion”.

Can the Minister also confirm that article 36 of the constitution of the People’s Republic of China specifies that

“citizens enjoy freedom of religious belief”,

but then goes on to say that

“The state protects normal religious activities”?

Will he tell the House what his understanding is of this term and what it means for the practice of religion and, in particular, Christianity, in China?

Have Ministers had an opportunity to raise these concerns with their Chinese counterparts, either before the current state visit or during it? Does the Minister have any information about when any case against Mr Zhang might be heard?

The Prime Minister has said that the developing trade relationship between the UK and China provides an opportunity for further dialogue. We agree. Will the Minister therefore undertake to the House, if the Government have not already done so, to raise this case during the remainder of the state visit, as my hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition and my right hon. Friend the shadow Foreign Secretary, both in their places in the House now, will do later today?

Mr Swire: I am grateful to the hon. Lady for her remarks. There is a whole range of cases about which we are concerned. The case in Zhejiang is not new. If the hon. Lady trawls back through *Hansard*, she will see that I answered a question raised by the hon. Member for North Antrim (Ian Paisley) on this back in June, when I talked about our concerns about restrictions on Christianity particularly in Zhejiang province. I went on to say:

“We raised these, and our broad range of concerns around religious freedom, directly with Chinese officials during the UK-China Human Rights Dialogue in April this year. We have also highlighted them publicly in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office’s Annual Report on Human Rights and Democracy.”

Further to that, in September I answered a question from my hon. Friend the Member for The Wrekin (Mark Pritchard). I reiterate what I said then:

“I am aware of reports that lawyer Zhang Kai was detained on 25 August, alongside two of his assistants, Liu Peng and Fang Xiangui, and members of a Christian congregation.

I am concerned that this is reflective of the wider situation facing rights lawyers in China. Reports suggest that over 200 lawyers have been detained or questioned since 9 July, and the space in which they operate is increasingly constrained.

The UK supported an EU statement of 15 July which said the detentions raised serious questions about China’s commitment to strengthening the rule of law. We have ongoing discussions with the Chinese authorities on human rights and rule of law issues, and discussed these matters in detail during the UK-China Human Rights Dialogue in April.”

I then went on to say what I have said in answer to an earlier question.

On the question of whether this case and other cases will be addressed, a number of cases are always being addressed. This is not just a one-off and I cannot gainsay what the Prime Minister might say. The Chancellor will of course be with the President in Manchester tomorrow, and there will be private meeting between the President and the Prime Minister at Chequers later this evening. I do not know what will be on the agenda, but I do know they have an ever-closer relationship and these matters are continuously being discussed.

Sir Edward Leigh (Gainsborough) (Con): May I raise the case of a very old man—he is 94—called Cosma Shi Enxiang, who died in prison in China last year? His only crime was that he was a Catholic bishop who refused to kowtow to the state. This is a very serious matter; it is the sort of thing that was happening in this country in the 16th century. The House does not want vague assurances from the Minister; we want to know that, while we respect the world’s growing superpower and want to trade with it, we are absolutely fearless in these matters and that during this visit our leadership will raise these matters with the Chinese President.

Mr Swire: We certainly do not see this visit as presenting a binary choice between greater economic co-operation and human rights, as some would have us do. I reject that utterly. As I have said, there are individual cases that have been raised consistently. We are one of the few countries to have an annual human rights dialogue with China, and we are of the view that that gives us the right format and architecture within which to raise these specific individual cases. I believe that that is the right way to pursue these matters. As our relationship becomes ever closer, we are in a better position to discuss these very worrying cases with our Chinese counterparts.

Patrick Grady (Glasgow North) (SNP): Will the Government use every opportunity, including those that arise this week, to make it clear to China that human rights and equality are a fundamental part of achieving greater and fairer economic growth? Given that the Chinese ambassador said at the weekend that no one would be put behind bars simply for criticising the Government, will the Minister join the United States Secretary of State John Kerry in calling for the release of Zhang Kai? If not, why not? More broadly, will he commit to speaking out, without fear or favour,

[Patrick Grady]

against the use of the death penalty, even when it is used by strategic allies such as the United States, Saudi Arabia and China?

Mr Swire: We do speak out without fear or favour. The United States is responsible for making its own comments on various matters. I refer the hon. Gentleman to my earlier comment that we supported an EU statement on 15 July on the detentions in Zhejiang. We believe that that is the right place for us to do that, along with our bilateral discussions with the Chinese themselves.

Tim Loughton (East Worthing and Shoreham) (Con): As we have heard yet again, freedom of speech and dissent in China are being brutally repressed, not least in Tibet, where the mere possession of a photograph of the Dalai Lama can result in imprisonment or worse. In the UK, our democracy is built on the principle of free speech, so can the Minister tell me why protesters in the Mall exercising their right to draw attention to human rights abuses in Tibet were this week corralled behind barricades at the back while Chinese state-sponsored cheerleaders were given “Love China” T-shirts, Chinese diplomatic bags and a prime position at the front?

Mr Swire: My hon. Friend is an assiduous campaigner for Tibet and he will know that, after the death of the senior Tibetan Buddhist, Tenzin Delek Rinpoche, in July, we supported an EU statement and the remarks of a Foreign Office spokesman were carried in the media. Prior to Tenzin’s death, I continued to call for his release, including in parliamentary debates on Tibet in June and in December 2014.

Ms Harriet Harman (Camberwell and Peckham) (Lab): I warmly thank the hon. Member for Congleton (Fiona Bruce) for bringing this issue to the House. I am sure that this debate will be watched by people in China, so this is an important occasion. I also thank you, Mr Speaker, for granting the urgent question. Does the Minister agree that our ability to raise our voice and put pressure on China because of its gross violations of human rights is in part based on the recognition that this country has itself made a commitment to human rights? Does he recognise that the increasingly negative tone being used in this country to describe human rights as a problem—even to the point of describing the legislation as “Labour’s Human Rights Act”, which I cannot believe is a compliment—undermines our ability to champion human rights abroad? We cannot champion human rights abroad if we regard them as a nuisance at home. Will he ensure that he and his Government stand up for human rights in this country, as part of our policy of championing them in other parts of the world?

Mr Swire: The right hon. and learned Lady is absolutely right. It is incredibly important to have good human rights in our own country before we preach to others, and I believe that we do. In my travels around the globe—looking after two thirds of the world, as I am obliged to do—I have observed that our own human rights are way better than those in the majority of countries. A second thing that gives us a huge moral case when we go round the world is that this Government have pledged to spend 0.7% of our GDP on international aid. Those two factors give the United Kingdom a good say at any table.

Mr Speaker: We are immensely grateful to the Minister of State for looking after two thirds of the world, as he puts it. The right hon. Gentleman is not understated on the matter. It is on the record, and we are deeply obliged.

John Glen (Salisbury) (Con): While I welcome the commitment of the Minister and the Government to greater intimacy between this country and China in economic terms, the concern of many people in this country is that we rest on carefully crafted diplomatic language when it comes to discussing human rights. We may have an architecture for dialogue, but people are looking for delivered change and a fundamental change in attitude. What will happen if there is no discernible change in outcomes and between what the Chinese say to us and what they practice? What sanctions or actions will the Government take?

Mr Swire: I subscribe to the words that “persuasion and dialogue achieve more than confrontation and empty rhetoric.”

Those are not my words; they are the words of the Prime Minister—[*Interruption.*] Yes, the Prime Minister of the time—Tony Blair, in October 1998.

Mr David Winnick (Walsall North) (Lab): While we of course have to trade with all kinds of countries, do we really have to grovel to every dictatorship going that treats human rights with such total contempt as China is doing?

Mr Swire: I would only say to the hon. Gentleman that I agree with another statement:

“We will make our position clear as we always do, but the best way to do it is without grandstanding or hectoring”.

Those are the words of the Prime Minister—Tony Blair, back in 1998.

Jeremy Lefroy (Stafford) (Con): I am most grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Congleton (Fiona Bruce) for asking this urgent question. The Chinese people and Government have done a tremendous amount during the past 30 years, to lift hundreds of millions of people out of poverty, thus giving them access to human rights they did not previously have. However, men and women shall not live by bread alone; this is much more important. As other hon. Members have said, human rights are also a vital and absolutely fundamental part of development. Will my right hon. Friend look in particular at Hong Kong—he mentioned the situation of the students and others there—where we have a particular responsibility, given the 1984 agreement?

Mr Swire: Yes. Mr Speaker, you will not be surprised to hear that Hong Kong falls within my area of responsibility, so hon. Members can all sleep safe in their beds. Just last week, we had a visit from the chief executive of Hong Kong, C.Y. Leung, which went very well. We had discussions with him about Hong Kong. My position and that of the Government on the issue of suffrage for the election is well known. We restate our interests in Hong Kong based on the joint declaration and in line with the basic law.

Stephen Twigg (Liverpool, West Derby) (Lab/Co-op): I congratulate the hon. Member for Congleton (Fiona Bruce) on asking this important urgent question. As she

said, we and China signed the sustainable development goals in New York last month. Goal 16 emphasises governance and the rule of law. Does the Foreign Office see that as a way in which we can raise human rights issues, including trade union rights—an important matter, which has not yet been raised this morning—with the Chinese?

Mr Swire: The hon. Gentleman makes a good point. We are increasingly working together on a number of global goals, such as climate change, development, peacekeeping and global health. It is important to say that, as China takes its place on the world stage as a major player, we see ourselves working ever more closely with the Chinese on issues that confront us all—peacekeeping, climate change, antimicrobial resistance—including on the UN Security Council. That will deepen the relationship and will again allow us to raise difficult issues that should not be off the table.

Neil Carmichael (Stroud) (Con): By placing human rights at the core of the Helsinki accords back in 1975, significant progress was made in moving the Soviet Union towards a new place. Can something similar be done through the European Union and our partners to drive home the message that we are really serious about human rights in China?

Mr Swire: To answer the earlier question from the hon. Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Catherine West), we are serious about human rights wherever there are such issues, but particularly in China. As I say, we believe that we have an advantage in being able to have an annual human rights dialogue with the Chinese. The next one will be in the United Kingdom next year, which will give us a good opportunity to drill down into specific cases. Those cases are ever changing, but the underlying trends are very often not changing. Those occasions allow us to raise our concerns and to oxygenise them.

Valerie Vaz (Walsall South) (Lab): I, too, congratulate the hon. Member for Congleton (Fiona Bruce) on allowing the House to discuss this matter. The Minister says that he wants to move forward, so will he report back to the House on why particular lawyers and the artist Ai Weiwei were detained?

Mr Swire: On the situation with Ai Weiwei, the Home Office spokesman said that the Home Secretary was not consulted over the decision to grant Mr Ai a one-month visa. She has reviewed the case and instructed Home Office officials to issue a full six-month visa. We have written to Mr Ai, apologising for the inconvenience caused. No doubt, the hon. Lady will have been to see the exhibition that is on not a million miles from here. If she wishes to raise other specific cases with me, I am always happy to see her. In advance of the Chinese state visit, I met a lot of pressure groups and non-governmental organisations in the Foreign Office who came to raise their concerns with me and my officials.

Mr Peter Bone (Wellingborough) (Con): I will sleep better in my beds tonight—[*Laughter.*] I will sleep better in my bed tonight knowing that the Minister is looking after two thirds of the world. I would sleep even tighter if I knew who was looking after the other third.

Does he agree that the way in which human rights will change in China is through working with countries like ours and seeing that there is nothing to fear from freedom of religion and freedom of speech?

Mr Swire: I know that Mrs Bone will be following my hon. Friend's comments about how many beds he has. Look, there are things that we take for granted in this country. We should be ever-vigilant of the fact that others around the world do not enjoy those same liberties. I agree with him that the UK can show that we are able to have criticism, dialogue and debate and that, at the end of the day, no one is threatened by it. Freedom of religious expression is a fundamental human right. That is one of the things that all too often in this country we accept as the norm. We should be jealous in guarding the privileges that we enjoy and do everything we can to export them to countries that are less fortunate.

Andy Slaughter (Hammersmith) (Lab): May I associate myself with your kind remarks about Michael Meacher, Mr Speaker? My experience of working with Michael was somewhat different, in that I was employed by him here for two years in the late-1980s. If one way in which we should judge people is by how they treat their employees, particularly the more difficult and truculent ones, that is further evidence of his tolerance and generosity of spirit.

On the Chancellor's recent visit to China, he was described by Chinese state media as

“the first Western official in recent years who focused on business potential rather than raising a magnifying glass to the ‘human rights issue’”.

Was not Ai Weiwei right this week when he said that the Government are sacrificing essential values for short-term gain?

Mr Swire: No, he was absolutely wrong. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor did raise human rights during his visit to China. In Xinjiang, he addressed the case of Ilham Tohti and called for his release. It is not right to say that when Ministers travel in China and meet our Chinese counterparts here in the UK, we do not raise such cases. The hon. Gentleman is precisely wrong.

Andrew Stephenson (Pendle) (Con): In advance of the state visit, I was contacted by Rev. Lorelli Hilliard, the vicar of St John with St Philip in Nelson, who expressed concerns about religious freedom in China. Will my right hon. Friend confirm that our improving commercial relationship certainly does not prevent us from speaking frankly and candidly with the Chinese about these issues, and may even be helpful?

Mr Swire: Yes, that is certainly the case. As we get ever closer in our relationship and our dialogue, so we are able to raise these difficult issues with our Chinese counterparts. Mr Speaker, you presided over the speech by President Xi in the Royal Gallery in which he referred to the ever-growing and ever-closer links, particularly with British parliamentarians, and invited more British parliamentarians to go to China. I submit that that would be an extraordinarily good way of forging closer relationships and raising these cases, as parliamentarians, in China.

Jonathan Reynolds (Stalybridge and Hyde) (Lab/Co-op): Of course we should be engaging with China, and promoting dialogue and trade, but there has been a huge sense this week that the Government are willing to sell themselves to China for any price, especially on this absurd nuclear energy deal—I say that as a supporter of nuclear energy. Surely we should have the moral confidence to stand up for what we believe in as a country, especially on political freedom and on religious freedom. Ultimately, other nations will respect us more if we are willing to do that.

Mr Swire: I do not regard as ridiculous more than £30 billion-worth of investment from China into the UK, let alone into our nuclear industry. I say gently to the hon. Gentleman that if the previous Government had paid more attention to the gap in our energy provision, we would not find ourselves in the position we are in.

Peter Grant (Glenrothes) (SNP): I welcome a lot of the words we have heard from the Minister today—when they are turned into actions we start to get somewhere. As well as making the point that the nations represented here give a good example of the fact that dissent and disagreement from official Government policy does not represent a threat to national security, does he agree that the right to life is the most fundamental of all human rights and so any nation that carries out wholesale executions of its population is in breach of fundamental human rights? During this week's visit, will the Government be specifically encouraging the Chinese Government to take steps towards the complete abolition of the death penalty? When was the last time the Government made

similar representations to the Government of the United States of America, which executes more of its citizens than almost any other nation on the planet?

Mr Swire: We are getting a little wide of the mark there, but I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for The Wrekin (Mark Pritchard), who is not in his place but who goes around the world restating British policy against the death penalty. That is our official policy; it is what we use as such at every meeting and we will continue to do so.

Tom Brake (Carshalton and Wallington) (LD): The Minister will have heard the Chinese President say:

“we have found a part of human rights development suited to China's national conditions.”

Will the Minister explain what part of human rights development, if any, allows for the possible execution of Zhang Kai, the persecution of Falun Gong practitioners, the alleged forced harvesting of organs and the harassment of Ai Weiwei? Why, at a time when the UK should be strengthening its commitment to human rights, does Sir Simon McDonald, the permanent secretary at the Foreign Office, say that human rights are no longer a priority for the UK Government?

Mr Swire: Human rights are actually being brought into the mainstream work of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, because we think they inform everything we do on a day-to-day basis. The right hon. Gentleman quoted part of what the President said and I shall just cite the last bit of it:

“China is ready to, on the basis of equality and mutual respect, increase exchanges and cooperation with the UK and other countries in the area of human rights.”

That seems to me to be very positive indeed.

Business of the House

11.7 am

Chris Bryant (Rhondda) (Lab): Will the Leader of the House give us the business for next week?

The Leader of the House of Commons (Chris Grayling): The business for next week will be as follows:

MONDAY 26 OCTOBER—Remaining stages of the Finance Bill.

TUESDAY 27 OCTOBER—Remaining stages of the Welfare Reform and Work Bill.

WEDNESDAY 28 OCTOBER—Opposition day (8th allotted day). There will be a debate on steel, followed by a debate on health.

THURSDAY 29 OCTOBER—Back-Bench business day. A motion in the name of the hon. Member for Nottingham North (Mr Allen) relating to a House business committee, followed by a debate on a motion relating to the distributional effect of proposed reforms to tax credits.

FRIDAY 30 OCTOBER—Private Members' Bills.

The provisional business for the week commencing 2 November will include:

MONDAY 2 NOVEMBER—Second Reading of the Housing and Planning Bill.

TUESDAY 3 NOVEMBER—Opposition day (9th allotted day). There will be a debate on an Opposition motion. Subject to be announced.

WEDNESDAY 4 NOVEMBER—Remaining stages of the National Insurance Contributions (Rate Ceilings) Bill.

THURSDAY 5 NOVEMBER—Business to be nominated by the Backbench Business Committee.

FRIDAY 6 NOVEMBER—Private Members' Bills.

I should also like to inform the House that the business in Westminster Hall for the week commencing 26 October will be:

THURSDAY 29 OCTOBER—General debate on the future of the green investment bank.

Finally, Mr Speaker, may I associate myself with your very gracious remarks earlier about Michael Meacher? He was a great figure in this House. Even those of us who very much disagreed with his policies respected him as a great parliamentarian, a man who made a major contribution to our public life. He will be much missed by his friends on both sides of this House.

Chris Bryant: I, too, pay tribute to Michael Meacher. To be honest, few Members can have had such an impact as he had in his years as Environment Minister. He was an indefatigable stalwart who battled away in the intellectual trenches of politics for nearly five decades in this place. In his last speech in this House, he delivered an absolutely excoriating attack on the Government's economic policy, and he ended with the words:

"So much for the Government's... long-term plan."—[*Official Report*, 4 June 2015; Vol. 596, c. 819.]

Our thoughts warmly go out to his family and to all those who knew him well.

May we have a debate about how we celebrate anniversaries in this House? Yesterday, we completely ignored Trafalgar day, despite it being the 210th anniversary of one of the United Kingdom's greatest naval triumphs.

This Sunday, St Crispin's day, will see the 600th anniversary of the battle of Agincourt at which several hon. Members of this House fought, though not, contrary to rumour, the hon. Member for North East Somerset (Mr Rees-Mogg). The Speaker, Thomas Chaucer, brought along 12 men at arms and 37 archers. I think that you, Mr Speaker, might feel that you need them for your press conferences. Next year is the 400th anniversary of Shakespeare's death.

It was an immense pleasure this week to see the band of the Brigade of Gurkhas beat the retreat in the Speaker's Court in proper recognition of their 200 years of valour and 13 Victoria Crosses that they have won, but should we not in Parliament do better at recognising these important national milestones?

Talking of beating the retreat, when will the Government beat the retreat on the cuts to tax credits? I can offer them two opportunities coming up very soon. There will be a vote in this House on Tuesday and another on Thursday. Before the Leader of the House gives us a whole load of tripe about financial privilege in the Lords, may I remind him that this is all his fault—his personal fault? The Government could perfectly easily have introduced these cuts in a Bill. That would have been a money Bill, which you, Mr Speaker, would have certificated as a money Bill and which we would have been able to look at line by line, but the Lords would not have been able to look at it because it was a money Bill. But oh no, the Leader of the House is too clever by half. He decided that a statutory instrument was best, so there would be just one-and-a-half hour's debate on it and no amendments allowed. Unfortunately, the only downside—oh dear!—is that it has to go to the Lords. So he has been hoist on his own petard. In the end, every single one of us here knows that some way or other the Government will beat the retreat. Tory Back Benchers want him to retreat, and even *The Spectator* today says that they have lost sight of the human factor, so retreat the Government will. Will the Leader of the House just tell us when it will happen? I promise that we will not crow.

I warmly congratulate Mr Alex Newton on being appointed the new editor of *Hansard* and pay tribute to the retiring editor, Lorraine Sutherland, who had to cope with John Prescott's contributions in this House. Members will know that *Hansard* is not exactly a verbatim record—thank goodness. It corrects repetitions and mistakes, so may I suggest that *Hansard* starts by re-examining the Prime Minister's remarks yesterday. He said that he was "delighted" to be bringing in the tax credit cuts. Delighted! He cannot possibly have meant that. There must surely be a heart in this man.

On steel, the Prime Minister said:

"We will do everything we can to help".—[*Official Report*, 20 October 2015; Vol. 600, c. 956.]

What he actually meant to say was, "We will do absolutely nothing to help." He also said yesterday that the Government intend to relax the Sunday trading laws. When will that be debated and when will it be tabled? What Bill will it be in? I ask that simply because many of us on the Labour Benches, and I suspect on the Government Benches too, want to keep Sunday special.

I thank the Leader of the House for granting extra time for psychoactive substances this week—sorry, I mean the Psychoactive Substances Bill. I noticed last

[Chris Bryant]

week that the Leader of the House did not answer a single question that I asked, so I warn him to take notes today, as, from now on, I will be writing to him after each session for answers to any questions that remain unanswered.

On 25 November, we shall have the autumn statement together with the comprehensive spending review. It is surely incumbent on us to scrutinise public spending diligently, including public spending cuts. Will the Leader of the House set aside three full days for a proper debate about the implications of the Government's cuts? Of course the deficit must come down. We have to live within our means, but we will oppose any measures that are unfair, counterproductive or false economies.

You will know, Mr Speaker, that the Public Accounts Committee published a special report this week on the conduct of the Under-Secretary of State for Disabled People when he was a member of that Committee in the last Parliament and leaked a draft report to Wonga. The matter stands committed to the Privileges Committee for a decision on whether it is gross contempt of the House—or at least it would if the Government had set up the Privileges Committee. Will the Leader of the House tell us why it has not yet been set up? Is it because the Prime Minister knew perfectly well that the issue was coming along the track? When the noble Lord Touhig was found to have asked for a draft copy of a Select Committee report some years ago, he immediately resigned as a Parliamentary Private Secretary pending the decision of the then Standards and Privileges Committee, which later suspended him from the House. Will the Leader of the House explain why the Under-Secretary of State for Disabled People has not done the same?

With the opening of the new Bond movie next week, will Ministers celebrate the British film industry by auditioning for the next film? I can just see the Health Secretary, who will doubtless be playing Dr No. The Home Secretary will make a cameo appearance in her steel-tipped kitten heels as Rosa Klebb, and I can just imagine the Culture Secretary jumping across roofs in a fine exhibition of parkour on Her Majesty's secret service. The Chancellor would look very fetching as Miss Money Penny, and I gather that he is quite a cunning linguist—that is from "Tomorrow Never Dies", Mr Speaker—and the Mayor of London's career is surely proof positive that you only live twice. As for the villain running an evil media empire, intent on world domination—well, Members can pick their own. I note from the press that the spectre of dismissal is hanging over the Leader of the House, but perhaps he can take a quantum of solace in the fact that it would be the Work and Pensions Secretary who would get the part of the smooth-pated Oddjob, who comes to a grisly electrocuted end.

Chris Grayling: The hon. Gentleman mentioned anniversaries and he is right to say that we should celebrate all the work that the Gurkhas have done on behalf of this country. I think that he and the Leader of the Opposition will join me in recognising another, rather sadder anniversary today, as it is the 50th anniversary of the tragedy at Aberfan, a terrible event that led to the deaths of 116 children and 28 adults. It is a blot on our

history and something that we should never forget. I hope that everyone in the House will remember those tragic events today.

The hon. Gentleman is, as we know, highly regarded among those on his Benches for his knowledge and understanding of the procedures of the House, so I am slightly mystified by his comments about tax credits and legislation. He will know that tax credits do not come within the scope of a Finance Bill, so I am a little puzzled by his assertion that we should have put the measure into a Finance Bill. He will also know that even if this House were to resolve to change that process, it would open up a range of additional questions about the role of the House of Lords and whether they should debate Finance Bills. I am surprised that he appears not to understand the processes of this House and I advise him perhaps to consult the Clerks afterwards who can put him right, I am sure.

The hon. Gentleman raised the issue of tax credits more generally. It is, of course, a matter that has been carefully debated in this House and voted on twice by MPs in the past few weeks. The measure has been supported by the House twice and it is interesting that the deputy leader of the Labour party did not turn up to oppose the changes, which we believe should now go forward and be put into action.

I suppose we should not be surprised that there is a degree of uncertainty on the Labour Benches, because we have had some interesting reports about what is going on. A message is been passed to me from a person with a vested interest, as is often the case for the Leader of the Opposition. A member of the Labour party has said to me:

"Farce doesn't begin to describe our position any more. It's the political equivalent of all the slapstick staples rolled into one. The Three Stooges pie fight. Stan Laurel stuck up a ladder. The house collapsing on Buster Keaton."

That is a message for me from Simon of Rochdale. You know, Mr Speaker, the people of Rochdale are wise and that is why, I think, they elected him as their Labour Member of Parliament.

The hon. Gentleman talked about steel. We are very clear. We are doing everything we can to support the steel industry in a difficult period for the workers and all those who live in those communities. We have looked at changing the rules on procurement. We are working to provide financial support. We are in discussions with the European Commission about what support we are able to provide. We have raised the issue of dumping with the Chinese this week. We will do everything we can to support our steel industry, but I remind the Opposition that it was when they were in government that steel output in this country halved, and manufacturing in this country almost halved as a share of our national income. Under this Government manufacturing is growing and the steel industry has held up in output terms and has employed more people, so I do not think we should take lessons from the Opposition as we work very hard to address an extremely difficult set of circumstances.

The hon. Gentleman raised questions about Sunday trading. That is a matter that will be debated in the House shortly.

Chris Bryant: When?

Chris Grayling: I am rather surprised. The hon. Gentleman claims to know all about the procedures of this House, and he will know that at Business questions each week the Leader of the House gives the business for the following two weeks. That is the way it is today and it is the way it will continue to be. He will have to wait for the business to be announced when we come to that point, and I will make a point of announcing that when the time is right.

I have always had high regard for the hon. Gentleman as someone who knows the House of Commons procedures, but once again he seems to be getting it wrong today. He is asking me for answers to questions of detail about ministerial responsibilities. This is a session for asking about future business, so when he asks me about numbers of asylum seekers or details of the Prime Minister's knowledge about issues, I understand that he wants to ask the questions, but he needs to go to the relevant departmental questions and raise those matters himself. Today is about the future business of the House and I will be delighted to answer questions about the future business in this House. I just cannot help him. If the Clerks can spend a little time with him giving him a refresher course, perhaps next week we will not see quite such a lack of understanding of parliamentary process.

Mr Peter Bone (Wellingborough) (Con): I had the pleasure of working with Michael Meacher in Parliament First. He was a great parliamentarian and he always wanted to put the House first. In that regard, what is my right hon. Friend's view of the motion to be voted on roughly this time next week about establishing a business of the House committee? Would he regard it as House business on which there should be no whipping on the Government side?

Chris Grayling: I know how strongly my hon. Friend feels about this and how expert he is at working at parliamentary procedure. Perhaps he might like to give the shadow Leader of the House a lesson afterwards. It might be helpful to the hon. Gentleman. I am going to have to make my hon. Friend wait for a few days. I will give the matter careful consideration. Whipping is not a matter for me—it is for the Chief Whip, and I am sure he will make that point as well. I do understand the point he makes.

Pete Wishart (Perth and North Perthshire) (SNP): I thank the Leader of the House for announcing the business for next week. I paid tribute to Michael Meacher last evening at the start of the debate on the Joint Committee on Human Rights, but I associate the Scottish National party with your comments this morning, Mr Speaker.

This is not a particularly good week for those who are poor or struggling to make ends meet in Tory UK. The tax credit whammy will be followed by the remaining stages of the Welfare Reform and Work Bill next week as this Tory Government up their assault on the poorest, most marginal and most vulnerable in our society. Yesterday, my right hon. Friend the Member for Moray (Angus Robertson) raised the issue of suicides related to changes to benefit arrangements for disabled claimants right across the United Kingdom. Apparently, something like 60 live investigations have been undertaken by the Department for Work and Pensions into the circumstances

surrounding these suicides and deaths. May we have a debate—that is the only thing we can do—to assess what is happening to the poorest, most vulnerable and most marginal in our society? Will the Leader of the House publish the results of those DWP investigations?

One thing that happened in the past week—like Brigadoon, it appears once every 100 years—was the emergence of compassionate conservatism. The remarkable speech from the hon. Member for South Cambridgeshire (Heidi Allen) showed that there was some element of that within the callous heart of this Tory Government. We also hear about concerns from the Mayor of London, but such signs of compassion are to be chopped down just as they appear.

The Leader of the House is even considering suspending the work of the House of Lords because it dares to disagree with the Government. I am not a friend of the donors and the cronies in that place, but at least I respect their right to have their view on these issues. The Leader of the House seems to want to either suspend the business of the other place or flood it with even more Tory donors—a place that is already bloated with more than 800 Members. Here is another solution that the Scottish National party might support: how about just abolishing the place? That would solve the problem at once, because the Tories would get their way and face no opposition, having stamped down on dissent on their Back Benches. We would give that proposal a sympathetic hearing.

Mr Speaker, this is the last business questions at which I will be addressing you as an equal Member with my English colleagues, if the Leader of the House gets his way and consigns me and my colleagues to second-class status in this House following today's EVEL vote. Indeed, a week on Monday we might see the first certification from you, Mr Speaker, on the Housing and Planning Bill, which I know you are looking forward to with great interest. Can the Leader of the House confirm that that will be the first EVEL certification? While we are on the Bond theme, I think I prefer Austin Powers, because after today's vote the right hon. Gentleman will forever and a day be known as this House's Dr EVEL.

Chris Grayling: I think that I still have fractionally more hair than Dr Evil.

As the hon. Gentleman knows, I have great affection for him as a parliamentarian and very much enjoy debating with him, but I cannot help but feel that today we are getting some slightly mixed messages. For one extraordinary moment I thought that he was about to reinvent himself as a champion of the House of Lords, but then he returned to his view that it should be abolished, raising my expectations and then dashing them at a stroke. Whatever my views might be—I happen to have great regard for the other place, as well as for him—I am afraid that I do not have the power to suspend the House of Lords. Therefore, I counsel him not to believe everything he reads in the newspapers.

I also encourage the hon. Gentleman not to be quite so cynical about compassionate conservatism. Let us look at a couple of things that have happened under this Government. We are seeing child poverty come down, not up, despite all the warnings from the Labour party. One of the achievements I am most proud of is the fact that our party, both in coalition and now in a majority Government, has overseen a rapid drop in

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unemployment and in the number of children growing up in workless households. To me, that makes a crucial difference for the development of the next generation. That is something I will always be proud of, and something that I think lies at the heart of a compassionate Conservative party and what it is achieving for this country.

The hon. Gentleman also talked about the debates on tax credits, but I am afraid that he has a rather misguided view of our approach to the poor. I remind him that we are cutting the rents of social tenants, increasing childcare, perhaps to the tune of £2,500 a year, cutting taxation for people on low incomes and boosting the national living wage for people on low incomes. This is a Government who care about people on low incomes and are doing practical things to help them. However, we cannot continue to have a high-tax, high-welfare and low-wage society. We have to change that, and that is what we are doing.

Martin Vickers (Cleethorpes) (Con): I welcome my right hon. Friend's comments about what the Government are doing for the steel industry. Many of my constituents are affected by the redundancies in Scunthorpe, so we need regular information to pass to them. Will he give an absolute assurance that the Business Secretary will come to the House regularly to make oral statements, particularly after visiting Brussels for talks with the European Commission in the coming days?

Chris Grayling: That is an issue I take very seriously. I can give my hon. Friend an assurance that Ministers with responsibility will want to keep the House informed. Indeed, the Prime Minister has addressed the issue on more than one occasion. We will do everything we possibly can to ease the problems caused by a deeply distressing change in world steel markets and to protect the livelihoods of workers in this country, but at the same time we will continue to pursue a policy that has succeeded in bringing down unemployment right across the country. It is much better to deal with these challenges in the context of an improving labour market, rather than a worsening one.

Barbara Keeley (Worsley and Eccles South) (Lab): A large group of women born in the 1950s have been badly hit by the acceleration of the state pension age as a result of the Pensions Acts of 1995 and 2011, and many of them, including my constituents, were not informed of the changes, which clearly have a key impact on their future pensions incomes. My hon. Friend the Member for Denton and Reddish (Andrew Gwynne) requested a debate on the issue last week but received a fairly dismissive reply. This issue is very important to hundreds of thousands of women, so I ask the Leader of the House to reconsider.

Chris Grayling: I understood the points that were made last week, but I would simply say that Governments of both sides have taken the view in recent years that we have to increase the state pension age. It was done under the previous Labour Government and it has been done most recently under the coalition Government. We are seeing life expectancies rise massively in this country, and that is good. People are living far longer than they did before, but the inevitable consequence is an increasing

state pension age, and that is what has happened. If the hon. Lady wants a debate, she can certainly refer the matter to the Backbench Business Committee. I understand that it is difficult for the women concerned, but in a world where people live much longer than they did before, it is impossible to make a transition without some kind of impact on those involved.

Amanda Milling (Cannock Chase) (Con): This morning, the Competition and Markets Authority released a report outlining a number of issues in the current account market that affect personal and business customers. May we have a debate in Government time on what measures can be taken to create more competition in this market?

Chris Grayling: This is an important issue. We very much want consumers to get the best possible deal. It is a marketplace where issues have been raised, as we have seen from today's developments. The Treasury team, including the Minister responsible, will be here on Tuesday for questions. I encourage my hon. Friend to take part and make sure that Treasury Ministers respond appropriately to her concerns.

Ms Margaret Ritchie (South Down) (SDLP): With reference to the debate on the remaining stages of the Finance Bill, will the Leader of the House give consideration to a debate on the aggregates industry, which is particularly relevant to Northern Ireland as a taxation issue? We want to see the reinstatement of the aggregates levy credit scheme because our construction industry has to compete at a disadvantage with that in the Republic of Ireland.

Chris Grayling: I have listened carefully to what the hon. Lady says. This is always a challenge because it is so easy for business to flow one way or the other across the border. Treasury Ministers will be here for the debate on Monday, when she can raise her concerns, subject to your ruling it in order, Mr Speaker. There are also Treasury questions on Tuesday, so I am sure she will take advantage of that opportunity.

Mr Bernard Jenkin (Harwich and North Essex) (Con): When are the Government likely to provide time for a debate about the consequences of the agreements made with the Chinese Government this week concerning nuclear power, which are clearly very significant? Not only is the possibility of a new power station at Bradwell, overlooking my constituency, likely to have very detrimental effects on the marine ecology of the Blackwater estuary, but the ownership, construction and control of our critical national infrastructure appears not to have been fully considered by the National Security Council, and no proper assessment has been made of the consequences of these very significant decisions for our national security.

Chris Grayling: I will make sure that my hon. Friend's concerns are raised with Ministers. There will be a number of opportunities for these matters to be raised at oral questions and, should he so choose, in debates on upcoming Bills. Clearly, the issue could be looked at in some of the discussions on Treasury matters coming

up in the next few days. I will make sure that his concerns are raised and give careful consideration to what he has said.

Keith Vaz (Leicester East) (Lab): When can we have the details of the arrangements for the visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to the House when he visits this country in the middle of November? I know that you, Mr Speaker, are very supportive of the visit of Mr Modi to the House. Following the successful visit of the President of China, it is important that we should treat the leader of the world's largest democracy in a proper and appropriate way. That will be also be welcomed by constituents in Leicester East, which has the largest number of British Indians, and Harrow East, which has the second largest number of British Indians.

Chris Grayling: First, let me say on behalf of the Government and everyone in this House how much we are looking forward to Prime Minister Modi's visit. India is a country with which we have long and historic ties. It is a country that is a close friend and ally. It is also, as the right hon. Gentleman said, the largest democracy in the world. This is a friendship that we should cherish and support and always seek to sustain. I hope and expect that when Prime Minister Modi comes to London, we, as the mother of Parliaments, the Government, and, indeed, the whole country will extend the warm welcome to him that he has every right to expect. This will provide an opportunity for us to mark the very real and important contribution that the Indian community has made to this country. It is a real opportunity to celebrate our ties and that contribution.

Bob Blackman (Harrow East) (Con): Further to the question asked by the right hon. Member for Leicester East (Keith Vaz)—I shall call him my right hon. Friend—about the visit of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, which you also referred to earlier this week, Mr Speaker, could we have a statement on the Floor of the House from a Foreign Office Minister on the arrangements, so that this country's Indian diaspora can join Parliament in the celebrations? I am proud to represent the Indian diaspora in Harrow East and have no doubt that my right hon. Friend is proud to represent them in Leicester, too. Can we also note the fact that the Leader of the Opposition and the shadow Chancellor both sought to block a visa being issued to Narendra Modi only two years ago?

Chris Grayling: I am not sure about the exact mechanism you will choose, Mr Speaker—because it is first and foremost a matter for you and the Lord Speaker—to announce how this Parliament will receive the Prime Minister of India, but I know that the matter is very much on your minds. We expect to be able to give details to hon. Members shortly.

Mr Barry Sheerman (Huddersfield) (Lab/Co-op): May I ask the Leader of the House about proper celebrations of big anniversaries? It will be the centenary of Harold Wilson's birth on 11 March and I hope we will be able to mark it appropriately.

May I also push the Leader of the House on the need for a debate about the importance of this country's film industry? I was born near Shepperton studios and my brother and sister worked there. One of our neighbourhood

friends, John Glen, left school at 14 and went on to direct some of the James Bond movies. I want to know who pays taxes in the film industry and where they pay them.

Chris Grayling: The British film industry plays an enormously important role in this country and has a great tradition. There are not that many major adventure movies that do not have some kind of footprint in this country. That is a great tribute to this country's creative industry, and long should we cherish, support and be proud of it.

This House should note the anniversary of Harold Wilson's birth, because he was another great figure in our politics. His wife, Lady Wilson, is still alive and I hope that, as we mark the occasion, we will also think of her and that the House will send a message to her about how much we value not only her husband's contribution to the country, but her personal contribution during his years as Prime Minister.

John Glen (Salisbury) (Con): Can I just make clear to the House that, as much as I enjoy watching them, I have no association with James Bond films?

Yesterday we heard that comments made in this House formed part of a campaign that undermined a police investigation. Will my right hon. Friend grant time for a debate on the issue of how hon. Members conduct themselves in such serious matters?

Chris Grayling: My hon. Friend makes a very serious point. I heard the remarks made in the Home Affairs Committee yesterday, but the conduct that has been unveiled in the past few days is nothing less than shocking. From time to time, every one of us is presented with difficult information that may or may not have substance. Of course, we have a duty to ensure that that information is followed through properly, but this country has a fundamental principle of people being innocent until they are proven guilty. For any Member of this House, let alone one who holds high office in his party, to make public statements about innocence and guilt before the evidence has even been assessed properly is shocking and betrays the principles of this House. I hope and believe that the relevant organisations in this House that can take a look at this matter will do so with great seriousness.

Lady Hermon (North Down) (Ind): May I urge the Leader of the House to make time to discuss the very serious and sensitive issue of why successive British Governments have failed to secure compensation for the victims of Libyan-sponsored IRA violence not just in Northern Ireland, but throughout the United Kingdom, including the Harrods bombing? This really sensitive issue should be discussed on the Floor of the House.

Chris Grayling: I understand the seriousness of the hon. Lady's point. It is a genuine issue and there are tragic stories behind her question. I will ensure that her concerns are raised with my colleagues in the Foreign Office, and I suggest that she considers bringing this subject to the House, through either a Backbench Business Committee debate or an Adjournment debate, so that she can raise the issue directly with the Minister responsible.

Pauline Latham (Mid Derbyshire) (Con): May we have a debate on the NHS providing a purpose-built national centre of excellence to treat rare diseases such as epidermolysis bullosa?

Chris Grayling: My hon. Friend raises an important point, and I hope that the work being done in this country to develop an understanding of genetics, and to develop gene-based treatments for some of the most difficult and rare diseases, will make progress and help provide solutions to sufferers. I am confident that we will make real progress through the high-quality research being done in this country to tackle many diseases. I encourage my hon. Friend to return to this issue so that we do not take our foot off the gas in relation to research that makes such a difference to so many people.

Alex Salmond (Gordon) (SNP): I caution the Leader of the House against the idea from Labour Members about a celebration of the battle of Agincourt in parliamentary terms, since Scotland was basically on the other side—if I remember correctly, it was assisting a rebellion by progressive forces in England against the Lancastrian autocracy of Henry V.

On current military engagements, why is there no statement on developments in Syria? There are 12 combatant countries in Syria, and the Prime Minister, Foreign Secretary and Defence Secretary want Britain to be the unlucky No. 13. The new Canadian Government have withdrawn from military operations in Syria, and there has been not a single Government reaction or comment—not even a tweet—about that development. Does that silence speak volumes about a Government who regard military intervention as a substitute for political and diplomatic strategy?

Chris Grayling: We do not regard military intervention as a substitute for diplomatic strategy. The Government take military action only in extreme circumstances, and when it is essential and the right thing to do. Should we choose to take any sort of military action in the future we have committed to discuss the matter with the House, and should such circumstances arise, we will of course do so.

Mr Ian Liddell-Grainger (Bridgwater and West Somerset) (Con): We have a crisis in Avon and Somerset policing. Our police and crime commissioner has not had a chief constable for nearly her entire tenure. She has lost the confidence of the police and of MPs, and we have no mechanism to get rid of this person. We need a debate in Government time to decide on a mechanism for getting rid of PCCs who are not up to the job, are not capable of the job, and have not got the intellectual rigour to do it.

Chris Grayling: I understand my hon. Friend's point, and there will be such a debate, not in the Chamber, not in Government time, but over the next five months. I hope that we as Conservatives will put forward a better strategy for policing in that area, and that we will win the election next May.

Paul Farrelly (Newcastle-under-Lyme) (Lab): Illegal, large-scale waste dumping is a growing worry in north Staffordshire and east Cheshire, and the activities of one haulage company—Frizells, which is based in Crewe—

are of particular recent concern. May we have a debate on the effectiveness of the Environment Agency in licensing, monitoring, and enforcing the law on the dumping of waste materials?

Chris Grayling: This issue causes concern in a number of places. Just before the election I visited the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Thurrock (Jackie Doyle-Price), where we saw an extraordinary 1 km long illegal dump at the side of the Thames. It was absolutely shocking, and if the hon. Gentleman's constituency has suffered anything like that, I understand his frustration. If local councils are on the ball, they have powers to be tough about such issues. Where they have not been tough, the problem is much exacerbated. My advice is for the hon. Gentleman to talk to his local council and ensure that it uses the powers available.

Michael Tomlinson (Mid Dorset and North Poole) (Con): Will the Leader of the House make time for an urgent debate, in Government time, on parliamentary privilege, to ensure that it is not abused by any hon. Member?

Chris Grayling: This is an issue to which the House will want to return, perhaps through the Backbench Business Committee. We must not make the same mistake that perhaps some hon. Members have made in relation to putting guilt before innocence. There is due process. A Select Committee inquiry is taking place and there may well be another one. I believe there may also have been a referral to the Standards Committee. We need to let that process take shape. Every single Member of this House must remember that whatever information comes to us, people outside are innocent until proven guilty. We must conduct ourselves accordingly.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Mr Speaker: Order. As always, I am keen, if possible, to accommodate all colleagues, but the pressure on time is very real. The House will not be surprised to learn that the subsequent debate is very heavily subscribed, the consequence of which is that there is now a premium on brevity from Back Benchers and Front Benchers alike. We can be led in our important mission of brevity by Mr Thomas Brake.

Tom Brake (Carshalton and Wallington) (LD): Will the Leader of the House make time available for a full debate on the future of St Helier hospital, something which I know he would welcome? In response to a question I put to the Chancellor, he said the Government will support the project. Subsequently, I received a letter from the Secretary of State for Health who said that he will not.

Chris Grayling: The future of local hospital services are indeed very close to my heart, since St Helier is part of a trust that includes Epsom hospital. My prime concern is to make sure we retain services in our areas that are right for our constituents. I want them to have first-class services and I want the right treatments to be available to them. The right hon. Gentleman can be absolutely sure that I will continue to monitor carefully

the future of the trust. He will have the opportunity to raise the question directly with the Chancellor at Treasury questions next week.

Henry Smith (Crawley) (Con): May we have a debate on civilian use of remote-controlled aircraft or unmanned aerial vehicles near major airports such as Gatwick, as they pose an increasing safety risk and a potential security risk?

Chris Grayling: This is a very significant issue. The availability of drones is now making this a very real problem. The Civil Aviation Authority is looking at it carefully at the moment. Transport questions will be next Thursday and I encourage my hon. Friend to make sure Ministers keep focused on this issue.

Alex Cunningham (Stockton North) (Lab): People in my constituency and the surrounding constituencies are worried that hospital services are being reduced in our area. May we have a debate on the ill-founded proposal from NHS England to transfer neo-natal services from the high performing North Tees hospital to the South Tees hospital, which currently has major performance problems?

Chris Grayling: As somebody who has always been concerned about hospital services in my area, I understand the hon. Gentleman's point. Given the structure of the health service, I have found it most helpful to engage local GPs in a discussion. Indeed, I have found them very useful allies in ensuring that the local service configuration remains what people want.

Philip Davies (Shipley) (Con): You know better than anybody, Mr Speaker, that one of my favourite days of the year in this House is when we debate international women's day. On 19 November, it is international men's day. In the interests of gender equality, which I know many Members take very seriously, will the Leader of the House agree to a debate in this Chamber on international men's day, just as we have a debate on international women's day?

Chris Grayling: I congratulate my hon. Friend on being such an effective champion of equality in this House. I was not aware of international men's day, but I will look very carefully at the suggestion he makes.

Mary Glendon (North Tyneside) (Lab): The draft guidance released by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence not to approve Translarna was devastating news for the boys with Duchenne muscular dystrophy who need still to be able to walk in order to access the treatment. Will the Leader of the House seek a statement from the Department of Health, or even allocate time for a debate, on Translarna?

Chris Grayling: It is always a difficult balance when new drugs come on stream. The role of NICE is to evaluate whether such drugs really can make the difference that is sometimes suggested by those producing them. That can often lead to very difficult, unhappy and challenging decisions. We, as politicians, are not really in a position to judge the rights and the wrongs of the effectiveness of drugs. What I will always do is ensure that such concerns are raised with my right hon. Friend

the Secretary of State, so that he is aware of them. I am only too well aware of what a terrible disease this is. A number of children in my constituency are affected and, like the hon. Lady, I want them to receive the best possible treatment, but of course NICE has to take difficult decisions as well.

Mr Stewart Jackson (Peterborough) (Con): May we have a debate on first wave academies? The Voyager academy in Walton, Peterborough, administered by the Comberton academy trust, recorded catastrophic GCSE results last summer—19% grades A* to E—but nevertheless the regional commissioner has failed to take proper action to remove the trust sponsors. Will my right hon. Friend have a word with our right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education to encourage her to use her powers to intervene and sack failing academies for the benefit of my constituents in Walton and across Peterborough?

Chris Grayling: I will indeed do that. The measures passing through both Houses at the moment are designed to make sure we can deal with failing schools as effectively as possible. It is important that we celebrate the success of our education system while being willing to act when it is not there. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will be before the House on Monday, and I encourage my hon. Friend to raise this issue then as well.

Alison Thewliss (Glasgow Central) (SNP): The Leader of the House will be aware that the air accident investigations branch is publishing a report tomorrow on the Clutha helicopter crash in Glasgow, in which 10 people lost their lives on 29 November 2013. Will he grant a debate on this tragedy and the report on the lessons to be learned from it, particularly given the implications for the safety of helicopters?

Chris Grayling: I caution Members to wait for the report to come out. It was a tragic incident and lessons must absolutely be learned, but let us wait for the report. If lessons or questions arise from it that need to be discussed in the House, those in the Department for Transport and I will give careful consideration to how that can best be done.

Mr Alan Mak (Havant) (Con): NatWest bank in my constituency is planning to close its Hayling Island branch. This follows closures in Leigh Park and Emsworth. Will the Leader of the House grant a debate on bank branch closures? Banks must remain at the heart of our successful and booming high streets.

Chris Grayling: Having experienced several bank closures in my own constituency recently, I understand my hon. Friend's point. Of course, most of us now bank online, so branches are not always viable, but they can be a central part of a local high street and community. The responsible Treasury Minister is before the House on Tuesday, and I encourage my hon. Friend to make his point then so that we can do everything possible to preserve local banking.

Jonathan Edwards (Carmarthen East and Dinefwr) (PC): Now that the Ministry of Justice consultation on proposed court closures in Wales and England has

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closed, may we have a debate in Government time, or at least an oral statement, so that those of us who have significant concerns about the effect of these proposals on the communities we represent can put them on the record?

Chris Grayling: I will ensure that that point is made to my right hon. Friend the Lord Chancellor. Of course, these are difficult decisions, and I am sure he will want to make sure he gives hon. Members on both sides the opportunity to raise their concerns with him.

Jason McCartney (Colne Valley) (Con): Love the Lorry week starts on Monday, and the Road Haulage Association estimates that 45,000 drivers will retire in the next few years, causing an acute shortage of drivers. May we have a debate on the state of our road haulage industry?

Chris Grayling: I know that this is a matter of great concern to my right hon. and hon. Friends in the Department for Transport. I hope that the Government's focus on apprenticeships will provide a vehicle to bring more people into this important industry, which is a lifeline for many businesses in the country. We must do everything we can to ensure a steady flow of new drivers.

Neil Gray (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP): Will the Leader of the House make a statement on the costs of the options appraisal report on the Palace of Westminster refurbishment works? I politely remind him that I requested this information from him on 9 July. Perhaps he could furnish colleagues with that information in a written or oral statement.

Chris Grayling: It is technically a matter for the House of Commons Commission to release that information, to which he will have access as a member of the Committee of both Houses that is studying these issues. As co-Chair of that Committee, I do not want any secrecy around what we are doing; I want it to be transparent. I have a simple goal: to deliver a solution that protects the integrity and historic nature of the building but in a way that causes minimal disruption to the workings of Parliament and offers the best possible value for the taxpayer.

Rehman Chishti (Gillingham and Rainham) (Con): There are communities in the middle east facing persecution for their beliefs, including the Baha'is and Yazidis in Iraq, but there are also good examples of tolerance and co-existence, such as in Bahrain. In the capital, Manama, there are 19 churches, three Hindu temples and a synagogue, all within close proximity to one another. This shows tolerance and freedom. May we have an urgent debate on the Floor of the House to discuss religious freedom and—a point I made earlier—the Baha'is in Iran.

Chris Grayling: Religious persecution, wherever it takes place, is utterly and totally unacceptable. I think we should all be particularly distressed at the moment at the way in which minority religions—Christian, Yazidi and others—are being treated so brutally by ISIL. If ever there were a justification for what we are seeking to

do in the military action we are taking in Iraq, it would be the sight of what happened to the Yazidi community and the extraordinarily brutal way in which young women have been taken as sex slaves. That is a kind of evil that we should always stand up against.

Paul Flynn (Newport West) (Lab): When can we debate early-day motion 599?

[*That this House judges the Chinese investment in Hinkley Point C to be an act of desperation to rescue the failed EPR design after all prudent investors, including Centrica, have fled; is appalled by catastrophic delays and financial losses at all other EPR reactors; notes that Flamanville is six years late and costs had tripled to 10.5 billion euros and the Finnish EPR is seven years late and four billion euros over budget; and believes gifting China with unparalleled rights over UK nuclear development will seriously debilitate the UK's future economy.*]

It deals with the disastrous record of EPR nuclear reactors, none of which works. One is five years late, the other seven years late; one €4 billion over budget and the other €10 billion over budget. As all the sensible investors have fled from the Hinkley Point future disaster, should not Chinese investment be judged for what it is—a cynical sprat to catch the mackerel of control in perpetuity of the British nuclear industry, which will greatly debilitate the future economy and rob us of future jobs?

Chris Grayling: No, I do not believe that to be the case. The first thing to say, of course, is that this project is being led by the French. Let me remind the hon. Gentleman that one reason why we do not have a nuclear power station building capability in this country is that, under last Labour Government, Gordon Brown sold it.

Chris Green (Bolton West) (Con): Will the Leader of the House allow MPs the opportunity to discuss the proper role of parliamentary privilege and whether it has been abused under a partisan campaign by any Member of this House?

Chris Grayling: I should apologise for not answering the question from the shadow Leader of the House about the Privileges Committee, which is due to be set up in the next few days. Members will know that it tends to mirror the Standards Committee in that the parliamentary Members are the same. The Standards Committee has to be established before the Privileges Committee can be. As I say, the Privileges Committee is due to be set up in the next few days and, by the sound of it and from experience of its work, it has quite a big project still ahead of it.

Ian Paisley (North Antrim) (DUP): I would like to associate myself and my party with the fine tribute you made, Mr Speaker, to Michael Meacher. I am sure that the high esteem in which he was held across the entire House will be of some comfort to his family.

When a statement is brought forward about the recent visit—successful visit—by the President of the People's Republic of China, will the Leader of the House ensure that some comment is made about our agri-food trade with the country? Many promises have been made over the years to include pork and other food produce being

exported to China, but very little has been delivered. Will the right hon. Gentleman ensure that some comment is made and that the matter is urgently brought to the attention of the Prime Minister during the current talks?

Chris Grayling: I will most certainly ensure that the attention of the Prime Minister and his office is brought to this. We are keen to find all avenues for expanding our trade—both with China and, indeed, other international partners such as India, which is why we are looking forward so much, among other reasons, to the visit of the Indian Prime Minister. I take on board the hon. Gentleman's point, and will make sure that it is drawn to the Prime Minister's attention.

Andrew Bridgen (North West Leicestershire) (Con): I have recently been informed that the annual inflation rate in the transport construction sector is around 19%, while general inflation is running at zero. This is because of the threat of HS2, sucking up all the required materials and labour for future years. May we have a debate about the impact of the HS2 project on the cost of improvements to conventional rail and other infrastructure projects going forward?

Chris Grayling: My hon. Friend raises an important point. I will make sure that my right hon. Friend the Transport Secretary is aware of his concerns. I have to say that this a challenge of success rather than failure. This Government are spending substantial amounts of money on infrastructure. If we are creating demand problems, they will, I hope, create an opportunity for new businesses to emerge to service that work. I think we should be proud that we are delivering infrastructure improvements to this country—something that it has waited for much too long.

Helen Jones (Warrington North) (Lab): Will the Leader of the House find time for a debate on freedom of speech in the workplace? Given that cleaners working for contractors in the Foreign Office have been disciplined for what is seen as the "crime" of asking for a living wage, will the right hon. Gentleman arrange for the Foreign Secretary to attend that debate so that we can express our dismay at what has happened? Will he draw this to the attention of other Ministers to ensure that no contractors working in Government offices treat their workers in this way in future?

Chris Grayling: I can only speak as a Minister, but I would not countenance circumstances in which anyone working in my Department was unable to raise concerns about their terms and conditions. I do not know the details of the situation in the Foreign Office, but I know my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary very well, and I am sure that he shares my view.

Wendy Morton (Aldridge-Brownhills) (Con): Would my right hon. Friend consider granting a debate on parliamentary privilege, given that comments made by an hon. Member have formed part of what a serving police officer has called a "baseless witch-hunt"?

Chris Grayling: I think that the extraordinary situation that the House faces over the conduct of the hon. Gentleman will prompt a general debate in the House

about the behaviour of Members of Parliament and the way in which privilege works and is used. I also think that, most immediately, it is important for the individual case to be dealt with, and I am confident that it will be, but once that has happened we shall have to ask some serious questions about what has taken place, especially in view of the fact that it has been carried out by someone with such a senior rank in the House.

Callum McCaig (Aberdeen South) (SNP): On Tuesday next week, a statutory instrument, the Onshore Hydraulic Fracturing (Protected Areas) Regulations 2015, will be discussed. It would allow fracking wells to be drilled through protected groundwater source areas, which I think would horrify a number of Members. Will the Leader of the House arrange for the debate to take place in the Chamber, so that all Members can take part in it?

Chris Grayling: In a previous role, I was the Minister responsible for the Health and Safety Executive, which is in turn responsible for safety standards throughout our energy industry. I believe, and the Government believe, that fracking is a necessary part of providing a sustainable supply of energy for the future, but we also believe that we have world-leading standards of safety in works through the industry. For those reasons, I simply do not share the hon. Gentleman's concern.

Mr Robin Walker (Worcester) (Con): With Trafalgar day just past, I am sure that Members in all parts of the House will welcome the launch of the Joining Forces credit union, which will offer affordable credit products to people serving in our armed forces, to veterans, and to those people's families. Will the Leader of the House provide time for a debate so that Members throughout the House can draw attention to the availability of the new credit union, and will he join me in paying tribute to the hon. Member for Harrow West (Mr Thomas) and our hon. Friend the Member for East Hampshire (Damian Hinds) for their long campaign to secure a credit union for the armed forces?

Chris Grayling: What we learn about during sessions such as this is the great work done by individual Members of Parliament to make a difference. That gives the lie to what was said earlier by the hon. Member for Perth and North Perthshire (Pete Wishart) about the attitude of our party. What we have in our party is a group of representatives of their constituencies who work to make a difference both for local groups and for those who have served our country, and we should be proud of those efforts.

Jonathan Reynolds (Stalybridge and Hyde) (Lab/Co-op): May we have a further statement on Government policy as it relates to Syrian refugees? I have constituents who were born in the United Kingdom, but whose parents and sister are Syrian nationals still trapped in Syria. My constituents can support their parents here in the UK without any recourse to public funds, and normally they would simply apply for a visa, but Syria clearly does not represent a normal set of circumstances. Will the Leader of the House make some inquiries within the Government, and perhaps send me in writing any advice that I can pass on to my constituents?

Chris Grayling: I will certainly pass on the hon. Gentleman's concerns to the Home Office. What he has said, however, shows why it is so important that we are supporting refugees in the neighbouring countries and providing a refuge for a number of refugees from the camps there, rather than simply taking some of those who have been strong enough and able enough to find their way to Europe.

Mr Nigel Evans (Ribble Valley) (Con): Recent events involving the use of parliamentary privilege when serious allegations have been made clearly serve as a cautionary tale for all of us in the House when we name individuals, but it is also clear to anyone who reads the books written by Paul Gambaccini and Jim Davidson that an investigation carried out in the full glare of publicity makes the terror and trauma worse. Might we possibly have a statement from the Home Office in the future about what action may be taken to protect those against whom allegations are made?

Chris Grayling: My hon. Friend makes an important point, and one that he perhaps more than anyone in this House understands well. It is important that we have a police force with the freedom to take actions in the interests of justice. I think of the case of Stuart Hall, where allegations that appeared to be questionable initially proved to be very serious and very substantial once his name entered the public arena. I was brought up in a world where the reporting tended to be, "A 30-year-old man is helping police with inquiries," not the publishing of the full details of the person arrested. Unless our police forces, and indeed all involved in our criminal justice system, are absolutely certain that there is very good reason for putting the name of a suspect into the public arena, they need to think very long and hard before doing so. That lesson needs to be at the heart of the way in which this House behaves, but clearly in recent times it has not been.

Jeff Smith (Manchester, Withington) (Lab): The Government have made a number of attacks since the election in May on support for green energy. In light of reports this morning that our current emissions targets may be insufficient to meet the challenge on global warming, may we have a debate in Government time on support for sustainable energy?

Chris Grayling: In the past few months the level of electricity generation from sustainable sources in this country has passed 25%. That is far in excess of anything that was envisaged in the early days by the previous Labour Government, so I do not think we have anything to be embarrassed about in our record on sustainable and renewable energy. Also, in a week when the Labour party has been complaining of the high energy costs faced by our steel producers, it is surely right and proper that we in this country do not seek to impose on consumers an ever higher burden of support from either the taxpayer or from bill payers without recognition of the impact that that can have.

Andrew Stephenson (Pendle) (Con): Following the questions raised by my hon. Friends the Members for Salisbury (John Glen), for Mid Dorset and North Poole (Michael Tomlinson), for Bolton West (Chris Green), for Ribble Valley (Mr Evans) and others, it is clear to

the Leader of the House that many hon. Members wish to have a debate on parliamentary privilege, particularly when we now hear that comments made in this House led to an unlawful interview and what has been described as a baseless witch hunt.

Chris Grayling: I can see that feelings on this issue are very strong. It is important to allow the Select Committee to do its work first, but I will take the comments of hon. Members away today and think about how best to address them. These are very serious and important matters. When we have such a clear example of questionable conduct in this House, we clearly have to learn the lessons from it.

Kirsten Oswald (East Renfrewshire) (SNP): The Ministry of Defence's latest published list of military assets includes jets officially retired in 1993 and grounded helicopters and tanks retired in the mid-1990s. Clearly it would be dangerous to rely on this information, so may we have a statement or debate in Government time on the UK's real military capability?

Chris Grayling: I suspect that it is as simple as the armed forces retaining old equipment for training purposes. That is what happens at airports for fire crews and in training in a variety of fields. The hon. Lady is perhaps seeing things that are not actually present.

Tom Pursglove (Corby) (Con): The crisis facing the steel industry has brought into sharp focus the importance of buying British products. May we have a full debate in Government time on how procurement policy across Government can better help our industries and give them a welcome boost?

Chris Grayling: My hon. Friend is absolutely right and in the case of steel we have worked hard to do that already. I am pleased that 97% of the contracts for steel for Crossrail, the biggest engineering project in Europe, have gone to British sources. It is important that we continue to focus our procurement policy, where we possibly can, on local sourcing and the support of local business. I commit absolutely to that being at the heart of what the Government are trying to do, particularly in what has happened to our steel industry.

Steve McCabe (Birmingham, Selly Oak) (Lab): Since the Leader of the House is so confident about his Government's record on sustainable energy, may we have a debate on Government plans to cut energy feed-in tariffs and the reports that that will cost us 20,000 jobs, devastate the rooftop solar industry and lead to 1 million fewer solar panel installations by 2020? That is not very green or efficient.

Chris Grayling: We take decisions on the basis of what is workable and affordable, and we will see whether the impact of the policy is quite what the hon. Gentleman suggests.

Marion Fellows (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP): On Tuesday, the Business Secretary failed to mention the Scottish steel industry once in answering an urgent question on job losses in the industry. Will the Leader of the House now secure an urgent debate in Government

time on the future of the industry in Scotland, so that we can hold this Government to account for the promises made but not delivered?

Chris Grayling: Of course, when we talk about the international challenges facing this country, we are referring to the UK as a whole. That is a given. Many aspects of the way in which we as a Government interact with the steel industry are devolved. Transport is an example. It is disappointing that, while we are working hard in England and Wales to ensure that we source as much steel for transport projects as possible from local suppliers, the same has not happened in Scotland, whose own Administration have responsibility in this area.

Andrew Gwynne (Denton and Reddish) (Lab): The reply from the Leader of the House to my hon. Friend the Member for Worsley and Eccles South (Barbara Keeley) made it quite clear that he did not understand the issues surrounding the state pensions of ladies born in the 1950s. May I politely suggest that he meet representatives of Women Against State Pension Inequality, in order to understand that they are not against the equalisation of the state pension age, but that this is an equality issue? Those women have been clobbered not once but twice, and there is no transition. When he has met them, will he change his mind about having a debate on the matter?

Chris Grayling: I have already had discussions with people who are affected, and I understand why they are frustrated, but the Government have to take difficult decisions about transitions and increasing the state pension age. That is what took place under the previous Government, and it is taking place under this Government. When life expectancy rises sharply—which is good—we have to raise the state pension age, and we have to take difficult decisions about how to do that.

Alan Brown (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (SNP): Since I was elected in May, 44 new Lords have been sworn in to the other place, despite this Government's pledge to cut the cost of politics. Given that, yesterday, even the hon. Member for North East Somerset (Mr Rees-Mogg) expressed his concern about the performance of the other place, will the Leader of the House now agree, on the second time of asking, to bring forward a debate in Government time on the merits, performance and value for money of the other place—because we might now all agree on abolition?

Chris Grayling: We are definitely back to the status quo, following the brief glimpse of support for the other place from the hon. Member for Perth and North Perthshire (Pete Wishart). This issue has been debated exhaustively in recent years. There have been at least three debates on it since I was elected, and there have been discussions in the other place. I have no doubt that the other place will in due course have further thoughts about how it should evolve and develop, but this Government's greater priority at the moment is to sort out our economic challenges and address some of the other issues that our nation is facing. Frankly, reform of the House of Lords is not at the top of our priority list right now.

Points of Order

12.12 pm

Chris Bryant (Rhondda) (Lab): On a point of order, Mr Speaker. The Leader of the House was absolutely right to refer earlier to the tragedy of Aberfan, the anniversary of which was yesterday, but may I gently point out to him that it took place 49 years ago, not 50? The 50th anniversary will be next year, and I hope, having heard his comments, that we will be commemorating it properly in the House at that time.

The Leader of the House also made a mistake about the Standards Committee and the Privileges Committee. This is an important matter, because several pieces of business urgently need to go to the Privileges Committee. He said that the membership of the Standards Committee and that of the Privileges Committee were the same, but that is not true. The Standards Committee is already set up, although it has just lost a member. A Conservative Member had to resign because they had not fully declared their earnings. That Committee has lay members, but the Privileges Committee does not. There is absolutely no reason why the Privileges Committee could not have been set up already, and it is the job of the Leader of the House to make sure that that happens as a matter of urgency.

The Leader of the House of Commons (Chris Grayling): Further to that point of order, Mr Speaker. I used the word “mirror”, and the point I was making was that the Standards Committee has now moved from having 10 members to having seven. The debate with the new Chairman of the Privileges Committee has been about whether we also reduce the membership of that Committee from 10 to seven. That will happen, in order to mirror the membership of the Standards Committee, which now has seven parliamentary members. The Committee will now be set up, and it clearly has some work to do.

Paul Farrelly (Newcastle-under-Lyme) (Lab) *rose*—

Mr Speaker: Order. I will come to the hon. Gentleman. I am saving him for a suitable point.

I shall briefly respond to the point of order made by the hon. Member for Rhondda (Chris Bryant) and to the response from the Leader of the House. It is of course a matter of fact that the Privileges Committee will not contain lay members. The House has made its own judgment on that matter. It is also a matter of fact that it falls to the Government to take the lead in the establishment of that Committee. It is not a matter for the Chair. It is further a matter of fact—noted by the hon. Member for Rhondda and accepted by the Leader of the House—that that Committee will have a substantial amount of work to do, and that a certain urgency attaches to it. Some of that work hails from matters that came to the attention of the House—and received much wider scrutiny in the media elsewhere—up to four years ago. It is therefore essential that that Committee be established soon. I have every confidence that the Leader of the House will now expedite the matter without any further delay.

Paul Farrelly: On a point of order, Mr Speaker. I have given notice to the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport that I shall be raising this point of order.

[Paul Farrelly]

Following the phone hacking scandal and the Leveson inquiry, the House agreed a package of measures to strengthen the independent self-regulation of the press. They included sections 40 to 42 of the Crime and Courts Act 2013, which were designed to create an incentive to join a recognised regulator and to protect public interest journalism in libel and privacy cases. However, those measures still need a commencement order from the Government. In a speech to the Society of Editors this week, the Secretary of State said:

“I am not convinced the time is right for the introduction of these costs provisions”.

This is a major change of stance by the Government over a key Leveson recommendation, and arguably one that thwarts the will of the House, yet it was not announced here in the Chamber or during questioning in front of the Select Committee last month. What steps can we, and you Mr Speaker, take to ensure that the Secretary of State makes such announcements to the House first, rather than doing so outside, to a favoured captive audience?

Mr Speaker: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his point of order, and for his courtesy in giving me advance notice of it. On the basis of what he has told me in writing, I have to tell him that it is not for me to conclude whether there has been a change of policy or not. I leave others to make that judgment. However, it is a long-established principle in this place that if a Minister has a policy announcement to make, that announcement should first be made to the House. The Minister concerned will therefore have to consider whether he or she believes that a change is involved, and to draw the appropriate conclusions. The hon. Gentleman is a sufficiently adroit and dextrous Member of the House to be well aware, if

he is dissatisfied with the development of events in the coming days, of the toolkit available to Members to draw the urgent attention of the House to a matter that they believe warrants its consideration.

Owen Smith (Pontypridd) (Lab): On a point of order, Mr Speaker. May I ask for your guidance on how we might secure an opportunity for the House to question the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions about the desperately inadequate response to the Work and Pensions Select Committee report on the extraordinarily important issue of benefit sanctions? The response has been snuck out this morning in a written statement, it is four months late, and it does not appear to address any of the principal recommendations. In particular, it does not address the recommendation on an independent review into the matter of those people who have died while subject to benefit sanctions. That is an extraordinarily shoddy way for the Government to behave. May I also ask for guidance on whether the Select Committee might, under the new Back-Bench business procedures, seek time to debate the issue and question the Secretary of State on why he has snuck out this response and why it is so poor?

Mr Speaker: Certainly, Backbench Business Committee debates can take place, and the hon. Gentleman requires no encouragement from me on that front. More widely, I note that he is a most assiduous member of the shadow Cabinet and that he is somewhat of a highbrow academic type. He will therefore know perfectly well what the opportunities are to air matters in the House. I have a hunch that he simply wanted a prime-time opportunity to tweak the Government's tail. I know that he would not think it right to abuse his privileges as a Member on the Front Bench, however. These matters can be aired on a subsequent occasion, but time is pressing and we will leave it there for today.

Standing Orders (Public Business)

[Relevant documents: First Report from the Procedure Committee, Government proposals for English votes for English laws Standing Orders: interim report, HC 410; Oral evidence taken before the Scottish Affairs Committee on 8 September and 13 October 2015, on English votes for English laws, HC 399; Written ministerial statement issued on 20 October 2015, on Government proposals for English votes for English laws Standing Orders: Interim report (First report of Session 2015-16 HC 410)—Government Response.]

Mr Speaker: We now come to the main business, which is a motion in the name of the Leader of the House on the Standing Orders (Public Business). Under the Order of the House agreed on Tuesday, the debate may continue till 4 pm, when the Chair must put the questions necessary to dispose of proceedings on the motion, including the questions on any amendments selected, which may then be moved. A list of the amendments that I have selected for debate has been circulated.

We shall proceed—I hope this is helpful to the House—as follows. The Leader of the House will open the debate and move the motion in his name. The debate will then take place on the main motion. Those Members whose amendments have been selected may speak to those amendments in the debate, but they will not be called to move them formally until the end of the debate. The House will then have an opportunity to decide on the amendments moved in sequence, and finally to decide the main motion either as it stands or as amended. I hope that colleagues will feel that the choreography of this matter is now clear, and it should lend itself to the efficient management of the time available.

12.21 pm

The Leader of the House of Commons (Chris Grayling): I beg to move,

That

(1) The following new Standing Orders and changes to Standing Orders be made:

“CERTIFICATION OF BILLS, CLAUSES AND SCHEDULES ETC: GENERAL

83J. Certification of bills etc. as relating exclusively to England or England and Wales and being within devolved legislative competence

(1) The Speaker shall, before second reading-

- (a) consider every public bill presented by a Minister of the Crown or brought from the Lords and taken up by a Minister of the Crown, and
- (b) certify any such bill, or any clause or schedule of any such bill, which, in the Speaker’s opinion-
 - (i) relates exclusively to England or to England and Wales, and
 - (ii) is within devolved legislative competence.

(2) A clause or schedule relates exclusively to England or to England and Wales if (disregarding any minor or consequential effects outside the area in question) it applies only to England or (as the case may be) to England and Wales.

(3) A clause or schedule which relates exclusively to England is within devolved legislative competence if-

- (a) it would be within the legislative competence of the Scottish Parliament to make any corresponding provision for Scotland in an Act of that Parliament,
- (b) it would be within the legislative competence of the National Assembly for Wales to make any corresponding provision for Wales in an Act of that Assembly, or

(c) it would be within the legislative competence of the Northern Ireland Assembly to make any corresponding provision for Northern Ireland in an Act of that Assembly and the corresponding provision would deal with a transferred matter.

(4) A clause or schedule which relates exclusively to England and Wales is within devolved legislative competence if-

- (a) it would be within the legislative competence of the Scottish Parliament to make any corresponding provision for Scotland in an Act of that Parliament, or
- (b) it would be within the legislative competence of the Northern Ireland Assembly to make any corresponding provision for Northern Ireland in an Act of that Assembly and the corresponding provision would deal with a transferred matter.

(5) A bill-

- (a) relates exclusively to England and is within devolved legislative competence if every clause and every schedule of it relates exclusively to England and is within devolved legislative competence;
- (b) relates exclusively to England and Wales and is within devolved legislative competence if every clause and every schedule of it relates exclusively to England and Wales and is within devolved legislative competence.

(6) In deciding whether a bill relates exclusively to England or to England and Wales, the Speaker shall treat any clause or schedule whose only effects are minor or consequential effects outside the area in question as relating exclusively to that area.

(7) In deciding whether a clause or schedule is within devolved legislative competence, the Speaker may take account of any amendments to the legislative competence of the Scottish Parliament, the National Assembly for Wales or the Northern Ireland Assembly which-

- (a) are not in force at the time of certification, but
- (b) are to come into force on a day already fixed by law,

if the Speaker considers that the clause or schedule is itself only likely to come into force on or after that day; and, for this purpose, an amendment which is in force but applies only in relation to a future period of time (or a clause or schedule which is likely to come into force but so apply) is to be treated as not being in force (or as not likely to come into force) until the start of that period (being a day already fixed by law).

(8) In deciding whether to certify a bill, clause or schedule under this order, the Speaker-

- (a) may consult two members of the Panel of Chairs who are appointed for this purpose by the Committee of Selection on a session by session basis, and
- (b) shall disregard any provision inserted by the House of Lords which, in the Speaker’s opinion, has the sole objective of ensuring that Standing Order No. 80(a) (Privilege (bills brought from the Lords)) will apply to the bill.

(9) The Speaker shall announce any decision under this order to the House.

(10) This order shall not apply to the following bills-

- (a) a bill which is certified under Standing Order No. 97(1) (Scottish Grand Committee (bills in relation to their principle)),
- (b) a bill referred to the Welsh Grand Committee under Standing Order No. 106(1) (Welsh Grand Committee (bills)),
- (c) a bill referred to the Northern Ireland Grand Committee under Standing Order No. 113(1) (Northern Ireland Grand Committee (bills in relation to their principle)),
- (d) a bill which falls to be considered by the select committee appointed under Standing Order No. 140 (Joint Committee on Consolidation, &c., Bills),
- (e) a bill whose main purpose is to give effect to proposals contained in a report by a Law Commission,

- (f) a tax law rewrite bill,
- (g) a bill introduced under the Statutory Orders (Special Procedure) Act 1945 or for confirming a provisional order.

(11) This order-

- (a) shall not affect the right of every Member to vote on-
 - (i) the consideration of estimates, and
 - (ii) ways and means motions and motions for money resolutions (other than motions to which Standing Order No. 83U applies), and
- (b) shall not apply to a Consolidated Fund or Appropriation Bill.

83K. Committal and recommitment of certified England only bills

(1) A bill certified by the Speaker under Standing Order No. 83J as relating exclusively to England and being within devolved legislative competence may only be committed to-

- (a) a public bill committee (to which Standing Order No. 86(2)(iv) (Nomination of general committees) applies), or
- (b) the Legislative Grand Committee (England).

(2) A bill whose current certification by the Speaker (whether under Standing Order No. 83J or 83L) is that it relates exclusively to England and is within devolved legislative competence may only be recommitted to-

- (a) a public bill committee (to which Standing Order No. 86(2)(iv) (Nomination of general committees) applies), or
- (b) the Legislative Grand Committee (England).

83L. Reconsideration of certification before third reading

(1) Paragraph (2) applies in relation to every bill which-

- (a) was eligible for certification under Standing Order No. 83J (whether or not the bill, or any clause or schedule of it, was so certified),
- (b) has been amended since its second reading, and
- (c) has completed the stages before its third reading.

(2) The Speaker shall, before a motion may be made for the third reading of the bill-

- (a) reconsider the bill, and
- (b) certify the bill, or any clause or schedule of it, if the bill or clause or schedule, in the Speaker's opinion-
 - (i) relates exclusively to England or to England and Wales, and
 - (ii) is within devolved legislative competence.

(3) Paragraph (4) applies in relation to every bill which-

- (a) was certified (whether in whole or in part) by the Speaker under Standing Order No. 83J,
- (b) has been amended since its second reading, and
- (c) has completed the stages before its third reading.

(4) The Speaker shall, before a motion may be made for the third reading of the bill, certify any amendment made to the bill since second reading which, in the opinion of the Speaker-

- (a) related to the bill so far as certified under Standing Order No. 83J,
- (b) was not made by the Legislative Grand Committee (England) or a public bill committee to which Standing Order No. 86(2)(iv) (Nomination of general committees) applies, and
- (c) either-
 - (i) resulted in there being no certification under paragraph (2) when there would otherwise have been such a certification, or
 - (ii) changed the area to which a certification under paragraph (2) would otherwise have related.

(5) Any amendment certified under paragraph (4) shall be certified as relating exclusively to the area to which the certification under paragraph (2) would have related had that amendment not been made (and there shall be no certification as to devolved legislative competence).

(6) The Speaker shall announce any decision under paragraph (2) or (4) to the House.

(7) The Speaker shall, wherever possible, announce the Speaker's decisions under paragraph (2) or (4) immediately after the conclusion of proceedings on the previous stage of the bill.

(8) Paragraphs (2) to (8) of Standing Order No. 83J apply for the purposes of certification of bills, clauses, schedules and amendments under this order as they apply for the purposes of certification of bills, clauses and schedules under that order.

83M. Consent Motions for certified England only or England and Wales only provisions

(1) Paragraphs (2) and (3) apply where-

- (a) a bill, or clauses or schedules of a bill, have been certified under Standing Order No. 83J as relating exclusively to England or to England and Wales and being within devolved legislative competence, and the bill has completed the stages before its third reading without having been amended,
- (b) a bill or clauses or schedules of a bill have been certified under Standing Order No. 83L(2) as relating exclusively to England or to England and Wales and being within devolved legislative competence, or
- (c) amendments have been certified under Standing Order No. 83L(4) as relating exclusively to England or to England and Wales.

(2) A Consent Motion which gives consent to the bill, clauses or schedules or amendments must be passed by the legislative grand committee for the area to which the certification relates before a motion may be made for the third reading of the bill.

(3) If a Minister of the Crown indicates his or her intention to move a Consent Motion, the House shall forthwith resolve itself into the legislative grand committee which is to consider the motion.

(4) If a Minister of the Crown indicates his or her intention to move both a Consent Motion which is to be passed by the Legislative Grand Committee (England and Wales) and a Consent Motion which is to be passed by the Legislative Grand Committee (England)-

- (a) the House shall forthwith resolve itself into the Legislative Grand Committee (England and Wales) to consider the motion for that committee,
- (b) on moving that motion, the Minister shall also inform the committee of the terms of the motion to be moved in the Legislative Grand Committee (England),
- (c) any debate in the Legislative Grand Committee (England and Wales) may also relate to the motion for the Legislative Grand Committee (England), and
- (d) on conclusion of proceedings in the Legislative Grand Committee (England and Wales)-
 - (i) the House shall forthwith resolve itself into the Legislative Grand Committee (England),
 - (ii) a Minister of the Crown shall forthwith move the motion for that committee, and
 - (iii) proceedings in the Legislative Grand Committee (England) shall be brought to a conclusion forthwith.

(5) Standing Orders Nos. 83E (Programme orders: conclusion of proceedings on consideration and up to and including third reading) and 83I (Programme orders: supplementary provisions) shall apply for the purpose of bringing proceedings to a conclusion in accordance with paragraph (4)(d)(iii) above (whether or not those proceedings are subject to a programme order) as they apply for the purpose of bringing proceedings to a conclusion in accordance with a programme order.

(6) On the conclusion of proceedings on a Consent Motion (or, in a case falling within paragraph (4), the conclusion of proceedings on the second Consent Motion), the chair shall report the decision of the committee (or, as the case may be, the decisions of the committees) to the House.

(7) Subject to paragraph (8), a Consent Motion shall be in the form either "That the Committee consents to the XXX Bill" or "That the Committee consents to [the following certified clauses

[and schedules] of the XXX Bill] [and certified amendments made by the House to the XXX Bill]...”; and in the latter case the motion shall identify the clauses or schedules or amendments in question.

(8) If a Minister of the Crown wishes to propose that a committee should not consent to certain clauses or schedules or amendments, the Consent Motion shall be in the form “That the Committee consents to [the following certified clauses [and schedules] of the XXX Bill] [and certified amendments made by the House to the XXX Bill]... and does not consent to [the following certified clauses [and schedules] of the XXX Bill] [and certified amendments made by the House to the XXX Bill]...”; and in any such case the motion shall identify the clauses or schedules or amendments in question.

(9) A Consent Motion may only be moved by a Minister of the Crown and may be moved without notice.

(10) Proceedings under this order may be proceeded with, though opposed, after the moment of interruption.

83N. Reconsideration of bills so far as there is absence of consent

(1) Where a legislative grand committee decides on a Consent Motion under Standing Order No. 83M to withhold consent to a bill or any clause or schedule of a bill or any amendment-

- (a) the bill shall be set down for reconsideration unless a Minister of the Crown moves a motion for the bill to be reconsidered (and any such motion may be made without notice, the question on any such motion shall be put forthwith and, if the motion is passed, the House shall proceed forthwith to reconsideration), and
- (b) any order for the third reading of the bill shall be discharged.

(2) Reconsideration of the bill shall be for the sole purpose of considering amendments to the bill to resolve matters in dispute as a result of the withholding of consent.

(3) Paragraphs (2) and (4) to (8) of Standing Order No. 83L, and Standing Order No. 83M, shall apply following reconsideration of a bill in relation to the bill so far as reconsidered as they apply in relation to a bill; but as if-

- (a) in Standing Order No. 83L(4)-
 - (i) the reference to any amendment since second reading were a reference to any amendment made on reconsideration, and
 - (ii) sub-paragraphs (a) and (b) were omitted, and
- (b) in the case of any matter, there were a deemed certification in relation to the area or areas to which any relevant previous certification under Standing Order No. 83L(2) or (4) related if there would not otherwise be a certification in relation to that area or areas.

(4) If, following reconsideration of a bill and the steps taken by virtue of paragraph (3), a legislative grand committee withholds consent to the whole bill (whether or not amended on reconsideration), the bill may not be given a third reading and shall not pass.

(5) Paragraph (6) applies if, following reconsideration of a bill and the steps taken by virtue of paragraph (3), a legislative grand committee withholds consent to-

- (a) any clause or schedule of the bill (whether or not amended on reconsideration), or
- (b) any amendment to the bill, but does not withhold consent to the whole bill.

(6) The bill shall be amended so as to remove any provisions of the bill which are not agreed by the House and any relevant legislative grand committee; and it is the bill as so amended which proceeds to its next stage.

(7) A Minister of the Crown may move a motion for the bill as so amended to be considered again (“consequential consideration”); and such a motion may be made without notice and the question on any such motion shall be put forthwith.

(8) If the motion is passed, the House shall proceed forthwith to consequential consideration of the bill as so amended; and any order for the third reading of the bill shall be discharged.

(9) Consequential consideration of the bill as so amended shall be for the sole purpose of considering minor or technical amendments in consequence of the removal of provisions under paragraph (6).

(10) Proceedings on reconsideration or consequential consideration, or a motion for reconsideration or consequential consideration, may be proceeded with, though opposed, after the moment of interruption.

(11) References in the standing orders of this House to consideration of a bill on report shall, so far as relevant and subject to paragraph (12), include reconsideration or consequential consideration of a bill under this order.

(12) In its application by virtue of paragraph (11), Standing Order No. 72 (Consideration of bill as amended in committee of the whole House) has effect as if the words “, as amended in a committee of the whole House,” were omitted.

83O. Consideration of certified motions or amendments relating to Lords Amendments or other messages

(1) The Speaker shall consider any motion relating to a Lords amendment to a bill or to any other message from the Lords in respect of a bill.

(2) The Speaker shall certify the motion if, in the Speaker’s opinion, it-

- (a) relates exclusively to England and is within devolved legislative competence, or
- (b) relates exclusively to England and Wales and is within devolved legislative competence.

(3) For the purposes of paragraph (2) a motion relates exclusively to England or to England and Wales and is within devolved legislative competence if it or any provision of it-

- (a) relates to a Lords amendment, or an item in another message, which would, if agreed, result in-
 - (i) a clause or schedule as amended which relates exclusively to England or to England and Wales and is within devolved legislative competence,
 - (ii) a new or unamended clause or schedule which so relates and is within devolved legislative competence, or
 - (iii) the omission of a clause or schedule which so relates and is within devolved legislative competence, or
- (b) contains proposals which would, if agreed, so result.

(4) The Speaker shall also certify the motion if, in the Speaker’s opinion, it or any provision of it-

- (a) relates to a Lords amendment, or an item in another message, which would, if agreed, result in a clause or schedule, which relates exclusively to England or to England and Wales and is within devolved legislative competence, ceasing to so relate or to be within devolved legislative competence, or
- (b) contains proposals which, if agreed, would so result.

(5) Any motion certified under paragraph (4) shall be certified as relating exclusively to the area to which the clause or schedule relates (and there shall be no certification as to devolved legislative competence).

(6) The same motion may be certified in relation to different areas under paragraphs (2) and (4) or either of them.

(7) If a division is held on a motion certified under this order, the motion shall be agreed to only if, of those voting in the division-

- (a) in the case of a motion certified in relation to England, a majority of Members and a majority of Members representing constituencies in England,
- (b) in the case of a motion certified in relation to England and Wales, a majority of Members and a majority of Members representing constituencies in England and Wales, and

- (c) in the case of a motion certified both in relation to England and in relation to England and Wales, a majority of Members, a majority of Members representing constituencies in England and a majority of Members representing constituencies in England and Wales, vote in support of the motion.

(8) The Speaker shall, in selecting motions relating to Lords amendments or other messages, have regard to the extent to which such motions are drafted so that they can be certified under this order by virtue of every provision of them meeting the test in paragraph (3)(a) or (b) or (4)(a) or (b).

(9) If a motion relating to a Lords amendment or other message is disagreed to under this order because one of the groups voting in the division has not voted in support of it while another has, the decision of the House shall be-

- (a) in the case of a motion to disagree (or agree) to a Lords amendment or an item in another message, to disagree with it, and
- (b) in any other case, such decision as would have the effect of leaving the bill so far as it relates to that matter in the same position as it was before the Lords amendment or other message was received from the Lords.

(10) The Speaker shall announce any decision under paragraph (2) or (4) to the House.

(11) This order does not apply in relation to-

- (a) any motion relating to a bill which was not eligible for certification under Standing Order No. 83J, and
- (b) any of the following motions-
- (i) any ways and means motion or motion for a money resolution,
- (ii) any programme motion,
- (iii) any order of consideration motion,
- (iv) any motion of, or relating to, the Reasons Committee, and
- (v) any other motion of a similar kind to a motion falling within any of paragraphs (i) to (iv).

(12) In this order-

- (a) references to motions are to be read as including, so far as relevant, references to amendments to Lords amendments and references to amendments to the bill, and
- (b) the reference in paragraph (3)(a)(i) to clauses or schedules as amended includes, in particular, a reference to clauses or schedules which would be amended by virtue of their territorial application being modified otherwise than in the clauses or schedules themselves.

(13) Paragraphs (2) to (4), (7) and (8)(a) of Standing Order No. 83J apply for the purposes of deciding under this order whether clauses or schedules relate exclusively to England or to England and Wales and are within devolved legislative competence as they apply for the purposes of the certification of clauses or schedules under that order; and, in the case of a bill which relates exclusively to England or to England and Wales, paragraph (6) of that order also applies for the purpose of deciding under this order whether clauses or schedules so relate.

CERTIFICATION OF INSTRUMENTS AND MOTIONS: GENERAL

83P. Certification of instruments

- (1) The Speaker shall-
- (a) consider every instrument to which this order applies, and
- (b) certify any such instrument which, in the Speaker's opinion-
- (i) relates exclusively to England or to England and Wales, and
- (ii) is within devolved legislative competence.
- (2) An instrument-

- (a) relates exclusively to England and is within devolved legislative competence if every provision of it relates exclusively to England and is within devolved legislative competence;

- (b) relates exclusively to England and Wales and is within devolved legislative competence if every provision of it relates exclusively to England and Wales and is within devolved legislative competence.

(3) Paragraphs (2) to (4), (6) and (7) of Standing Order No. 83J apply for the purposes of this order; and as so applied those paragraphs have effect as if-

- (a) references to a bill were to an instrument, and
- (b) references to a clause or schedule were to a provision of an instrument.

(4) In deciding whether to certify an instrument under this order the Speaker may consult two members of the Panel of Chairs who are appointed for this purpose by the Committee of Selection on a session by session basis.

(5) The Speaker shall announce any decision under this order to the House.

(6) This order applies to any instrument (whether or not in draft) upon which proceedings may be taken in pursuance of an Act of Parliament where the instrument-

- (a) meets any of conditions A to C, and
- (b) is not a report within paragraph (1)(a) to (c) of Standing Order No. 83R.

(7) Condition A is that the instrument-

- (a) stands referred to a Delegated Legislation Committee pursuant to paragraph (3) of Standing Order No. 118 (Delegated Legislation Committees), or
- (b) does not stand so referred because sub-paragraph (a) of that paragraph applies to it.

(8) Condition B is that a member has given notice of a motion of the kind mentioned in paragraph (4)(a) of Standing Order No. 118 in relation to the instrument and the instrument-

- (a) stands referred to a Delegated Legislation Committee, or
- (b) has been set down for consideration in the Chamber on a particular day.

(9) Condition C is that the Regulatory Reform Committee has made a recommendation of the kind mentioned in paragraph (1) or (2) of Standing Order No. 18 (Consideration of draft legislative reform orders etc.) in relation to the instrument.

83Q. Deciding the question on motions relating to certified instruments

(1) This order applies to the following motions-

- (a) a motion to approve a certified instrument;
- (b) a motion of the kind mentioned in paragraph (4)(a) of Standing Order No. 118 in relation to a certified instrument;
- (c) a motion to disagree with a report of the Regulatory Reform Committee that contains a recommendation of the kind mentioned in paragraph (2) of Standing Order No. 18 in relation to a certified instrument;
- (d) an amendment to a motion within sub-paragraph (a) or (b).

(2) If a division is held on a motion to which this order applies, the motion shall be agreed to only if, of those voting in the division-

- (a) a majority of Members, and
- (b) a majority of Members representing qualifying constituencies,

vote in support of the motion.

(3) In this order-

- (a) "a certified instrument" means an instrument which has been certified under Standing Order No. 83P as relating exclusively to England or to England and Wales;

- (b) “qualifying constituencies” means constituencies in the part of the United Kingdom to which the instrument has been certified as relating exclusively.

83R. Deciding the question on certain other motions

- (1) This order applies to the following motions-

- (a) a motion to approve-
- (i) a report which has been laid before the House under paragraph 5 of Schedule 7B to the Local Government Finance Act 1988 (local government finance report) and which contains a determination under section 78 of that Act (revenue support grant), or
 - (ii) a report which has been laid before the House under section 84A of that Act (revenue support grant: amending report);
- (b) a motion to approve a report which has been laid before the House under section 52ZD of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 (referendums relating to council tax increases: principles);
- (c) a motion to approve a report which has been laid before the House under section 46 of the Police Act 1996 (police grant);
- (d) a motion for a resolution under section 26(2)(b)(ii) of the Higher Education Act 2004 (student fees);
- (e) an amendment to a motion within sub-paragraph (d).

(2) If a division is held on a motion to which this order applies, the motion shall be agreed to only if, of those voting in the division-

- (a) a majority of Members, and
 - (b) a majority of Members representing qualifying constituencies,
- vote in support of the motion.

- (3) In this order “qualifying constituencies” means-

- (a) in the case of a motion within paragraph (1)(a), (b), (d) or (e), constituencies in England;
- (b) in the case of a motion within paragraph (1)(c), constituencies in England or Wales.

CERTIFICATION OF FINANCE BILLS, INSTRUMENTS AND MOTIONS

83S. Modification of Standing Orders Nos. 83J to 83N in their application to Finance Bills

(1) In their application in relation to a bill within paragraph (2), Standing Orders Nos. 83J to 83N shall have effect with the modifications in paragraphs (3) to (5).

- (2) A bill is within this paragraph if-

- (a) it is a Finance Bill, or
- (b) it is a bill which, before second reading, only contained provision which would be within the ordinary scope of a Finance Bill (or would be if the provision was to take effect in the current financial year).

- (3) In Standing Order No. 83J-

- (a) in paragraph (1)(b)(i) after “Wales” insert “or to England, Wales and Northern Ireland”;
- (b) in paragraph (2) after “Wales” (in both places) insert “or to England, Wales and Northern Ireland”;
- (c) after paragraph (4) insert-
“*(4A)* A clause or schedule which relates exclusively to England, Wales and Northern Ireland is within devolved legislative competence if it would be within the legislative competence of the Scottish Parliament to make any corresponding provision for Scotland in an Act of that Parliament.”;
- (d) in paragraph (5) after sub-paragraph (b) insert “;”;
(c) relates exclusively to England, Wales and Northern Ireland and is within devolved legislative competence if every clause and every schedule of it relates exclusively to England, Wales and Northern Ireland and is within devolved legislative competence”;
- (e) in paragraph (6) after “Wales” insert “or to England, Wales and Northern Ireland”; and

- (f) after paragraph (11) insert-

“(12) The test in paragraph (3)(a), (4)(a) or (4A) is also met if the clause or schedule concerned sets a rate of income tax in respect of any kind of income for a person who is resident in the United Kingdom for tax purposes but is not a Scottish taxpayer where the corresponding rate for a Scottish taxpayer may be set by a resolution of the Scottish Parliament under Chapter 2 of Part 4A of the Scotland Act 1998 (and the reference in paragraph (7) to the legislative competence of the Scottish Parliament includes a reference to that Chapter)”.

(4) In Standing Order No. 83L, in paragraph (2)(b)(i) after “Wales” insert “or to England, Wales and Northern Ireland”.

- (5) In Standing Order No. 83M-

- (a) in paragraph (1) after “Wales” (in each place) insert “or to England, Wales and Northern Ireland”;

- (b) for paragraph (4) substitute-

“(4) If a Minister of the Crown indicates his or her intention to move Consent Motions which are to be passed by more than one legislative grand committee-

- (a) the order in which the Consent Motions are to be considered is:

- (i) any motion to be considered by the Legislative Grand Committee (England, Wales and Northern Ireland),
- (ii) any motion to be considered by the Legislative Grand Committee (England and Wales), and
- (iii) any motion to be considered by the Legislative Grand Committee (England),

- (b) the House shall forthwith resolve itself into the legislative grand committee which is to consider the first Consent Motion,

- (c) on moving that motion, the Minister shall also inform the committee of the terms of any other Consent Motion to be moved in any other legislative grand committee,

- (d) any debate in the first legislative grand committee may also relate to any other Consent Motion to be moved in any other legislative grand committee,

- (e) on conclusion of proceedings in the first legislative grand committee-

- (i) the House shall forthwith resolve itself into the legislative grand committee which is to consider the next Consent Motion,
- (ii) a Minister of the Crown shall forthwith move that motion, and
- (iii) proceedings in the second legislative grand committee shall be brought to a conclusion forthwith, and

- (f) on conclusion of proceedings in the second legislative grand committee, sub-paragraphs (e)(i) to (iii) shall apply in relation to any third Consent Motion and a third legislative grand committee as they apply in relation to the second Consent Motion and the second legislative grand committee.”;

- (c) in paragraph (5) for “(4)(d)(iii)” substitute “(4)(e)(iii) and (f)”;

- (d) in paragraph (6) for “second Consent Motion” substitute “Consent Motions”.

83T. Modification of Standing Orders Nos. 83P and 83Q in their application to financial instruments

(1) In their application in relation to a financial instrument, Standing Orders Nos. 83P and 83Q shall have effect with the following modifications.

- (2) In Standing Order No. 83P-

- (a) in paragraph (1)(b)(i) after “Wales” insert “or to England, Wales and Northern Ireland”;

- (b) in paragraph (2) after sub-paragraph (b) insert “;
 - (c) relates exclusively to England, Wales and Northern Ireland and is within devolved legislative competence if every provision of it relates exclusively to England, Wales and Northern Ireland and is within devolved legislative competence”; and
 - (c) in paragraph (3) for the words from the beginning to “apply” substitute “Paragraphs (2) to (4A), (6), (7) and (12) of Standing Order No. 83J (as modified by Standing Order No. 83S(3))”.

(3) In Standing Order 83Q(3)(a) after “Wales” insert “or to England, Wales and Northern Ireland”.

(4) For the purposes of this order an instrument is a “financial instrument” if it is made or proposed to be made in exercise of powers conferred by (and only by)-

- (a) an Act which resulted from a Finance Bill;
- (b) a provision of an Act which would have been within the ordinary scope of a Finance Bill.

83U. Certification of motions upon which a Finance Bill is to be brought in which would authorise provision relating exclusively to England, to England and Wales or to England, Wales and Northern Ireland

(1) This order applies to any founding motion which, if passed, would-

- (a) authorise a bill to include provision which would be within the ordinary scope of a Finance Bill, or
- (b) authorise a Finance Bill to include provision which would not be within the ordinary scope of a Finance Bill.

(2) The Speaker shall-

- (a) consider every motion to which this order applies, and
- (b) certify any such motion which, in the Speaker’s opinion, falls within paragraph (3), (4) or (5).

(3) A motion falls within this paragraph if it would, if passed, only authorise a bill to include provision which-

- (a) relates exclusively to England, and
- (b) is within devolved legislative competence.

(4) A motion falls within this paragraph if it would, if passed, only authorise a bill to include provision which-

- (a) relates exclusively to England and Wales, and
- (b) is within devolved legislative competence.

(5) A motion falls within this paragraph if it would, if passed, only authorise a bill to include provision which-

- (a) relates exclusively to England, Wales and Northern Ireland, and
- (b) is within devolved legislative competence.

(6) In deciding whether to certify under this order a motion to which this order applies, the Speaker may consult two members of the Panel of Chairs who are appointed for this purpose by the Committee of Selection on a session by session basis.

(7) The Speaker shall announce any decision under this order to the House.

(8) Paragraphs (2) to (4A), (7) and (12) of Standing Order No. 83J (as modified by Standing Order No. 83S(3)) apply for the purposes of this order; and as so applied those paragraphs have effect as if references to a clause or schedule were to a provision.

(9) In paragraph (1) “founding motion” means a motion upon which a bill is to be brought in.

83V. Deciding the question on motions certified under Standing Order No. 83U

(1) If a division is held on a motion which has been certified under Standing Order No. 83U, the motion shall be agreed to only if, of those voting in the division-

- (a) a majority of Members, and
 - (b) a majority of Members representing qualifying constituencies,
- vote in support of the motion.

(2) In this order “qualifying constituencies” means-

(a) in a case where the motion concerned was certified as falling within paragraph (3) of Standing Order No. 83U, constituencies in England;

(b) in a case where the motion concerned was certified as falling within paragraph (4) of that standing order, constituencies in England or Wales;

(c) in a case where the motion concerned was certified as falling within paragraph (5) of that standing order, constituencies in England, Wales or Northern Ireland.

LEGISLATIVE GRAND COMMITTEES

83W. Legislative Grand Committees

(1) There shall be-

- (a) a Legislative Grand Committee (England),
- (b) a Legislative Grand Committee (England and Wales), and
- (c) a Legislative Grand Committee (England, Wales and Northern Ireland).

(2) The Legislative Grand Committee (England) shall consist of all Members representing constituencies in England.

(3) The Legislative Grand Committee (England and Wales) shall consist of all Members representing constituencies in England and all Members representing constituencies in Wales.

(4) The Legislative Grand Committee (England, Wales and Northern Ireland) shall consist of-

- (a) all Members representing constituencies in England,
- (b) all Members representing constituencies in Wales, and
- (c) all Members representing constituencies in Northern Ireland.

(5) A Deputy Speaker or a member of the Panel of Chairs may chair a legislative grand committee.

(6) The functions of the Legislative Grand Committee (England) shall be-

- (a) to consider any bills committed or recommitted to the committee in accordance with Standing Order No. 83K, and
- (b) to consider any Consent Motions under Standing Order No. 83M which relate to the committee.

(7) The functions of the Legislative Grand Committee (England and Wales) and the Legislative Grand Committee (England, Wales and Northern Ireland) are to consider any Consent Motions under Standing Order No. 83M which relate to them.

(8) Any Member who is not a member of a legislative grand committee may take part in the deliberations of the committee but shall not vote or make any motion or move any amendment.

83X. Legislative Grand Committees: supplementary

(1) The procedure of this House applicable to a committee of the whole House shall, so far as relevant, be applicable to a legislative grand committee.

(2) Accordingly, references in the standing orders of this House to a committee of the whole House or to the House in committee, or similar references, shall be read as references to the relevant legislative grand committee.

(3) Paragraphs (1) and (2) do not apply to Standing Order No. 82 (Business Committee).”

In Standing Order No. 12 (House not to sit on certain Fridays), in line 20, after “notices of” insert “Consent Motions under Standing Order No. 83M (Consent Motions for certified England only or England and Wales only provisions) and of”.

In Standing Order No. 51 (Ways and means motions), in line 12, after “forthwith” insert “or, in the case of a motion to which Standing Order No. 83U applies, forthwith upon the announcement of the Speaker’s decision with respect to the motion under that standing order”.

After Standing Order No. 63(4) (Committal of bills not subject to a programme order) insert-

“(5) In the case of a bill certified by the Speaker under Standing Order No. 83J as relating exclusively to England and being within devolved legislative competence-

- (a) committal under this order is subject to Standing Order No. 83K (Committal and recommittal of certified England only bills), and
- (b) committal under this order to a public bill committee is accordingly to a public bill committee to which Standing Order No. 86(2)(iv) (Nomination of general committees) applies.
- (6) Nothing in this order enables a bill to be committed to any legislative grand committee other than to the Legislative Grand Committee (England) in accordance with Standing Order No. 83K.”

In Standing Order No. 64 (Notices of amendments, &c., to bills), in line 2, after “schedules” insert “, of Consent Motions under Standing Order No. 83M (Consent Motions for certified England only or England and Wales only provisions)”.

In Standing Order No. 73 (Report of bills committed to public bill committees), in line 4, after “bill committee” insert “or the Legislative Grand Committee (England)”.

In Standing Order No. 83A (Programme motions), in line 30, after “and” insert “up to and including”.

In Standing Order No. 83B (Programming committees)-

- (a) in line 2, after “reading” insert “or in legislative grand committee or on reconsideration or consequential consideration”, and
- (b) in line 14, after “reading” insert “or in legislative grand committee or on reconsideration or consequential consideration”.

In Standing Order No. 83C (Programming sub-committees)-

- (a) in line 22, after “and” insert “up to and including”,
- (b) in line 62, after “and” insert “up to and including”, and
- (c) in line 75, after “and” insert “up to and including”.

In Standing Order No. 83D (Programme orders: conclusion of proceedings in public bill committee or in committee of the whole House)-

- (a) in the title, after “House” insert “etc.”, and
- (b) in line 2, after “bill committee” insert “, in the Legislative Grand Committee (England) when exercising functions under Standing Order No. 83W(6)(a) (Legislative Grand Committees)”.

In Standing Order No. 83E (Programme orders: conclusion of proceedings on consideration or third reading)-

- (a) in the title for “or” substitute “and up to and including”,
- (b) in line 2, after “and” insert “up to and including”, and
- (c) in line 22, at end, insert-

“(5) In the application of this order to proceedings on a Consent Motion in legislative grand committee, the references to the Speaker in paragraph (2) are to be read as references to the Chairman of Ways and Means or either Deputy Chairman.”

After Standing Order No. 83F(7) (Programme orders: conclusion of proceedings on consideration of Lords amendments), at the end of line 35, insert-

- “(8) Where a single question would be put under paragraph (3)(a), (4)(a) or (7) in circumstances where some or all of the amendments concerned are certified under Standing Order No. 83O (Consideration of certified motions or amendments relating to Lords Amendments or other messages) in relation to a particular part or parts of the United Kingdom, the Speaker shall put forthwith-
- (a) a single question on any amendments for which the certification is in relation to England,
- (b) a single question on any amendments for which the certification is in relation to England and Wales,

(c) a single question on any amendments for which the certification is both in relation to England and in relation to England and Wales, and

(d) a single question on any amendments for which there is no certification.

(9) Where a single question would be put under paragraph (6) in circumstances where, if there were (or are) separate motions to agree in relation to each of the remaining Lords amendments, some or all of the motions would be (or are) certified under Standing Order No. 83O (Consideration of certified motions or amendments relating to Lords Amendments or other messages), the Speaker shall put forthwith-

(a) in the case of any remaining Lords amendments for which there would be (or are) motions certified in relation to England, the question that this House agrees with the Lords in those amendments,

(b) in the case of any remaining Lords amendments for which there would be (or are) amendments certified in relation to England and Wales, the question that this House agrees with the Lords in those amendments,

(c) in the case of any remaining Lords amendments for which there would be (or are) motions certified both in relation to England and in relation to England and Wales, the question that this House agrees with the Lords in those amendments, and

(d) in the case of any remaining Lords amendments for which there would be (or are) motions which would not be (or are not) certified, the question that this House agrees with the Lords in those amendments.

(10) If a division is held on a question put under paragraph (8) or (9), the amendments shall be agreed to only if, of those voting in the division-

(a) in a case falling within sub-paragraph (a) of that paragraph, a majority of Members and a majority of Members representing constituencies in England,

(b) in a case falling within sub-paragraph (b) of that paragraph, a majority of Members and a majority of Members representing constituencies in England and Wales,

(c) in a case falling within sub-paragraph (c) of that paragraph, a majority of Members, a majority of Members representing constituencies in England and a majority of Members representing constituencies in England and Wales, and

(d) in a case falling within sub-paragraph (d) of that paragraph, a majority of Members,

vote in support of them.

(11) Paragraph (9) of Standing Order No. 83O shall apply to a decision made by virtue of paragraph (10) above on a question as it applies in relation to a decision made by virtue of paragraph (7) of that order on a motion.”

In Standing Order No. 83G (Programme orders: conclusion of proceedings on further messages from the Lords)-

(a) in line 12, after “shall” insert “, subject to paragraphs (6) and (7),”, and

(b) at the end of line 14 insert-

“(6) Paragraph (7) applies where, if there were (or are) separate motions to agree in relation to each of the remaining Lords proposals, some or all of the motions would be (or are) certified under Standing Order No. 83O (Consideration of certified motions or amendments relating to Lords Amendments or other messages).

(7) The Speaker shall put forthwith-

(a) in the case of any remaining Lords proposals for which there would be (or are) motions certified in relation to England, the question that this House agrees with the Lords in those proposals,

- (b) in the case of any remaining Lords proposals for which there would be (or are) motions certified in relation to England and Wales, the question that this House agrees with the Lords in those proposals,
 - (c) in the case of any remaining Lords proposals for which there would be (or are) motions certified both in relation to England and in relation to England and Wales, the question that this House agrees with the Lords in those proposals, and
 - (d) in the case of any remaining Lords proposals for which there would be (or are) motions which would not be (or are not) certified, the question that this House agrees with the Lords in those proposals.
- (8) If a division is held on a question put under paragraph (7), the proposals shall be agreed to only if, of those voting in the division-
- (a) in a case falling within sub-paragraph (a) of that paragraph, a majority of Members and a majority of Members representing constituencies in England,
 - (b) in a case falling within sub-paragraph (b) of that paragraph, a majority of Members and a majority of Members representing constituencies in England and Wales,
 - (c) in a case falling within sub-paragraph (c) of that paragraph, a majority of Members, a majority of Members representing constituencies in England and a majority of Members representing constituencies in England and Wales, and
 - (d) in a case falling within sub-paragraph (d) of that paragraph, a majority of Members,
- vote in support of them.
- (9) Paragraph (9) of Standing Order No. 83O shall apply to a decision made by virtue of paragraph (8) above on a question as it applies in relation to a decision made by virtue of paragraph (7) of that order on a motion."

In Standing Order No. 83I (Programme orders: supplementary provisions), in line 2, after second "House" insert "or in legislative grand committee".

In Standing Order No. 86 (Nomination of general committees), in line 33, at end insert-

- "(iv) for the consideration of any bill certified by the Speaker under Standing Order No. 83J (or, in the case of recommitment after recertification, Standing Order No. 83L) as relating exclusively to England and being within devolved legislative competence, the Committee of Selection, in nominating Members to a public bill committee, shall have regard to the composition of that part of the House consisting of Members representing constituencies in England; and no Member who does not represent a constituency in England shall be nominated to such a committee"; and

(2) The new Standing Orders, and the changes to Standing Orders, made by this order do not apply in relation to-

- (a) any bills which have had a Second Reading in this House on or before the day on which this order is made,
- (b) any bills introduced in the previous Parliament which have been carried over into this Parliament,
- (c) any instruments or draft instruments laid on or before the day on which this order is made, and
- (d) any motions agreed to on or before that day.

This is the third time that the proposals have been debated by the House, and the second occasion for debate that I promised back in July. I have endeavoured throughout this process to listen to the views expressed

by hon. Members about the way all this is conducted and to respond as positively as possible, notwithstanding the timetable commitments in our manifesto.

I should add that the reason why we have timetabled votes for 4 pm is that I was aware there were likely to be a number of Divisions, and I was particularly concerned to ensure that Members from constituencies a little further away could get away to catch planes and trains to get back to their constituencies this evening.

I will endeavour to keep my remarks relatively short so that all Members who want to speak can do so, and I hope other Front Benchers will do the same. I want to start by setting out briefly why we are pursuing this strategy. If Members will forgive me, I will do that before I take interventions. I will obviously be happy to take interventions a little later.

I am a staunch Unionist. I support the devolution of powers to the different parts of the United Kingdom. I want the United Kingdom to remain secure and intact. I was delighted when the Scottish people voted clearly to stay in the United Kingdom. The whole is greater than the sum of our parts. Indeed, I have great affection for all the countries of the United Kingdom, so I cheered when Wales and Northern Ireland secured their places in Euro 2016 and was dismayed last Sunday when Scotland was so narrowly pipped at the post at Twickenham. I will always cheer the home nations in competition.

I have, however, listened with concern to some in England who have expressed less enthusiasm than me about the future of the UK. I am sure I am not alone in having experienced strong views from an English perspective about the nature and extent of devolution, and the sense that somehow the other parts of the United Kingdom are getting something that the English are not. It is clearly not in the interests of the Union for us to see mounting resentment in any part of the United Kingdom. That is why I looked carefully at the polling evidence that suggests a majority of Scots think the approach we are taking is fair.

To all of those in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland who share my concern for the future of the Union, I say this: it cannot be in the interests of any of us to see the English people becoming cynical about the Union and even perhaps wishing for its end. That is why I think these proposals will help to secure what most reasonable people would think was a fair settlement across the United Kingdom.

Andrew Gwynne (Denton and Reddish) (Lab): Will the Leader of the House give way?

Chris Grayling: I will give way in a while, but I will just make some progress before I do.

When the Prime Minister asked me to take over dealing with the issue of English votes for English laws—I should emphasise that it is sometimes English and Welsh votes for English and Welsh laws—I looked very hard at the proposals I inherited from my predecessor. I found what I believe to be a sensible set of proposals, which fit well with the Government's strategy on devolution. I found a package that, taken overall, should strengthen the Union through giving greater devolution to all parts of the United Kingdom—the Scotland Bill and the draft Wales Bill, which has been published in the past

few days. I found a package that creates fairer Parliaments and fairer Assemblies, and that gives the English a strong voice on English matters without—I emphasise, without—excluding MPs from other parts of the United Kingdom from participation in this House.

Andrew Gwynne: *rose*—

Hywel Williams (Arfon) (PC) *rose*—

Kevin Brennan (Cardiff West) (Lab) *rose*—

Chris Grayling: I will give way in a moment. Let me just make this point.

Kevin Brennan *rose*—

Hon. Members: Sit down!

Madam Deputy Speaker (Mrs Eleanor Laing): Order. Nobody tells anyone to sit down except the Chair. The hon. Member for Cardiff West (Kevin Brennan) should know when to resume his seat; nor should he challenge the House from a sedentary position.

Kevin Brennan: Well tell them to shut up then.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. If the hon. Member for Cardiff West had whispered that remark, I would not have heard it. As he made it very loudly, I could not help but hear it, and I must ask him to apologise to the House for using that language.

Kevin Brennan: Of course I apologise to you, Madam Deputy Speaker. I hope we are not going to be second-class MPs in this House with that sort of attitude. [*Interruption.*]

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. We will have a calm and sensible debate this afternoon, and I hope that tempers will now be kept under control.

Chris Grayling: I did say that I would give way in a moment but just wanted to set out some remarks first; that was all.

This has been one of the frustrations of the debate on this issue. Anyone who reads these proposals will know full well that they do not exclude any Member of Parliament from any vote in this Chamber in which they can currently take part. It is simply not the case. Yet I keep hearing about MPs being excluded. That will simply not happen. I hope we will not hear that error repeated in today's debate.

Mr David Hanson (Delyn) (Lab): I am grateful to the Leader of the House for giving way on that point. Will he explain why, for example, Lord Thomas of Gresford, who has fought four elections in north-east Wales and lost every one—he has never won an election—but sits in another place, will have rights over my constituents in moving motions on an amendment, whereas I—I have won six elections to this place—will not have the same rights?

Chris Grayling: The answer to that question is that in 1997, in the wake of the general election, the right hon. Gentleman's party passed a devolution package meaning

that, on issues such as health and education, he had no right to vote on issues affecting his constituents, but that people sitting in the Assembly did. Members of the House of Lords can vote on English matters, but it is of course for the Assembly in Cardiff to vote on matters affecting his constituents in areas such as health, education and transport.

Andrew Gwynne: If the Leader of the House does not think it is unfair for Lord Thomas of Gresford to be able to make a judgement on legislation on which my right hon. Friend the Member for Delyn (Mr Hanson) cannot make a judgment, what about Lord Roberts of Llandudno, who has fought five general elections for the Liberal Democrats and lost all five, but will be able to make laws on which Welsh MPs cannot have a say?

Chris Grayling: The irony of this, as I keep saying, is that both the hon. Gentleman and the right hon. Member for Delyn (Mr Hanson) will continue to be able to vote on matters relating to health, education and other issues in relation to the constituencies of Government Members, with the exception of those who represent Wales and Scotland, whereas they cannot vote on those issues in relation to their own constituencies. That is the point of the devolution settlement that Labour set up.

Mark Spencer (Sherwood) (Con): Will the Leader of the House reflect on the abbreviation for this legislation, which seems to have been boiled down to EVEL? Will he reflect on changing it to something more appropriate, such as laws only votable in England? The House could then could vote for LOVE, not EVEL.

Chris Grayling: I cannot confess to being the greatest fan of the acronym, but, sadly, that had been set before I came along. I rather like my hon. Friend's alternative. Certainly, as I always say to my friends in the Scottish National party in this House, we may disagree violently about the future of our Union and we may disagree on a whole range matters, but I value our debates and their presence in the House. We will continue to have a lively time, but I hope also a friendly time, working together.

Dr Philippa Whitford (Central Ayrshire) (SNP): I was shocked to hear on Radio Scotland this morning, across my porridge, a senior member of the Secretary of State for Scotland's team criticising the involvement of SNP Members in the debate on assisted dying. He picked out those who voted and particularly those who spoke. I understand that there are Members in the Chamber who feared we would come down with claymores to smash up the furniture, but when we speak up for Scotland in Committees and in debates, I and my colleagues do our best to be constructive and professional. As I was the only SNP Member who spoke in that debate, I was very upset and hurt to hear that said. I have to say that if someone thinks the introduction of assisted dying here would have no impact in Scotland, that shows the difficulty of picking the Bills from which we should be excluded.

Chris Grayling: That is precisely why I am not proposing that the hon. Lady should be excluded from any debate or vote that she may currently take part in.

Dr Whitford: It was a senior member of the Secretary of State's team.

Chris Grayling: I say to the hon. Lady today, as Leader of the House, that I do not want her to be excluded from any debate or vote that she may currently take part in on the Floor of this House. Nothing in the proposals will make that happen. As I keep saying to the SNP's shadow Leader of the House, I would not take a step that prevented us, in the rare moment when it might happen, from walking through the Division Lobby together, perhaps because we had all come to the view that some of the views of the Labour party were beyond the pale. There are quite a few these days that look like they might be just that.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Chris Grayling: I will take a couple more interventions and then make some progress.

Karen Lumley (Redditch) (Con): When my hon. Friend the Member for Pudsey (Stuart Andrew) and I campaigned for a no vote in Wales, we warned that this would happen. Does my right hon. Friend agree that these proposals are the only fair way to move matters forward?

Chris Grayling: I rather agree. It is simply not tenable for us to say that devolution for Wales is good, devolution for Scotland is good and devolution for Northern Ireland is good, but that the English should have no powers at all. All we are saying is, should a future United Kingdom Parliament, or indeed this one, seek to impose something on the English that the English do not want for their constituencies, when it is a matter purely for England, it is surely not unreasonable that they should grant their consent before it happens. We are using the same principle of a legislative consent motion that applies in the devolution settlements.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Chris Grayling: I will take one more intervention before I make a bit of progress, and then I will take a couple more.

Kevin Brennan: Will the Leader of the House confirm that these changes to Standing Orders make it practically impossible for any Conservative Welsh Member of Parliament to be appointed a Minister of the Crown in any area where the jurisdiction is devolved?

Chris Grayling: No, I do not accept that at all. Indeed, it has already happened. The former Member of Parliament, John Reid, was Health Secretary while representing a Scottish constituency over which he had no jurisdiction in health matters. I happen to believe that we want the best people in this House to do the jobs. Nothing in the proposals will prevent that.

I will make a few points about the Procedure Committee and then take more interventions. I recognise that this is a change to the workings of the House. I have therefore sought to ensure that the views of the House about the process are taken into account. I have given evidence to the Procedure Committee and the Scottish Affairs Committee. I am grateful to the members of both Committees for their work. I have met representatives of the parties across the House and many individual Members over the past few weeks. I listened to the comments that were made earlier in the summer and

provided extra time for debate. I extended the timeframe beyond the original 100-day commitment. I also ensured that this debate took place after the Procedure Committee had completed its work.

Sir Edward Leigh (Gainsborough) (Con): Will my right hon. Friend give way on that point?

Chris Grayling: I will just make some points about the Procedure Committee's recommendations, then I will happily take my hon. Friend's intervention. I thank him and other members of the Procedure Committee for the work that they have done since July. The interim advice they gave me in September, which was published this week, contained some valuable thoughts. I have made amendments to the proposed Standing Orders to take into account many of their recommendations.

I have accepted the Procedure Committee's proposal to give Mr Speaker discretion over whether to give his reasons for decisions during the trial period. I have accepted its proposal to allow the Speaker to appoint two senior Members to assist him in the task. I have accepted that it should be set out formally in Standing Orders that Members who represent constituencies other than those in England and Wales should, subject to the decision of the Chair, be able to take part in debates in the Legislative Grand Committee stage, should they choose to do so. I have accepted its proposal to strengthen the guidance notes to make it easier for all Members to work with the new process.

The Procedure Committee made a point about trials and pilots. In practice, we are embarking on the kind of trial process that it asked for in the report. My estimate, subject to confirmation through the new certification process, is that the change will affect three or four Bills in the next few months, as well as statutory instruments, before we get to the review that I have committed to undertaking. We will effectively have a trial period to road test the proposals and will then review them in discussion with the different Committees of the House.

Sir Edward Leigh: I am really grateful to my right hon. Friend for the careful way in which he has listened to our representations. He is a model Minister in that respect. He knows that I have raised on many occasions the problem of Barnett consequentials. It might be argued in Scotland that its Members do not have exactly the same voting rights and that that affects spending in Scotland because of the Barnett formula. As part of the piloting process, will he undertake to review that matter and report back to the House, so that if there are Barnett consequentials, we can think again about that point?

Chris Grayling: I have looked carefully at that issue, as my hon. Friend knows. I have not identified measures outside the estimates process that create a Barnett consequential. I have been very clear in the proposed changes to Standing Orders that the estimates process remains outside the proposals. I have asked officials to continue to monitor this matter over the period leading up to the review and to produce information that can be presented to the House in due course. I give my hon. Friend and the House a commitment that if we identify a problem in this area, I will return to it as part of the review.

I intend this to be a process of development, rather than a one-off. The House will undoubtedly take decisions over the next 12 months about how we want to modify the system to make it work. That is right and proper with a new approach. I give my hon. Friend an absolute commitment that that information will be provided to the House ahead of the review.

Chris Bryant (Rhondda) (Lab): I am very grateful for all the things the Leader of the House has said about the idea that this should be a pilot that we should engage in for a period and then review. We tabled amendment (e), which would mean that the changes to Standing Orders would be in place until the end of the parliamentary Session—that is to say, until next May. That seems perfectly in line with what the Procedure Committee said. It would provide the opportunity, as the Leader of the House has just said, to review the operation of four or five Bills and several statutory instruments. If the Government then wanted to come forward with another set of measures, whether they were identical measures because everybody thought that they were working wonderfully or different measures, they would be able to do so. Would that not be a sensible way to proceed that would allow him to take the whole House with him?

Chris Grayling: I studied the hon. Gentleman's amendment carefully. There are two problems with it, or two reasons why our approach is right. First, it prejudices the length of the Session. We have not announced the length of the Session. Opposition Members will remember that the first Session of the last Parliament was two years long. Therefore, in some circumstances, his proposal would extend the trial period rather than reduce it. We do not know the date of the end of the Session, so it is difficult to commit to a pilot of that length.

Secondly, if the Session does finish next spring, we will not even, in my judgment, be able to test to the level recommended by the Procedure Committee, because not enough Bills to which these procedures apply would have been laid before the House. I understand the point the hon. Gentleman is making but, with respect, I think the approach we have taken is better and I intend to stick to it.

Mr Alistair Carmichael (Orkney and Shetland) (LD): Is the Leader of the House aware that yesterday in the other place, Lord Butler of Brockwell described the process that he is outlining to the House as one whereby,

“We will jump over the cliff and grab a bush on the way down so that we can review our decision about whether we were right to do so”.—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 21 October 2015; Vol. 765, c. 750.]

Why is the Leader of the House so resistant to the proposal from the other place that we should have a Joint Committee of both Houses to establish the best way of moving forward and building a consensus?

Chris Grayling: I cannot agree to the message from the House of Lords or amendment (a), which was tabled by the hon. Member for Nottingham North—I have great respect for the hon. Gentleman, as he knows, and for the House of Lords—and I invite the House not to do so. To do so would be to remove this process from the first Session of this Parliament. We would not be

able to trial the measures until the second Session. That would be a direct contravention of our manifesto commitment to introduce the measure within the first 100 days. It would also invite the House of Lords to be directly involved in shaping the Standing Orders of this House—something that would require pretty extensive debate here before we did it. I think many Members would doubt that that was the right thing to do.

I do recognise the concerns in the other place about constitutional change. I have therefore written to the Chair of the Lords Constitution Committee in response to those concerns. I am grateful that the Committee has responded to say that it has agreed to undertake its own review of the impact of the proposals, including their effect on the House of Lords and their wider implications for the constitution as a whole. I hope that the work of that Committee and the Commons Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee will complement each other, that they will work in partnership in this area and that they will make recommendations ahead of the review that I have committed to carry out next year. I hope that we will also receive work from the other Committees in that time.

I therefore ask the House to reject amendment (a) and to graciously decline the request from the Lords. However, I want to send the clear message to the Lords—indeed, I have already done so—that I want their input.

John Redwood (Wokingham) (Con): England has waited 18 years to get some justice and power back under this lopsided devolution settlement that was forced on us against our will all those years ago. Can my right hon. Friend think of any good reason an English MP could give for voting against these very moderate proposals? Does he notice how few English Labour voices there are in the Chamber? They must be ashamed of their own party's policy.

Chris Grayling: It baffles me that English Labour MPs seem to be set against these sensible and balanced proposals. They do not exclude anyone from debate, but they give the English a clearer voice so that they can say no to something being imposed on them against their wishes.

Mr Angus Brendan MacNeil (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP): A few weeks ago, the Leader of the House was talking about English votes for English laws, whereas today it has been about English and Welsh votes for English and Welsh laws. Will he develop this a bit further: can we have Scottish votes for Scots laws? Might I hope that he will support a 10-minute rule Bill by the end of November containing a triple lock that would enable the Scots Government, the Scots Parliament and Scots MPs here to say what should be happening for Scotland and that it will not be blocked by Conservative Members?

Chris Grayling: The reason we have taken this approach and the reason we are concerned about England is because Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland all have their own legislative Assemblies. The difference in Wales is that its devolution settlement is different from the ones in Scotland and in Northern Ireland. Key areas such as policing and justice are not devolved in Wales,

[Chris Grayling]

and I would not countenance a situation where Welsh MPs were disadvantaged in debates on those issues. When I talk about this sometimes being English and Welsh votes for English and Welsh laws, it is to protect the interests of Welsh MPs as well. I hope that the hon. Member for Rhondda (Chris Bryant), a Welsh MP, will bear that in mind.

David T. C. Davies (Monmouth) (Con) *rose*—

Chris Grayling: I give way to the Chair of the Select Committee on Welsh Affairs.

David T. C. Davies: Does my right hon. Friend agree that these modest proposals will still allow Welsh and Scottish MPs to have far more influence over policy in the health service in England than any English MP currently has over the health service in Scotland or Wales? Why does he think some Members are so determined to prevent English MPs from having the same powers as they fought for in Wales and Scotland?

Chris Grayling: This still baffles me, because Scottish and Welsh Members can vote on education in my constituency but not on education in their own. All I am asking for is the ability to say no if the UK as a whole tries to impose something on my constituents that my constituents and their counterparts around England do not want. That seems to be entirely reasonable.

Lady Hermon (North Down) (Ind): Will the Leader of the House clarify, for the benefit of all of us in this House, the composition of the Legislative Grand Committee for England, Wales and Northern Ireland? As drafted, it appears to include

“all Members representing constituencies in Northern Ireland.”

As he will know, there are MPs who represent constituencies in Northern Ireland who, shamefully, do not take their seats in this House and are absentee MPs—there are four Sinn Féin Members. Please reassure me that they are not going to be serving on this Legislative Grand Committee.

Chris Grayling: They cannot; if they do not turn up, they cannot participate. They are Members of this House but they do not turn up and so they cannot participate. That situation is not going to change, be it in relation to something that is before the whole House or to a Committee.

Hywel Williams: Can the Leader of the House explain how we would solve the conundrum of the health service in England being changed in the north-west of England, given that it serves so many people in north Wales? People in north Wales would be taking advantage of a service that had changed substantially but their representatives would have been excluded from the discussion.

Chris Grayling: I absolutely understand the hon. Gentleman's frustration. He is not responsible for the Administration in Wales. He will know, rightly, that the Administration here in Westminster are doing a much better job of running the health service than the Labour

Administration in Cardiff. I can understand why Welsh constituents look longingly over the border into England on health matters, but I simply remind him that a consequence of devolution is that if health is devolved in Wales, it is the responsibility of Assembly Members to discuss and debate those health matters. The opportunity I am leaving him—I am not taking it away from him—is to speak on and vote on health matters across the border in England. All I am asking when he does so is that if he is part of a United Kingdom bloc of Members of Parliament seeking to impose change on the English, the English should have the right to give their consent before that change happens.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Chris Grayling: I am giving to give way but then I must make some progress, because so many people want to speak.

Stephen Metcalfe (South Basildon and East Thurrock) (Con): Is the point not a simple one? Does my right hon. Friend agree that the people of Basildon and Thurrock will find it very hard to understand how people who are not affected by legislation can force it on those who are? What this measure does is resolve that issue.

Chris Grayling: I could not have said it better myself. My hon. Friend is absolutely right and puts his finger on the heart of these reforms. They are fair and sensible. Whatever Opposition Members say today, I am entirely comfortable, as a Unionist, in presenting them to this House.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Chris Grayling: I am going to make some progress because I am aware that many people want to speak. I wish to touch on one point relating to the McKay report and how some Members of this House are interpreting what it says. I have thought about this very carefully. I have talked to Sir William and looked at his report, and I am very clear that our proposals are consistent with the recommendations made by the team who worked on it. In particular, I draw the House's attention to his core recommendation:

“A principle common to the devolution arrangements for Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales exists on which to base proposals for modifying the procedures of the House of Commons to mitigate the unfairness felt by people in England. The constitutional principle that should be adopted for England (and for England-and-Wales) is that: decisions at the United Kingdom level with a separate and distinct effect for England (or for England-and-Wales) should normally be taken only with the consent of a majority of MPs for constituencies in England (or England and-Wales). This principle should be adopted by a resolution of the House of Commons”.

That is what we are putting in place today. It is worth saying that Sir William's report was produced before the Scottish referendum and before the new devolution changes set out in the Smith commission report existed, but we have still remained faithful to the principle.

I was delighted when I heard the shadow Leader of the House accept the need for English votes for English laws, but I was disappointed to see from his comments and his amendments that he wants a reform that is

toothless and meaningless. Labour's position appears to be that devolved powers are a good thing, as long as it is not in England. I gently remind him today that if he votes against these measures, he will be a Welsh MP voting against a measure that also provides Welsh votes for English and Welsh laws. He will therefore be voting against increasing the influence of Welsh MPs over matters such as policing and justice. His amendments would also have the effect of removing almost all the substance from these proposals. If the House were to accept what he is proposing today, we might as well pack up and go home now. He has proposed a set of wrecking amendments and they are the wrong thing to do.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Chris Grayling: I will give way twice more and then I will sit down.

Ian C. Lucas (Wrexham) (Lab): I am grateful to the Leader of the House for the conversations we have had on this matter. Why is he quite prepared to exclude Members from Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland from the English Grand Committee but he will not exclude English Members from the Welsh, Northern Irish and Scots Grand Committees?

Chris Grayling: I am not excluding the hon. Gentleman from the English Grand Committee. He will be able to speak in that Committee and to vote on Bills. I am simply leaving the English with a requirement to give their consent before something can happen. Where we legislate in this House for a variety of issues affecting Wales, we require a legislative consent motion from the Welsh Assembly Government. That is no different from this House seeking a legislative consent motion from the English in order to proceed.

Mr Robin Walker (Worcester) (Con): Like many Members, I have raised petitions on this issue and I have received enormous support from my constituents. One challenge with raising petitions in Worcester is that when we go out on the high street, we constantly meet day trippers from Wales. What I found was that when I explained to them that this was about English votes for English laws and English and Welsh votes on English and Welsh issues, they happily signed the petitions and gave strong support for the approach we are taking.

Chris Grayling: My hon. Friend makes an important point: the public are on our side over this. It is a perhaps a sign that we are in government and the Opposition are not that we are more in touch with what the public think.

Conor Burns (Bournemouth West) (Con): Does the Leader of the House agree that these relatively modest proposals do something powerful, which is allow us to say to our constituents—I say this as a Member of Parliament born in Belfast but representing an English constituency—that in future there is no chance of the rest of the United Kingdom's Members of Parliament imposing on them something that they do not want in England? The reason there is so much hostility from Scottish National party Members is that they realise this is a safety valve that will help to protect the future of the United Kingdom.

Chris Grayling: I could not have put it better myself. The proposed changes enable us to give an answer to the West Lothian question and to our constituents by saying that England will have its own piece of the devolution settlement, but we will achieve that without removing any Member of Parliament from the workings of this Chamber. We will hear much this afternoon about how these changes will create a different class of MPs, exclude MPs, and shut MPs out from the job that they do. The truth is that that is nonsense. Despite all the rhetoric, our proposals do none of that. Instead, they bring fairness to our devolution settlement, and it is fairness that will secure the future of our Union.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Madam Deputy Speaker (Mrs Eleanor Laing): Order. Before I call the shadow Leader of the House, I should say that it will be obvious to Members that a great many people—more than 50 Members—have indicated that they wish to take part in this debate for which there is now really a very short time remaining. I will not impose a time limit on Back-Bench speeches quite yet, but I implore Members of the House, even very senior and terribly important ones, to seek to prove the power and quality of oratory by speaking for less than five minutes. Of course I am not making such a request of the shadow Leader of the House. I call Mr Chris Bryant.

12.51 pm

Chris Bryant (Rhondda) (Lab): Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker, for bearing in mind that I voted for you. However, I do take your stricture seriously, because I think that it applies to self-important Members as well.

Seriously, it is a real shame that the Leader of the House did not even bother to lay out what his measures will do, but there is a reason for that. Let me start first with four very simple principles. First, Government must be by consent, which means that no state should abrogate to itself decisions that could more properly be made closer to those whom they most affect. That is why I support devolution to and within Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. It is also why I support England having a clear and distinctive voice in this Parliament. For that matter, I also believe that power, responsibility and finance need to be devolved further within England, because we are, and have been for far too long, a very centralised state.

My second principle is that I passionately support the Union. It is in the best interests of my constituents and of all our constituents. I know that the people of this country agree with that—not everyone, but the vast majority. That is why I will do nothing that will undermine or imperil the Union. It has stood us extremely well through war and depression and in sickness and in health.

My third principle is that all MPs are equal. We all arrive with an equal right to speak, and to make our constituents' voices heard. In the old writs of return for Members, it was called the full power—*plena potestas*—to debate, agree, legislate and tax. Overturning that equality of all Members, which has stood the test of 800 years, is a big step to take.

Wayne David (Caerphilly) (Lab): The Leader of the House quoted Lord Mackay. Does my hon. Friend agree that one of the things in Lord Mackay's report was that there should be absolutely no move whatsoever towards the creation of two classes of MPs, but that is precisely what this does?

Chris Bryant: My hon. Friend makes a very good point, which is that the Mackay commission lays out various different routes that one could go down, but makes it absolutely clear that one of his fundamental principles was that there should not be two tiers of MPs.

Kevin Brennan: I asked the Leader of the House earlier on about how a Welsh Conservative MP could be appointed a Minister of the Crown in an area that is not devolved. Does my hon. Friend understand how that could practically be the case under these proposals if that Minister was not permitted to participate in the Committee stage of a Bill under his own jurisdiction?

Chris Bryant: If I am honest, the reason I was upset that the Leader of the House did not lay out his plans was that, in the previous debate that we had earlier this year which I did not take part in but which I read, I noticed that he made several mistakes about his own proposals. I do not honestly think that he fully understands them. It is certainly true that people would be able to take part in debates, but they would not then be able to table amendments.

It was a delight to see the right hon. Member for Wokingham (John Redwood) telling us all how terrible it was that powers had been forced on other people by MPs from different parts of the country. When he was Secretary of State for Wales, despite not representing a Welsh seat, he introduced much against Welsh views the shape of local government that we have in England today.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Chris Bryant: I am duty bound to give way to the right hon. Member for Wokingham, but then I will make some progress.

John Redwood: In those days, we had a unitary state, where it was accepted that this place made all the decisions for all parts of the United Kingdom. We have moved on. What we are saying is that it is unfair if some parts of the UK have devolution and others do not.

Chris Bryant: The thing is the right hon. Gentleman is not arguing for devolution in England; he is arguing for a completely different thing. He is arguing to change this Parliament. The devolution that was introduced in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland was on the back of a long process that gathered the views of the whole community. There were referendums, draft Bills and Bills.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Chris Bryant: I will make some progress.

Sir William Cash (Stone) (Con) *rose*—

Chris Bryant: I love the hon. Gentleman, but I will make some progress.

Fourth, because our constitution is unwritten, we should enter into major constitutional change not unadvisedly or lightly but, in the words of the Prayer Book, discreetly, advisedly and soberly. That means that, when possible, the Government of the day should always proceed on a cross-party basis. Where it cannot do so, especially when one party alone holds a view, it should proceed with extreme caution. All these issues should be looked at in the round, in a proper constitutional convention. We cannot make these changes merely by altering the Standing Orders of this House. That is a thoroughly disreputable way of changing the constitution of this country.

James Cleverly (Braintree) (Con) *rose*—

Jonathan Reynolds (Stalybridge and Hyde) (Lab/Co-op) *rose*—

Chris Bryant: I will give way in a moment.

My problems with the measures before us are many. First, they are far too complex, which is why the Leader of the House did not bother to explain them this afternoon. They introduce at least six new processes for each Bill. They will be incomprehensible to most Members of this House let alone the wider public. In years to come, people will be running competitions to see whether anyone can explain these measures in fewer than 1,000 words. I bet that nobody will ever win that prize.

The Procedure Committee produced an excellent report at the beginning of this week. It calls the proposals “over-engineered, complex and rococo”—that have more curlicues, arabesques and flourishes than the whole of the Vatican City put together. In any one day, we may be convened and reconvened as the full House, the English Legislative Grand Committee, the English and Welsh Legislative Grand Committee, a Committee of the Full House, and back again. There will be motions, money motions, programme motions, legislative consent motions, reconsideration motions followed by new legislative consent motions, followed by motions to agree or to disagree wrapped up in a majority and a double majority.

For the first time in our history, the tellers will become redundant, disappearing into the reasons room at the end of votes to be told the double majority result by the computerised Clerks. Some have described this as constitutional knitting, but at least knitting has a rhyme and reason to it. This will be a bowl of soggy, overcooked spaghetti.

Jonathan Reynolds: I am extremely grateful to my hon. Friend for giving me the chance to intervene. I tried to intervene on the Leader of the House, but was not able to do so. If I had been able to intervene, I would have said that I genuinely have some sympathy for the points that he and the Conservative party have put forward. The current situation is not tenable. It has caused resentment and we should have tried to sort it out. My objection is to the process. This is a major constitutional change; it is not a change to Standing Orders. Having won the referendum, to do this without a convention frankly risks ending the Union in a way that the Scottish National party could only have dreamt of.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. With 50 Members waiting to speak, we just cannot have long interventions. It is simply discourteous to those who are waiting to speak. We must have interventions to keep the debate flowing lest it becomes unlively.

Chris Bryant: I will try to keep it lively, Madam Deputy Speaker, but I might fail.

My hon. Friend the Member for Stalybridge and Hyde (Jonathan Reynolds) makes a good point. I agree with him and with some of the points that the Leader of the House has made. I believe that England needs a distinctive voice in this Parliament and I personally have no objection whatsoever to an England-only Committee to do the line-by-line consideration of legislation that applies only to England. However, like the McKay commission, I believe that there is a real danger when a veto is given to English MPs only, as that creates two tiers of MPs.

There is a further problem. As McKay points out, if the Government or the whole House feel at some point that they have to override English MPs, which is perfectly legitimate, it should be absolutely clear that that is what they have done. The whole House or the Government would then take the political risk, just as the Government would take it on the head if they appointed a Welsh MP to a post that involved largely devolved responsibilities.

Sir William Cash: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way, as I am aware of the time constraints. He has sympathy with the approach, but does he not appreciate that it originated in 1997 when I tabled an amendment on similar but much shorter lines—only seven lines long—to deal with the problem? At the end of the day, this is not about different classes of MP but about different functions conferred under the process of devolution.

Chris Bryant: I am not so sure. At first sight, the hon. Gentleman's suggestions seem perfectly sensible, but I have often found when I examine them a little more carefully that they do not really work in practice. He is nodding his head; he agrees.

Kevin Foster (Torbay) (Con): The hon. Gentleman said that he would give a prize to anyone who produced a short summary and said that it would be impossible. The House of Commons Library has managed it in three quarters of a page; would it have helped him to have read that before he came here today?

Chris Bryant: I have read the House of Commons Library summary, but if the hon. Gentleman looks carefully, he will see that it does not lay out all the processes. It lays out only half the processes—[*Interruption.*] I note that the hon. Gentleman has picked something up from the Library and feels that on the back of that he can come in to the Chamber and be awfully clever—[HON. MEMBERS: "Ooh!"] There we are; the debate is lively enough now, isn't it, Madam Deputy Speaker?

Mr Jacob Rees-Mogg (North East Somerset) (Con)
rose—

Chris Bryant: The hon. Member for the 16th century is so tempting.

Mr Rees-Mogg: The hon. Gentleman's point about two classes of MP is important and one that we should tread very carefully towards. I wonder whether this is not the same as MPs serving on a Committee, which is limited in number, meaning that not all MPs can be present, yet can still be overruled by the whole House through, in this instance, a suspension of Standing Orders rather than having a legislative method, which would make it much more complicated.

Chris Bryant: This is good, because the hon. Gentleman agrees with me. He is absolutely right to do so, but I do not think he has followed it through to its logical conclusion. He is right. For centuries, when the House has sent a Bill into Committee, it has decided that certain Members should sit on that Committee for the line-by-line consideration of the Bill. That is absolutely the sensible thing to do. In the past, it was done by those who were most interested in the subject, and then it was decided that it would be done by party political balance. Now, there is a suggestion that if the Bills are exclusively English-only, there should be English-only membership. I have absolutely no problem with that; the hon. Gentleman and I are as one. He should therefore support our amendment this afternoon, as I agree with him.

My second problem is that these measures will politicise the Speaker—[*Laughter.*] [HON. MEMBERS: "Oh!"] This is a Paddington bear stare—[*Interruption.*] All right, calm down—[*Interruption.*] You broke my leg; calm down.

Karl McCartney (Lincoln) (Con): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I have said this before, but I did not break the hon. Gentleman's leg. He might be fleet of foot in this Chamber, but he certainly is not on the rugby pitch.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Mrs Eleanor Laing): Order. I am very glad to say that as far as points of order as concerned, that is about the same as your breaking a leg on the rugby pitch.

Chris Bryant: It was a hospital pass, though.

Let me return to the issue of the Speaker. I know that the Leader of the House thinks that deciding whether a Bill is exclusively England-only will be simple, but none of the evidence thus far provided by the devolved Administrations, any of the legal experts or any of the Members of the House of Lords who have legal qualifications suggests that that is so. I urge hon. Members to consider any one of the Bills before the House to see whether it is straightforward.

There is a major difference between the money Bill certificates issued under the Parliament Acts and these new certificates. Money Bill certificates affect only the Lords and prevent them from considering our legislation. The new certificates will affect elected Members of the House who are bound to try to tie the Speaker up in knots. Since certification has to happen before Second Reading, the Speaker will in effect be able to delay when Second Reading can take place. The Leader of the House tells me that the Government will provide clear instructions to the Speaker on how he should certificate, but surely that turns the Speaker into the creature of the Crown, not the servant of this House. What price Speaker Lenthall?

David T. C. Davies: Surely it would be extremely simple to work out whether a Bill applied in England, Wales or Scotland, as we already have to do that. Whenever we pass legislation, we have to work out whether it will apply to the Welsh Assembly or the Scottish Parliament or not. A simple solution would be to ensure that if Welsh and Scottish MPs vote on it, it applies across the whole United Kingdom.

Chris Bryant: All right, I defy the hon. Gentleman to tell me whether clause 44 of the Housing and Planning Bill applies to England, England and Wales, Wales only, England, Wales and Scotland, or England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. He cannot—*[Interruption.]* I will give him some time.

Chris Grayling: No one is giving any instructions to the Speaker. It is custom and practice for those drafting a Bill to set out its territorial extent. No doubt those who drafted the Housing and Planning Bill will know precisely the territorial extent of clause 44. I do not happen to remember what clause 44 is; perhaps he does.

Chris Bryant: I know clause 44 extremely well, but I am not going to let on to the Leader of the House. If he cannot be bothered to read his own legislation when it goes through the Legislative Programme Committee, which he chairs, that is a problem for him.

Although the measures seek to address one anomaly, which has been referred to by the right hon. Member for Wokingham, I believe that they will create many more. If Scottish MPs are not to be allowed to determine legislation that affects only England, why should English MPs be allowed to determine Westminster legislation that affects only Scotland or, for that matter, that affects only Wales or Northern Ireland? Plenty of legislation, clauses and schedules fall into that category. The Partnerships (Prosecution) (Scotland) Act 2013, for instance, applied only in Scotland but was driven through the House of Commons on the back of the Government's majority. I tell the Leader of the House that this is a dangerous road to go down as it will set a worm of grievance into the hearts of many across the Union.

Mr Jim Cunningham (Coventry South) (Lab): What my hon. Friend has just outlined suggests that he agrees with me that the Speaker will be challenged more and more, which will undermine his credibility.

Chris Bryant: I completely agree. I think that this will politicise the Speaker in a way that is not only unhelpful to the House—

Michael Ellis (Northampton North) (Con): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Chris Bryant: Just calm down.

Michael Ellis: I am very calm. Will he give way?

Chris Bryant: Not yet, because I am replying to my hon. Friend the Member for Coventry South (Mr Cunningham). The other problem is that, as several Members of the House of Lords have said, there is a danger that these certificates will become justiciable. I fully accept that under article 9 of the Bill of Rights any proceeding in Parliament should not be impeached or

questioned in a court of law or any other place. However, it is clear that many legal experts believe that, by making such a sharp divide within the House, the new certification process will lead to the undermining of article 9 and to the decisions of the Speaker being questioned in a court of law. I think that that is another very dangerous route to go down.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Chris Bryant: I will not give way to the hon. Member for Macclesfield (David Rutley), as I am giving way to the hon. Member for Na h-Eileanan an Iar (Mr MacNeil).

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Mr MacNeil: I am very grateful—

Mr Graham Allen (Nottingham North) (Lab): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Can you inform the House of your view of Members who intervene and wish to be one of the 50 who are waiting to contribute to this debate? Good knockabout stuff though it is, some Members have already intervened two or three times. Will you take that into account?

Madam Deputy Speaker (Mrs Eleanor Laing): Just for a change, I can directly answer the hon. Gentleman's point of order. The view of the Chair is that if a Member has requested to speak but makes several long interventions, that Member's place in the speaking order will go further down the list every time they intervene. I can make that absolutely clear. I hope the House is listening and will allow the hon. Gentleman to finish his speech.

Chris Bryant: Right. I am not giving way—

Mr MacNeil *rose*—

Chris Bryant: I am not giving way for a while.

These measures will also not deliver the Government's declared aim. The Library has examined every Division since 2001—some 3,000 Divisions in all. Library staff looked at what would happen if no Scottish MPs had voted in any of those Divisions. They found just a tiny proportion where that would have changed the vote—25 in all. Yes, I admit that perhaps I could understand the Government if all the measures that we are debating this afternoon were intended to deal with those 25 cases, but of the 25, nine were on UK-wide or England, Wales and Scotland legislation, such as anti-terrorism legislation, so not affected; 10 were on non-legislative motions, such as whether the screen should be installed, so also not affected; three were on private Members' Bills and, to answer the question from the hon. Member for Central Ayrshire (Dr Whitford) earlier, would not have been affected by the measures under consideration this afternoon; and one would have been tied and would therefore have fallen.

The most contentious subject, which the Leader of the House rather inadvertently deceptively mentioned in the previous debate, was on 27 January 2004, when the Higher Education Bill was given a Second Reading by five votes when 46 Scottish MPs had voted in favour and 15 against. Interestingly, the Tories voted against it then, but a few years later trebled tuition fees. However, that vote would not have been changed by today's proposals, as I hope the Leader of the House acknowledges.

It would not have been changed, would it? He need only nod. It would not have been changed, would it? *[Interruption.]* Oh, he thinks it would. No. The vote was on Second Reading, and Second Reading is not covered, a point that he has made several times. He does not understand his own provisions which he introduced this afternoon. *[Interruption.]* No, it was not. There is no point in the Leader of the House intervening again if he does not understand his own proposals.

Chris Grayling *rose*—

Chris Bryant: I am not giving way to the right hon. Gentleman. *[Interruption.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker (Mrs Eleanor Laing): Order. We must have a calm and measured debate.

Chris Bryant: That analysis leaves us with a single vote in 14 years, which added the statutory pubs code and independent adjudicator to the Small Business, Enterprise and Employment Bill to address the imbalance between large pub owning companies and tied tenants. I think even the Leader of the House would drink to that, and anyway, the Bill also had Scotland and Northern Ireland measures.

The true effect of these measures will be to make the Government split their Bills up into lots of little Bills. There will be more Wales-only and Scotland-only Bills clogging up the system, and the Report stage of any England-only Bill will be absorbed not with debates about the substance, but with wrangles about procedure. So all this constitutional jiggery-pokery will be for nothing. I ask the Government: what's the hurry? The Government have a majority of UK seats, of English seats and of English and Welsh seats. It will make not a jot of difference in this Parliament.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Chris Bryant: I think I am duty bound to give way to the Leader of the House.

Chris Grayling: I was simply going to point out, as the hon. Gentleman and I were both Members at the time, that the top-up fees Bill in 2003-04 would not have secured a legislative consent motion because the English were opposed to it. Therefore, under these measures, it would not have happened.

Chris Bryant: That is not correct. The right hon. Gentleman needs to look back through the record. The vote was on Second Reading and the Bill was carried very healthily on Third Reading by English MPs as well. The measures this afternoon have nothing to say about Second or Third Readings.

On the amendments, the Procedure Committee was clear that it wanted a proper pilot system for these measures. These are enormous constitutional changes and they should be properly piloted. The response from the Leader of the House suggests that he thinks this will be a pilot. He stated in a written ministerial statement that

“there will be a limited number of Bills to which the proposals will apply in the remainder of this Session of Parliament”—
that is all he is talking about. He went on:

“While this is not a pilot in the exact terms of the Committee’s Report, the outcome will be very similar.” —*[Official Report, 20 October 2015; Vol. 600, c. 43W.]*

I gather the Government Chief Whip has been telling all his anxious colleagues not to worry as it is just a pilot, so I am taking the Leader of the House and the Chief Whip at their word. Our amendment (e) would mean that the Government would have to come back to the House in April if they wanted to continue the measures, or if they wanted to introduce other measures after we had had an opportunity to review how the processes had worked.

Talking of taking the Leader of the House at his word, he said earlier today that the Speaker is able to dismiss minor or consequential issues when certifying Bills. That is what he said—minor or consequential issues. He is wrong. It is minor and consequential issues. He knows that perfectly well and he went on to correct himself. Yet again, he does not fully understand his proposals. Our amendment (f) would make this “minor and consequential”, rather than “minor or consequential”, because that is the only way that Barnett consequentials could be taken into consideration when determining whether a Bill applies only in England or only in England and Wales.

Huw Merriman (Bexhill and Battle) (Con): I thank the hon. Gentleman for his courtesy in giving way. I understood that the Labour party supported devolution, but all I have heard is a line-by-line review—no veto, therefore no devolution for English voters.

Chris Bryant: The hon. Gentleman is not arguing for devolution either. This does not create devolution in any shape or form. It retains power here in Westminster and it is completely unnecessary because in this Parliament the Government have a majority in any venue they choose.

James Cleverly *rose*—

Chris Bryant: I am not going anywhere near the hon. Gentleman.

I say to the hon. Member for Bexhill and Battle (Huw Merriman) that it is right that there should be line-by-line consideration by an England-only Committee. There should be a voice, but not a veto.

Mr MacNeil: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way. He correctly identifies a problem. It is a minor problem and he goes back to 2004 to identify it. The problem is very different. When the Scotland Bill came through this Parliament this year, when 95% of Scottish MPs, the Scottish Government and the Scottish Parliament backed amendments, they were blocked by English and Welsh Members, despite Scotland wanting its power. That is where the problem is for this Parliament. It is not English votes for English laws.

Chris Bryant: I am sympathetic to some of what the hon. Gentleman says, except that when we are discussing a constitutional measure, that is a matter for the whole House. Today’s proposals are also a constitutional matter, the biggest constitutional change for some considerable time, which is being introduced through one House without a constitutional convention, which would have

[Chris Bryant]

been a better way of doing it. Why on earth did the Government refuse to reply to the Lords' request for a Joint Committee to consider the constitutional implications first?

David Rutley (Macclesfield) (Con): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Chris Bryant: I will not, if the hon. Gentleman does not mind.

The Commons has not refused such a request for 104 years. And I am not going to take any nonsense from the Leader of the House about their lordships telling us what to do about Standing Orders. This is a major constitutional change. Devolution was brought in after a cross-party constitutional convention, a referendum, a draft Bill and a Bill. In this case, what do we get? The longest-ever amendment to Standing Orders—742 lines in all—driven through on a Government majority. That ain't no way to treat Parliament. Nor will I take any lectures about the unelected Lords. I have always voted for reform. It is the right hon. Gentleman's leader who has appointed nearly 10 times as many barons to the other House since he came to power in 2010 as there were sitting around Runnymede in 1215.

Mr Rees-Mogg *rose*—

Chris Bryant: I have already given way to the hon. Gentleman. Much as I enjoy what he has to say, there are others who need to speak.

The honest truth is that this is not a conservative set of measures. It is quite a dangerous set of measures. It is a bureaucratic nightmare and hon. Members will regret it. As Lord Forsyth said last night in the House of Lords, it is like an Uber driver without a sat-nav. It is not a unionist set of measures, either. It is as if the Prime Minister had decided to fashion a new grievance for Scotland—God knows the Scots have never needed a new grievance—because he wanted to antagonise them.

Mr MacNeil: If I understand the hon. Gentleman correctly, he is suggesting that 95% of Scottish Members looking for powers to be devolved to Scotland but being blocked by other Members is not a cause for grievance. If that is not a cause for grievance, what is?

Chris Bryant: I have just said that there are grievances, and there are English grievances too. I believe that we need to come to a proper constitutional settlement in this House—and across the whole of Parliament—that delivers an elected House of Lords so that the whole country is represented and so that we do not have the anomaly of a baron who was born in Scotland, lives in Scotland and claims expenses for travelling from Scotland to Westminster—[*Interruption.*]

Pete Wishart (Perth and North Perthshire) (SNP): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. The shadow Leader of the House has been on his feet for half an hour. The House will not hear from a Scottish Member of Parliament until the sixth speaker. This is being done to us, because it is we who will become

second-class Members. Is there anything you can do to speed up proceedings so that we can hear from Scottish Members of Parliament?

Madam Deputy Speaker (Mrs Eleanor Laing): The hon. Gentleman makes a very reasonable point. Many Members are waiting to speak, and they have legitimate points of view that the House must hear, which is why I have appealed for brevity and for short interventions. The shadow Leader of the House has another minute until he reaches half an hour, at which point I will raise my eyebrows at him.

Chris Bryant: I am terrified of your eyebrows, Madam Deputy Speaker. I was on my perorating sentence, so I would have finished my speech by now had the hon. Member for Perth and North Perthshire (Pete Wishart) not intervened. I think that Conservative and Unionist Members will ultimately rue the day if they vote for these measures, because this is a charter for breaking up the Union, not keeping it together.

1.21 pm

Mr Charles Walker (Broxbourne) (Con): I shall try to be brief, Madam Deputy Speaker, because although the 50 hon. Members waiting to speak are very interested in what I have to say, I know that they are much more interested in what they have to say. Now is not the time for great oratory.

I would first like to thank the Procedure Committee, which I chair, for working so hard and producing an excellent report. I also thank the Leader of the House, who has been open and straightforward in his dealings with the Committee, which makes a welcome change from his predecessor. I know that the issue ignites strong feelings in the House, which is another reason why I shall be brief, because we need to hear as many views as possible. Also, I do not understand why we cannot move the vote to 5 o'clock this afternoon, or perhaps later.

The concept of EVEL is easy to understand, but the proposals attached to it are extremely complex, and Members on both sides of the House should be in no doubt about that. The shadow Leader of the House said that 742 additional lines of Standing Orders are proposed. I disagree, because I make it 733, but who is going to quibble over nine lines. Between four and eight additional stages are potentially being injected into the legislative process, which may have huge consequences for the transacting of legislation in this place. We cannot have any truncation of Report stage or Third Reading.

The idea that certification will always be done smoothly, with one stage followed by the next, is for the birds. There will be times when the process of scrutinising Bills is interrupted for a significant period of time while finely nuanced decisions about certification are taken. I do not believe that the decisions taken by the Speaker will end up before a court. Someone might try to bring them before a court, but the proceedings of this House are protected by the Bill of Rights. The Speaker will be able to call on his Counsel, senior Clerks and two senior members of the Panel of Chairs.

We are entering new territory, so of course we will have to experiment. That is why the Procedure Committee will return to the House in a year with a review of the early stages of the process. We will be forceful in putting our view at that stage.

Mr Alistair Carmichael: On the point about justiciability, is the hon. Gentleman aware of the views of Lord Hope of Craighead, a former Lord President of the Court of Session and Justice of the Supreme Court, who addressed that very point in the other place last night and said that the procedures would be subject to judicial scrutiny?

Mr Walker: There are thousands of lawyers in this country, and they all have different views—that is how they earn a living. I am sure that Lord Hope's views are sincerely held, but I disagree with them, as I am sure does my hon. Friend the Member for North East Somerset (Mr Rees-Mogg), who served with such distinction on the Committee. Is he seeking to intervene?

Mr Rees-Mogg *indicated dissent.*

Mr Walker: I was trying to be generous to my hon. Friend.

We are where we are. The former Prime Minister, Tony Blair, has said that he did not give enough consideration to the impact of devolution on England in 1998. What we are debating today is, in my view, the least worst option on the table. Would we start from this point in a perfect world? No, we would not.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I had a long and distinguished speech to give, and there are many things that I would like to say, but I am not going to do so on this occasion, because 50 Members wish to speak and we need to hear from as many of them as possible.

1.25 pm

Sir Gerald Kaufman (Manchester, Gorton) (Lab): I pay tribute to Michael Meacher, who was a good friend, an excellent Member of Parliament and a colleague from Greater Manchester. He sat alongside me in this House for 45 years. I am deeply sorry that he is dead, but I am happy that he is not present for this ghastly debate, which I think is one of the nastiest and most unpleasant I have attended in 45 years. We have before us something called EVEL, and I say this: evil to him who thinks EVEL.

We have heard Members speak today about who are English MPs, and about who are Scottish, Welsh or Northern Ireland MPs, but that is not what we are. I am not an English MP; I am a Member of the Parliament of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. I was not elected by my constituents to be an English MP; I, like every single Member of this House, regardless of her or his party, was elected to represent my constituents in the United Kingdom Parliament, with the powers that this House of Commons has had for many centuries.

This Government, with the flip of a coin, have decided to alter what this House of Commons is about, and they have decided to do so for momentary political convenience, because they have a small majority and because a considerable body of the Members of this United Kingdom House of Commons are from Scotland. We have good and valued colleagues from Northern Ireland, from different parties, and they are here because Northern Ireland fought a war in order to remain part of the United Kingdom.

I am deeply saddened that it has come to this. We are looking at 20 pages of amendments to the Standing Orders. Heaven only knows how much it cost the

Government to pay the parliamentary draftsmen to draft them all. They are deeply confusing and can be analysed in many different ways. One thing is for sure: this House is being called upon to pass amendments to make the Standing Orders state, "The Speaker shall...". I do not remember that ever happening before, but hon. Members may correct me. Members might have different views about any particular Speaker, but the whole point of having a Speaker is that she or he should be impartial. That will end if the amendments are made this afternoon.

The proposals before the House are full of gyrations and complications. I challenge anybody reading through these Standing Order amendments to understand them. Previously, up until today—up until tonight—the House of Commons was very, very, very clear: every hon. Member of this House, regardless of when they were elected, whether they were elected 45 years ago, like Michael Meacher and me, or whether they will be newly arriving, like the person who will be elected in the by-election to succeed Michael, whether they have membership of the Privy Council, whether the Queen has conferred an honour on them, whether they are members of the Cabinet or of the Government, once they walked into the Division Lobby every one of them was equal.

That will end late this afternoon because this Government—I am sorry to say it—have no respect for the House of Commons. They do not care about the principles on which the House of Commons is based; they simply want convenience relating to certain legislation—probably, though I am not certain, in the light of the large contingent of Scottish National party Members who were elected. I do not know whether this would have happened if that had not happened, but the people of Scotland voted in the way they did, and those Scottish National party Members, like the Irish and the Welsh, are completely equal to everybody else—or they will be until this evening. I am troubled that this—

Rehman Chishti (Gillingham and Rainham) (Con): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir Gerald Kaufman: If the hon. Gentleman will just give me a moment.

I am troubled that this Government have decided to do this, because, as I said to William Hague when he first came to the House of Commons to announce this, it puts a stain on the Government. I really do think that it sullies the House of Commons.

My hon. Friend the Member for Rhondda (Chris Bryant), as always, made an effective speech. However, I disagreed with it because his amendments accept not the principle—there is no principle involved—but the basis of what the Government are proposing. I will not vote for any of the amendments because every one of them is based on an acceptance of what the Government are putting forward. I shall vote against the main motion at the end of what I regard as a day of shame for the House of Commons.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Lindsay Hoyle): Order. We need to put on a time limit in order to accommodate as many people as possible. We will start off with Bernard Jenkin on four minutes.

1.33 pm

Mr Bernard Jenkin (Harwich and North Essex) (Con): Thank you for the early warning, Mr Deputy Speaker.

It is my privilege to follow the Father of the House, who, in his now customary fashion, stilled this House with his wisdom. I think we should listen carefully to what he said and take on board the points he made. The only response I would make is this: he said that before this measure we were all equal, but I am afraid that that is not the case. The West Lothian question was originally coined in the 1970s, but it has been with us since the moment the devolution settlements were enacted in Wales and Scotland. The fact that it has been ignored, ignored and ignored, and amplified by further and further devolution to Scotland and Wales, and now to Northern Ireland, is the reason we are now having this debate: we have this one unresolved issue before us.

The principle of English votes for English laws is clearly right. As I hear the objections of those who supported the settlements in Scotland and Wales that they are now going to be excluded from the consideration of matters in England that affect their constituents, I recall that that is exactly the same argument that we made against the establishment of Scottish and Welsh Parliaments, because those things are now decided in those jurisdictions whether or not they have any effect on my constituents. We have an unequal House already, and the question is how to address that.

This debate follows the Prime Minister's statement following the referendum. Since then, we have learned that doing this in this way is fantastically complicated. I draw the House's attention to proposed Standing Order 83J(8)(b), which says that the Speaker

"shall disregard any provision inserted by the House of Lords which, in the Speaker's opinion, has the sole objective of ensuring that Standing Order"—

blah, blah, blah. In other words, the Speaker is meant to adjudicate on what he thinks was behind the intention of an amendment passed by the House of Lords. We are in danger of putting the Speaker in an impossible position. I do not dismiss the risks of judicial review in these circumstances because we are inviting such controversy through these arrangements. However, the hon. Member for Rhondda (Chris Bryant) cannot have it both ways. He cannot say that this is a massive constitutional change and then read out a whole lot of statistics and say it will make no difference at all. He is in rather a difficult position.

We need to move on from this kind of debate to a different kind of discussion. We need far more dialogue and discussion, both in this Chamber and outside it, involving all the parties, Unionist and nationalist. We need it in public and in private, we need it in all parts of the United Kingdom, and we need to involve all four Parliaments and Assemblies. We need to choose language that seeks to build common ground, avoids divisive terms, does not prejudice outcomes, and makes each part of the United Kingdom feel valued, feel heard and feel understood. I fear that this debate is not going to do that.

The Constitutional Committee is launching an inquiry into the future of the United Kingdom.

Kevin Brennan: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr Jenkin: I am not going to give way.

We are carrying out an evaluation of English votes for English laws that perhaps looks to a new settlement in the United Kingdom—what it might look like and what the financial consequences might be. This might finish up with exactly the kind of Joint Committee that has been proposed by Lord Butler of Brockwell, and that might be a good way of resolving these differences in the long term.

1.37 pm

Pete Wishart (Perth and North Perthshire) (SNP): After an hour and 40 minutes, and six speeches, we are actually getting to hear from the Members of Parliament who this is being done to—the Scottish Members of Parliament. This will, I hope, be the last instalment of what can only be called the sorry saga of English votes for English laws. Never has such massive and significant constitutional change been undertaken on the basis of plans that are so meagre, so threadbare, so inept, and so stupid.

I have searched the documents for all the statements that have been made about these plans and all the various words that have been used in these debates. I came up with a word cloud, because I hear they are quite popular just now, to see the favourite words used—namely, “shambles”, “disaster”, “mess”, “dog's breakfast”, “unnecessary”, “won't work”. There are some really good Scottish words that sum this up perfectly, with apologies to my friends in *Hansard*: “boorach”, “guddle”. Even those words do not do justice to the mess that has been created by these plans.

In the course of the past couple of months since the Leader of the House's plans were first introduced, he has managed to convince absolutely nobody about their quality. Not one political party in this House supports these plans other than the Conservatives. Not one devolved legislature, Assembly or Parliament throughout the United Kingdom supports these plans; in fact, they are resolutely opposed. Even the donors and the cronies down the corridor do not support these plans. Even the Procedure Committee, with a Conservative Chair and a Conservative majority, finds massive difficulties with what is proposed. An exercise in building consensus and working in partnership this most definitely is not. To proceed with such historic constitutional change without even a shred of consensus is probably about the worst way possible to embark on such plans.

We will, of course, oppose the plans in full. We have not tabled any amendments because we do not want to dignify the proposals with any suggestion that they should be approved. We will vote them down altogether. We will support some of the Labour amendments, which are marginally better than what is on offer, but we will do so half-heartedly, because we object to the basic principle.

The Leader of the House tries to convince us—he did it again in his speech today—that these are tiny, eensy-weensy little tinkering with the constitution of the House. “What are all you Scots getting upset about?”, he wails at us. “What are you bothered about? It's only a little veto you're going to be exposed to.” Well, let me tell him: how dare you give us second-class status in this place. How dare you disrespect the views of the Scottish electorate and diminish the role of Scottish Members of Parliament.

Mr Rees-Mogg: It is most important that the proposal does not create a second-class tier of Members of Parliament. Given that it comes under Standing Orders, in the event of there being a Government who are dependent on Scottish votes for their majority, they could repeal the Standing Order. Therefore the basis of the authority of each MP remains identical.

Pete Wishart: I have a lot of respect for the hon. Gentleman's views, but he is quite simply wrong. The basic principle of the plans is that I and my hon. Friends will be second-class citizens in the unitary Parliament of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. That is unacceptable.

Scotland is watching this debate and the mood is darkening. If this is an exercise in saving the Union, the Government could not have contrived a more inept way to do so. Support for independence is increasing. The Conservatives got 14% of the vote in Scotland at the general election. It was an historic low. They have not secured such a vote since the 19th century. Once this has been done to Scottish Members of Parliament—our elected representatives—just watch their polls continue to plummet.

Rebecca Pow (Taunton Deane) (Con): The proposal was a clear manifesto pledge by our party and we were voted in by the people. Does not the hon. Gentleman agree that it is the people who want this to happen?

Pete Wishart: I do not think that English Conservative Members quite get it. The United Kingdom is supposed to be a partnership of equals. There are issues and difficulties—fair enough—and I know they are upset about what is going on with English votes for English laws, but we are a nation. Does the hon. Lady know how many Conservative Members there are in Scotland? One, and he barely scraped in. Our view is legitimate and we reject being made second-class citizens in this Parliament. This is our Parliament as much as the hon. Lady's. This is the unitary Parliament of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and yet we have to accept second-class status. No wonder the mood is darkening in Scotland.

Mr Hanson: Andrew Bonar Law, Campbell-Bannerman, Asquith, Lloyd George, Gordon Brown, James Callaghan, Gladstone, Winston Churchill and a range of others had constituencies in Scotland or Wales and served as Prime Minister of the United Kingdom. Does the hon. Gentleman envisage a Scot or a Welsh MP ever again being Prime Minister?

Pete Wishart: I say candidly that I do not envisage that happening again. It would be absurd for a Scottish Member of Parliament to be a Secretary of State for Health or Education, because they would be debarred from full voting entitlements on getting legislation through the House. I do not foresee there ever again being a Scottish, Welsh or possibly Northern Irish Minister in one of the great devolved Departments of state. I do not think there will be another Scottish Prime Minister. I am sorry to upset some of my hon. Friends, but I cannot think of any circumstance where that would be possible. This is the beginning of the process of creating two classes of Members of Parliament in this House and it will be instinctively followed by a hardening of those positions.

Robert Jenrick (Newark) (Con): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Pete Wishart: I want to make some progress, because I am conscious that a lot of my hon. Friends want to speak.

This is the fourth time these hastily redrawn plans have been presented to the House, which says absolutely everything we need to know about them. [*Interruption.*] Does the hon. Member for Nottingham North (Mr Allen) want to intervene? He is chuntering away.

Mr Graham Allen: I will gladly intervene, but very quickly, in view of what I said earlier. The hon. Gentleman is posing as a second-class Member of Parliament, but he is getting a first-class allocation of unlimited time. Perhaps he would care to give those of us who are second class a go as well.

Pete Wishart: May I say ever so gently to the hon. Gentleman that this is being done to us and it has taken an hour and a half and six speeches before a Scottish Member of Parliament has been allowed to speak? We will take our time and I will not rush for his sake.

I have scoured the fourth set of Standing Orders to see whether they change the first set significantly. Perhaps one curious thing could be explained to me. On the Speaker's certification, the Speaker is now required and obliged to speak to two members of the Panel of Chairs before deciding whether a Bill will be English-only. I have a lot of respect for the Panel of Chairs—they do a fantastic job chairing the Committees of this House—but I have never known them to be an authority on the constitution. Surely it would be as well to ask two random members of the public for their views. The people that should be spoken to are the Scottish Government, the Welsh Assembly Government, the Scottish Parliament and the Welsh Assembly. They are the bodies that this is being dumped on and it is their devolution settlements that will be impacted, but there is no requirement on the Speaker to consult them.

The most invidious thing about the proposals is what they will do to the Speaker. The Speaker will be politicised, which is almost unforgivable. That could set the Speaker in conflict with Scottish Members of Parliament. If we do not agree with and reject one of the certifications, what are we supposed to do? We are here to represent our constituents, so of course we are going to do what we can to ensure that their voice is heard. The proposal could lead to a challenge that goes all the way to judicial review and the Supreme Court. We know that the rulings of the Speaker are unchallengeable because of parliamentary privilege, but if constituents who watch what is going on here feel that their rights are not being represented properly, we will end up in the Supreme Court and judicial review.

One of the daftest things the Leader of the House has said—I say this candidly, because I have a lot of affection for him—is that there is no such thing as Barnett consequentials. He told the Procedure Committee:

“I have looked long and hard at the issue of Barnett consequentials and I think they are a bit of both an illusion and a side issue. I don't actually believe that Barnett consequentials exist.”

According to the right hon. Gentleman, Barnett consequentials are up there with Santa Claus, the Easter

[Pete Wishart]

bunny and the tooth fairy. What he said about Barnett consequential is absurd and I will give him the chance to take it back.

Chris Grayling: I have asked the Scottish nationalists to offer one example of a piece of legislation outwith the estimates process that has had a direct financial impact on the budget for Scotland. So far, neither he, his colleagues nor my officials have been able to come up with one example.

Pete Wishart: After the Leader of the House made those remarks, we went to the Scotland Office to look at the annual report and found that something like 56 Barnett consequential were enacted in the course of one Parliament. Of course there are Barnett consequential. It is absolutely absurd to suggest otherwise.

I think the Leader of the House is trying to refer to downstream Barnett consequential, but he is totally and utterly wrong about that as well. On the supply and estimates procedure, they are called estimates for a reason: they are an estimated departmental spend, and the Barnett consequential from any subsequent legislation are simply consolidated in the next set of estimates.

Mr Jenkin: The logic of the SNP's position is to advocate an English Parliament, but what would happen to Barnett consequential then?

Pete Wishart: We would then have a federal system, which would allow us to collect and retain our taxes, and England would be able to do that, too. That is much more elegant. I am sure the hon. Gentleman agrees with the principle of taking responsibility for ourselves. We are happy to do that and I am pretty certain that my colleagues in England are more than equipped for the task of looking after their own country. There are some very talented people who could probably lead that devolved Parliament. It is up to them to secure and achieve it. We did the hard work: we built the consensus, had a referendum and instituted a Parliament. Why cannot they do that, too? What is wrong with making sure that they have their own Parliament? All these issues would then be solved. There would be no such thing as Barnett consequential ever again. They can do their thing and we will do ours, and we could come together in a federal arrangement to discuss all the big, reserved issues.

The Leader of the House's comments on Barnett consequential were absurd. The Procedure Committee corrected him by saying that

"in reality, the estimates and supply procedures of the House validate prior decisions about policy, including those which have been given effect through primary legislation."

That proves that spending in the next set of estimates will be consolidated, proving that there are downstream Barnett consequential. It is totally and utterly absurd to try to suggest that there is no such thing.

If we are to open up procedures for estimates and supply, we must find a lot more time because all issues of Barnett consequential are wrapped up in that. We must spend day after day looking at total departmental spend across all Departments, because what has happened thus far is not good enough anymore. The Liaison

Committee decides on two or three Departments whose spending will be rubber stamped. We will have to spend weeks, if not months, resolving that, and the Procedure Committee will have a big job when it comes to supply and estimates procedures.

We object to this measure on three principles: it is making us second class; it politicises the office of the Speaker; and because of the new provisions and the legislative guddle that will be created. This is probably the one issue that will drive the demand for Scottish independence. I have heard some hon. Members say that it will save the Union, but this is not saving the Union—what we are doing in the House is creating division. If the Government want a solution, they must do the work and create an English Parliament—that is the way to proceed with such matters. This measure, and the mess, the brouhaha, the dog's breakfast of these proposals, will only help me and my hon. Friends, damage the Government's cause, and divide the House. The Government should take the proposals away, think again, and come back with something that it is sensible for the House to consider.

1.51 pm

Sir Edward Leigh (Gainsborough) (Con): I apologise for arriving late to the debate but I was attending the Trade Union Bill.

I sat on the Procedure Committee and have gone through this issue in great detail. English votes for English laws is a manifesto commitment that must be carried out, and I have argued consistently that the complete exclusion of Scottish MPs would be a disaster. The Leader of the House has listened to our views carefully, and Scottish MPs are not being completely excluded—there is a double veto.

This issue is fearfully complicated—our new Standing Orders take up 700 lines—and we need a careful piloting stage. It is a cliché to say that this is like the Schleswig-Holstein question—only three people understand it and one is mad and one is dead—but only two Clerks understand it, and neither is mad or dead. The Leader of the House of Commons says that it is okay because we can all vote on estimates, but I wrote a report for the Chancellor on that issue, and under our procedures, on estimates days the only thing Members cannot talk about is estimates. In that sense, this is a serious matter.

The most serious matter for me, my right hon. Friend and our colleagues to consider is that we love the Union beyond everything else. Nothing we do in this House should add to a sense of grievance in Scotland, and that most important consideration should be in the forefront of our minds.

Ian Blackford (Ross, Skye and Lochaber) (SNP): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir Edward Leigh: I cannot. The point about Barnett consequential that the hon. Member for Perth and North Perthshire (Pete Wishart) mentioned is of supreme importance. It is essential that it cannot be argued in Scotland that Scottish MPs were prevented from taking part in all stages of a Bill that ostensibly affected England, when because of the Barnett formula that decision also affected spending in Scotland. The Leader of the House says that that will not happen, but we

must have a careful piloting stage. We on the Government Benches love the Union above all else, and we cannot do anything that will add to a sense of grievance in Scotland. There would be a genuine sense of grievance if Scottish MPs were excluded from some stages of a Bill, when that Bill—through non-estimates procedure and debate—affected spending in their own country.

Finally, we must do nothing to politicise the office of Speaker, because this is different to the certification of money Bills. When we pilot this measure, we must ensure that the Speaker is not dragged into politics—that is one of the most important principles to abide by. The Leader of the House understands those points and is listening. We are fulfilling a manifesto commitment, and I wish him well in the parliamentary process.

1.54 pm

Mr Graham Allen (Nottingham North) (Lab): Let me do something that nobody else who has anything on the Order Paper can do, which is read out my amendment. If we had to listen to all the amendments that are before the House, it would take longer than a speech by the hon. Member for Perth and North Perthshire (Pete Wishart). For those who want to vote rather than turn tail and go to the Tea Room, I will press my amendment to a vote at 4 pm. It states that

“this House concurs with the Lords Message of 21 July, that it is expedient that a joint committee of Lords and Commons be appointed to consider and report on the constitutional implications of the Government’s revised proposals to change the Standing Orders of the House of Commons in order to give effect to English Votes for English Laws, and that the committee should report on the proposals by 30 March 2016.”

That amendment is supported by seven different parties in the House, and until I heard some tribalism in the debate’s early exchanges, I had hoped that Members of good will throughout the House would have supported it. It is clear that there is no consensus. There are those for and against, and I accept that that is the way this place works. However, if we are to do something of a democratic nature—such as change the Standing Orders of the House of Commons or the way that votes are recorded—I hope that people will seek consensus because they are Members of Parliament, as well as members of the Government or the alterative Government.

That amendment first saw the light of day in July and was crafted in the House of Lords by that wild maverick, Sir Robin Butler, now Lord Butler of Brockwell. Together with a number of colleagues, including the former Scottish Secretary, the former Home Secretary, and many other distinguished people from the second Chamber, he was trying to create something that could unite people not merely across parties, but across Houses.

There are clearly problems and many people have raised difficulties—today’s Order Paper runs to 17 pages, plus seven pages of amendments. I hope that everyone will accept that there are difficulties, so let us find a mechanism to resolve those problems. Let us take our time. There is no need to rush at this; there is nothing pending or desperately urgent that will not be dealt with. The Government have a majority and can do what they wish in this place. I ask only that they not be tyrannical, and that they consult. By setting up a Joint Committee they could see the evidence being prepared in the Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee, and look carefully at the report that was published this week by the Procedure Committee.

They should listen to last night’s debate—I bet many Members have not had the chance in their busy day to consider what some eminent, respected people across the House of Lords said about this issue.

We should take time to look again at the McKay proposals produced by a distinguished, and totally impartial, Clerk of this House. The views of political parties, and others, could be fed in, so that we come up with something that everybody in the House can agree on, not because it is imposed, or because “We don’t like it because they’re doing it”, but because we respect work that has been done by a Joint Committee of eminent people across the House. I hope that those warning flags will be heeded and that the consequential for our democracy and constitution will be taken seriously with the creation of a Joint Committee when we vote at 4 pm.

1.58 pm

Iain Stewart (Milton Keynes South) (Con): I will begin with a confession. The hon. Member for Central Ayrshire (Dr Whitford) intervened on the Leader of the House to comment that her breakfast had been interrupted by a spokesperson on “Good Morning Scotland”. I confess that that was me, and I apologise for spoiling her porridge.

Let me return to an important point that the hon. Lady raised. Her criticism was that I had said that Scottish Members should not have been speaking and voting in the debate on assisted suicide. I was replying to a point put to me that the measure before us today is not required because the SNP do not participate in matters that pertain only to England, and I was pointing out that that is not the case. It was not to complain that she was contributing. I actually valued her contribution so much that she swayed the way I voted in that debate. It was a very valuable contribution.

Dr Philippa Whitford: The understanding is that this arrangement would not apply to a private Member’s Bill. So I find it rather bizarre for the hon. Gentleman, speaking on behalf of the Secretary of State for Scotland, to single out me and that debate in that way. We have done our best to be constructive, and to bring our professionalism and our life experience to the activities here. It was very upsetting to be singled out in that fashion.

Iain Stewart: I merely used it as an illustrative example. The point of the motion before us today is not to exclude the hon. Lady and her colleagues—

Dr Whitford *rose*—

Iain Stewart: Forgive me, but time is very limited and a lot of Members want to get in.

The point of the motion is not to exclude contributions, but that where a measure applies solely to England, Members from England should consent to the motion before them. Nothing in the motion excludes Members from Scotland from speaking on any Bill before this House.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Iain Stewart: I will give way to the right hon. Member for Gordon (Alex Salmond).

Alex Salmond (Gordon) (SNP): On Scottish television on Sunday, the hon. Gentleman conducted a discussion in which it was suggested that Scottish Members should be excluded from votes on Heathrow airport, which has £5 billion of public spending. Is that the case, or is it not?

Iain Stewart: It is not the case. The right hon. Gentleman did not listen to what I said. SNP Members are trying to set up a grievance that does not exist. No Bill will be able to pass this House without the consent of all Members of Parliament who take part in the Division. The proposal is to insert a consent stage into matters that apply only to England. It is the same principle that applied to the arguments that were made to set up the Scottish Parliament in the first place. The argument was made in the 1980s and 1990s that it was wrong for this House to legislate on matters solely affecting Scotland when Scottish Members of Parliament opposed it. That was one of the rationales for setting up the Holyrood Parliament. If it was right for that, then it is right for this House as well.

Ian Blackford: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Iain Stewart: I am not going to give way again. I have very limited time.

I look forward to contributions from Scotland on all matters, but I want to have, for my constituents, the important principle of consent: that their Members of Parliament approve matters that apply only to them. This is an issue that has been running around for decades, and it is an issue on which there is strong public support on both sides of the border. I refer the House to two opinion polls this year. In an Ipsos MORI poll in July, 59% of people across the United Kingdom approved of the principle of English votes. In Scotland, in a ComRes survey in May, 53% approved.

Kirsty Blackman (Aberdeen North) (SNP): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Iain Stewart: Forgive me. I enjoyed a good debate with the hon. Lady earlier, but I must press on.

This is a matter that has support across the country. There are only three perfect answers to the West Lothian question, but none of the options are available or desirable. We could have independence. Scottish National party Members want that, but it was rejected. We could do away with devolution altogether. That is not on the table; indeed, we are enshrining the permanence of the Scottish Parliament. The third option is to have some form of federal United Kingdom. The problem with that is if the federation is the four constituent nations, England would be far too big and dominant, and the balance would be upset. In addition, there is no demand in England for having England split up into federal blocks, so that option is not on the table.

What we have before us is a perfectly reasonable and sensible proposal that adds the same principle of consent to matters that apply only to England, which Scotland enjoys for matters that apply north of the border. It is a reasonable measure and it has support. People in my constituency want to see it and it is high time, four decades after Tam Dalyell posed it, that we answer the West Lothian question. Doing nothing has a bigger cost.

I fear that if we do not address this issue now, it will fester away and erode the bonds that hold the United Kingdom together. That is why I support the measure, and I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House for bringing this matter before us today.

2.4 pm

Ian C. Lucas (Wrexham) (Lab): I thank the Chairman of the Procedure Committee, on which I was privileged to serve, for preparing the report.

I want to make two points. I think the Leader of the House has heard enough from me, and I am grateful to him for his patience in listening to me. First, I intervened on him to ask why MPs from Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland would be excluded from the English Grand Committee set up under these proposals, but there would be no exclusion for English MPs from the Welsh Grand Committee, the Scottish Grand Committee and the Northern Ireland Grand Committee. He gave me no answer. The reason for that is that MPs in this House are being treated differently, a point made with superb eloquence by my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton (Sir Gerald Kaufman).

If the Leader of the House really believes in the Union, and if he really believes in the equality of Members of Parliament in this place—I do passionately, which is why I feel strongly about this, and I hope he will forgive me for my short-temperedness at some stages in this process—then will he please see that he is giving an enormous gift to those who wish to split up the United Kingdom? I believe passionately in devolution. It is right and proper that we decentralise more within England and devolve to Wales and Scotland, but this is not the way to do it. It has been a fractious, bad-tempered and foul debate today, one that I have not enjoyed listening to, and this is just the start of the process. But the process does not address the needs of my constituents.

My second point is that I represent the constituency of Wrexham in north-east Wales, which is on the border. In my constituency—I will give one example, but I could provide the House with more—NHS services are designed to be supplied from hospitals in England, for example in Gobowen, Liverpool, Manchester and Chester. On the boards of those foundation hospitals are people who represent and are elected from the population of north Wales. The proposals will give me a second-class say on the future of those hospitals.

Mr MacNeil: There is a secondary issue with health. The UK always sets its health budgets for the needs of England. If Wales has a greater need, there will be no extra money sent to Wales, with consequentials going elsewhere. They are always set for England. We therefore must have a voice on this issue.

Ian C. Lucas: I will leave the Barnett consequential argument to others because time is very limited, but clearly it was one that was heard very often in the Procedure Committee.

My constituents, who get their services from specialist hospitals in England, need to have representation through me, speaking on their behalf, in connection with those hospitals. If the proposals go through and the England Grand Committee excludes me from speaking on their behalf, my constituents will not have a voice in this

Parliament. To my knowledge, this process is unprecedented. The Leader of the House knows I will not have the opportunity to move amendments in that Committee in connection with the future of, for example, those hospitals. That is the situation. I have spoken to my constituents and they believe very strongly that that is wrong.

Kevin Brennan: My hon. Friend has studied this very closely. Can he answer the point I was trying to make earlier? How can it possibly be envisaged that this will not interfere with the Prime Minister's ability to make a Crown appointment of a Minister, when any Minister from a Welsh constituency, for example, who is appointed a Minister to a Department would be unable to participate in the Committee stage of a Bill he was promoting in Parliament? Is that not a nonsense?

Ian C. Lucas: It is a nonsense, and it is unprecedented. It will mean that an individual from outside England cannot be a Minister and move amendments in Committee on what is defined as an England-only Bill. If that is not creating two different classes of Member, I do not know what is.

This is the third version of amended Standing Orders—it came out last week after the Procedure Committee reported—and it is extremely complex. I have tabled two amendments to illustrate my two points, although I have not read them out because they would have taken up my entire four-minute allocation of time. None the less, the Standing Orders are horrifically complex and dangerous, and they go to the heart of the Union.

Dr Philippa Whitford: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Ian C. Lucas: I only have 58 seconds left, so I cannot, I am afraid.

These changes, which go to the heart of the Union, will probably go through today with the support of Conservative MPs from England, but I think they will rue this day, because they are giving an enormous gift to Welsh and Scottish nationalists. This will foster their grievances and build resentment. It is ill judged and wrong, and I will oppose it till my dying day. If the party opposite really is the Conservative and Unionist party, it should not support this dreadful set of Standing Orders.

2.11 pm

Heather Wheeler (South Derbyshire) (Con): When I first stood for Parliament in 2001, one of my personal pledges was English votes for English laws. When I stood for Parliament in 2005, one of my personal pledges was English votes for English laws. It was in our manifesto this time, and I stood again on that platform, so I am delighted that after detailed consultation we now have these proposals. I will gladly vote for them tonight, at 4 o'clock, quarter past 4, half past 4, quarter to 5 and, if need be, at 5 o'clock. This has gone on for too long. [HON. MEMBERS: "What about 6 o'clock?"] No, SNP Members need to be on their planes back home.

It is important that the rest of Parliament understands the grievance that my voters feel. My postbag on this issue is phenomenal. When I knock on doors, people

say all the time that it is outrageous that Scottish, Welsh and Northern Irish MPs vote on matters that only affect England.

Several hon. Members rose—

Heather Wheeler: No, I will not give way, because I want other people to speak.

It has been incredible to hear all this sanctimony, piousness and egregious anger, and it is not on any more. It is about time Parliament listened to the voters who put us here and who voted for our manifesto, and I am delighted that these detailed proposals, after full consultation, are going to go through. It will be a pleasure to follow my right hon. Friend into the Aye Lobby tonight.

2.13 pm

Mr Nigel Dodds (Belfast North) (DUP): I thank the Leader of the House for consulting me and my colleagues. I doubt neither his sincerity nor his Unionism. That said, while he might mean well, his proposals neither deal with the problem they diagnose—even the supporters of these changes to Standing Orders will accept that—nor do much to prevent the growth of other and worse defects in our constitution. I commend, but will not go into the details of, the Procedure Committee's excellent report. I think there is much in it that the Government could sensibly pay heed to.

I want to set out my party's principled objections to EVEL as it is currently configured. We do not think for one moment that English voters and votes on English matters should be treated unfairly. English voters have the right to be treated fairly. Our profound fear is not what this does to or for England, which in truth is very little, but what it potentially does to the fabric of our Union. This point has been raised by several colleagues. Quite frankly, our Union does not need any more rending.

The unanswered questions, even only partially listed, are depressing in their extent and significance. Why has it been done by Standing Orders? If this is such an important matter, it surely needs more time and scrutiny. If England needs justice, surely she needs justice secured. How is that done by "here today potentially gone tomorrow" Standing Orders? It is all very well to talk of pilot schemes and reviews, but why is there nothing like a sunset clause, which we discussed, built into the proposals? We are told that this is a critical democratic need for England, yet at the same time something of no great constitutional significance, because it will, we are assured, be used a mere handful of times a year.

Where is the crisis that requires this? The Government have a majority and can pass every law they have support for. What credible piece of business can be imagined that the Government would not bring into law with a UK majority under the traditions and practices that have served this House and all its Members equally for centuries? Let us cut to the chase. If England needs and deserves an English Parliament, let us have an English Parliament. Let us stop twisting the Union Parliament into what it is not. This kind of ad hoc, half-hearted approach does not work in the long run.

I could go into detail about how the Speaker's Office will be bogged down in procedural nightmares of certification, about the dangers of judicial review of

[*Mr Nigel Dodds*]

Parliament's proceedings in relation to certification and all of that, but I do not have time. Others have alluded to the problems posed by these changes to Standing Orders.

Mr Jeffrey M. Donaldson (Lagan Valley) (DUP): On the question of judicial review, I think the Leader of the House failed to respond adequately to the valid point made by my hon. Friend the Member for North Down (Lady Hermon). As currently drafted, the Grand Committee on England, Wales and Northern Ireland will include all Members representing Northern Ireland constituencies. It does not clarify whether those are Members who have taken the oath. I can see that being a recipe for Sinn Féin launching a legal challenge.

Mr Dodds: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for that point. It raises another issue that we have raised several times about there being two classes of Northern Ireland MP: those who get their expenses for not doing their work and those who get their expenses for doing their work. There is little parliamentary scrutiny of Sinn Féin MPs and their expenses.

I could go into the implications of EVEL for the block grants and the Barnett formula, which have rightly been explored, but I want to conclude on the principle. There is no suggestion that on matters where Parliament legislates solely for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, only Scottish, Welsh and Northern Ireland Members should respectively have the territorial veto now to be accorded to English Members. So where is the point of principle? Where is the justice? If it be right, as Conservative Members are saying, that there be a veto in relation to English-only matters, surely, if Northern Ireland-only matters come before the House that are not in the remit of Stormont, only Northern Ireland Members should be allowed to vote on them. If it is a matter of principle, justice and democracy, exactly the same principle should apply to Northern Ireland Members in the same circumstances, but there is no suggestion that it will be afforded to Scottish, Welsh and Northern Ireland MPs. We are not being offered that.

In conclusion, there are problems with both Parliament and the balance of our Union; there are problems in the devolved Assemblies that I accept need to be addressed; and there are needs in England that deserve to be met, but these proposals do not deal with any of them.

2.18 pm

Mark Spencer (Sherwood) (Con): It is always a pleasure to follow the right hon. Member for Belfast North (Mr Dodds), who speaks with great experience.

One of the challenges of this debate is to understand where we are coming from and our different constituencies. Some of those who come from other parts of the UK fail to understand the strength of feeling on the doorsteps of England.

Mr Alistair Carmichael (Orkney and Shetland) (LD): If that is the case, surely the hon. Gentleman's constituents deserve something better. What is being offered to his constituents today is something that could be turned back again by a future Government if they felt the need.

Mark Spencer: I accept the argument. To a certain extent, my constituents would like to see something more robust and firmer put in place for the long term, but we are where we are. We need to resolve this matter. We have been kicking this can of the West Lothian question down the road since 1997, and we need to sort it out so that we can find a way of sorting out devolved matters.

Ian Blackford: May I politely suggest what the best way of dealing with this is? We understand that people in England want a say on their own matters, but the correct way to achieve that is to have an English Parliament in which their views can be represented. What should not be happening is the creation of a situation in this place whereby we SNP Members will be second-class MPs.

Mark Spencer: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman, and I can tell him that whenever I have been campaigning in my constituency, no constituent has ever said to me that the answer is more politicians. We need to find a way of using this House—[*Interruption.*] We are going to reduce the number of politicians here to 600, and I hope that Opposition Members will support us when that legislation comes forward. We need to find a way of using this House to resolve issues that apply only to England.

People in my constituency recognise the fact that in Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales there is devolution, whereby powers have passed from this House down the structure, so that people in those areas can make their own decisions. My constituents understand quite simply that I do not get a say on matters relating to health in Wales, and I do not get a say on matters relating to education in Scotland. Those issues are decided through the devolved Administrations. My constituents understand that the position is fundamentally unfair. We now need to ensure that we talk about and resolve in this House issues that apply only to England. It is a question of fairness and balance.

Dr Whitford *rose*—

Mark Spencer: The hon. Lady has had a lot to say. I shall give way to her now, but I shall not give way again.

Dr Whitford: It is just a question. As health has been devolved to Manchester, will Manchester MPs be excluded from health discussions in this House?

Mark Spencer: I think we are getting to the point, frankly, where things are getting a bit silly. Clearly, issues about Crossrail will be discussed. The Government make big decisions on Crossrail and other infrastructure projects, and it is ridiculous to suggest that we should exclude any person who is not affected. The same argument could be applied to HS2—that unless HS2 goes through an MP's constituency, they should not get a say on it.

A number of big issues such as health and education have been devolved, and my constituents fully understand that I, as the Member of Parliament for Sherwood, do not get a say in the devolved Administrations on those issues. That is fine; I am all for devolution. I think it is a

really good idea to devolve those powers lower down the structure, but there has to be balance and fairness to the whole process.

Let me deal with the Speaker's role in the process, as a number of Members have alleged that this means the politicisation of the Speaker's role. We should recognise that the Speaker is already in a position where such decisions have to be made. He has to decide, for example, which amendment is going to be selected and which is not—and these amendments are often highly politicised. This week has provided a good example in that we have had three urgent questions on the steel industry. The Speaker had to decide whether to accept those urgent questions, notwithstanding the fact that they came with a political slant to score political points. We are blessed with a Speaker's Office that can make those decisions impartially. We may sometimes disagree with a decision, but it is made impartially and the Speaker's Office has proved that it is perfectly possible to make those decisions without getting drawn into party political issues.

I am conscious of the time, so let me conclude by saying that it is clear on the doorsteps of Sherwood that this is about balance, fairness and giving English MPs an ability to manage English matters once and for all within England.

2.24 pm

Mr David Hanson (Delyn) (Lab): I am finding this debate quite depressing. During my time in the House of Commons, when I have walked into this Chamber, I have done so and been able to speak on behalf of my constituents on issues that they have raised with me—irrespective of my majority, irrespective of how long I have served here, irrespective of my service to this House and irrespective of whether I am a Privy Councillor. I have been able to speak as an equal Member of this House. Tonight, however, that circumstance will change—*[Interruption.]* It will.

I served as an equal Member of this House during the time that the right hon. Member for Wokingham (John Redwood) was Secretary of State for Wales even though he did not represent a constituency in Wales. I have served as an equal Member when I was a Northern Ireland Minister, dealing with Northern Ireland matters, even though I was not a Member representing a constituency in Northern Ireland. From tonight, however, there will be a very subtle difference, because as a Member of Parliament representing a constituency in north-east Wales, I will not be able to table amendments or vote on them in Committee.

Why does that matter? It matters because my constituents use services in England and pay general taxation for services in England. Before any Members shout "Oh, yes", let me point out to them that my constituents use health services in England because the local general hospital is the nearest general hospital that was designed to serve Chester and north-east Wales; they use services in Liverpool; they use specialist services in Manchester; and they use specialist health services in Gobowen in Shropshire. Indeed, some 66,000 people from my area used the Countess of Chester hospital last year because it was the hospital they were meant to use under legislation passed by this House.

Antoinette Sandbach (Eddisbury) (Con): In fact, the reality is that the Labour Welsh Government have pulled the plug on a lot of health funding in Wales, and the

maternity unit at Glan Clwyd is under threat. That is why 66,000 of the right hon. Gentleman's constituents are going over the border into England.

Mr Hanson: The hon. Lady does not know the area of north-east Wales. In fact, she lost an election in north-east Wales in the constituency I now represent. She does not understand the nature of the business in north-east Wales. I have—*[Interruption.]*

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Lindsay Hoyle): Order.

Antoinette Sandbach: On a point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker. The right hon. Member for Delyn (Mr Hanson) suggested that I was not elected in the area that he represents, but I spent four years as a Welsh Assembly Member representing the whole of north Wales, including north-east Wales.

Mr Deputy Speaker: I hate to say it to the hon. Lady, but this is actually the House of Commons.

Mr Hanson: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker.

The point I am making is that my constituents depend on services that are based in England and they pay taxes to the Exchequer that also funds services in Belfast. The key issue is that I, as the MP representing my constituents, should have the right to walk through that door and speak on equal terms with Scottish Members, English Members, Welsh Members and indeed Northern Ireland Members.

Under the proposals before us, the Speaker will be required to certify a Bill. He will do so in a way that will make it impossible for me to speak in Committee because the Bill could be

"within the legislative competence of the National Assembly for Wales".

Health is a Welsh Assembly competence, but my constituents use and depend on English health services, one third of my constituents were born in England and hospital maternity services are there for them. Am I to have that role no longer in this House? Am I supposed to be a second-class citizen? As I suggested in my intervention, Lord Thomas of Gresford, who has fought four elections in or near my constituency, lost every one and now sits in the other place, will have the same right as every Member—apart from myself and Scottish and Northern Ireland MPs—to speak on those matters. Lord Roberts of Llandudno, who has lost five elections in our area will have the same right to speak as other Members, but not me. I have been sent here six times by my constituents, and not once have I been asked to differentiate between the equality of Members of Parliament in this House.

Helen Goodman (Bishop Auckland) (Lab): I represent an English seat, and, like my right hon. Friend, I can tell the House that none of my constituents has ever raised this issue with me on the doorstep, or said that they wanted any change. My right hon. Friend and other Members have drawn attention to the wide-ranging and significant constitutional implications of this measure. Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is an utter disgrace that it is being considered here for only three and a half hours, with no pre-legislative scrutiny and no constitutional consideration?

Mr Hanson: The level of scrutiny is an extremely important issue, but this is a major constitutional change. I despair that the Conservative and Unionist party has presented this measure. I will never, ever admit to being a Conservative, but I will admit to being a Unionist. That may upset some of my hon. Friends who are sharing our debate today, but the key point is that I am part of a United Kingdom Parliament.

An issue relating to how England runs its services may well arise. It could involve regional government, it could involve an English Parliament, and it could involve other measures. However, this Parliament comes to this House with its Members having an equal vote and an equal say, based on their constituents' needs. Today, at five o'clock, that system will be overturned—not with a referendum, as happened in Wales; not with a referendum, as happened in Scotland; not with a referendum and a hard-fought political war, as happened in Northern Ireland; and not with the consent of my constituents. That will happen because the Conservative party—the Conservative and Unionist party—has presented this proposal today.

I make the point flippantly, but Andrew Bonar Law was MP for Glasgow Central, Asquith was MP for North East Fife, Campbell-Bannerman was MP for Stirling Burghs, Gordon Brown was MP for Kirkcaldy and Cowdenbeath, and James Callaghan was MP for Cardiff South East. How does the Conservative party expect colleagues in Scotland—constituents of the SNP Members who are sitting on the neighbouring Benches—or constituents in Northern Ireland, or my constituents in Wales, to be able to say in the future, “One of our children, or grandchildren, could be Prime Minister of this United Kingdom, while representing a seat in Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland”, when the Bills before the House will not provide for the ability of such a Member of Parliament to vote on issues to do with that in Committee—or perhaps in Cabinet Committee—or to enjoy the confidence of the House as a whole?

This is a divisive measure. It differentiates between Members of Parliament, and it differentiates between parts of the United Kingdom. It does not allow us to speak when we want to, on behalf of the people who have sent us here. It is appalling. I shall vote today in support of my hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham North (Mr Allen) to try to get some sense into this, but I shall continue to oppose the measure, because ultimately it will divide this United Kingdom. It will be the first step down a road to disunity, and I will not support it in this House.

2.32 pm

John Redwood (Wokingham) (Con): I speak for England. For some 18 years English MPs in this United Kingdom Parliament have proposed, encouraged, or come to accept with good grace major transfers of power to Scotland, substantial transfers of power to Wales, and the transfer of other powers to Northern Ireland. Now it is England's turn.

Alex Salmond: The right hon. Gentleman says that he speaks for England. We all recall that, in a former existence, he once tried to sing for Wales.

John Redwood: In those glorious days of great singing, we had a unitary country, which meant that anyone could do anything from this great House of Commons

in the Government across the whole United Kingdom. We have this problem today because, in our collective wisdoms, we are transferring massive powers to devolved Governments and to all parts of the United Kingdom, but not to England. Now it is England's turn to have a voice, and England's turn to have some votes.

I welcome today's proposals, but I must tell my hon. Friends that they do only half the job. What England is being offered today is the opportunity to have a voice and a vote to stop the rest of the United Kingdom imposing things on England which England does not wish to have and has not voted for. That is very welcome, but we still do not have what the Scots have. We do not have the power to propose something for our country which we wish to have and which may well be backed by a large majority of English voters and by English Members of Parliament, because it could still be voted down by the United Kingdom Parliament. So this is but half the job for England. Nevertheless, I welcome half the job, and I will of course warmly support it.

We are given but two pathetic arguments against the proposal by the massive and angry forces that we see ranged against it today. First, we are told that it will not be possible to define an England issue. Those Members never once thought there was a problem with defining a Scottish issue, and, as we know, issue after issue is defined as a Scottish issue and passes through the Scottish Parliament with very few conflicts and problems.

In your wisdom, Mr Speaker, you will be well guided in this respect, because every piece of legislation that is presented to us will state very clearly whether it applies to the whole of the United Kingdom or just to some parts of the United Kingdom. The decisions on who can vote on the matter under the double-vote system will therefore become very clear, because they will be on the face of the law. How can this House produce a law that does not state whether it is England-only or United Kingdom-wide? The law must make that statement, so it will not be any great problem for the Chair to sort that out.

Then there is the ridiculous argument that this measure will create two different types of MP. The problem, which some of us identified in the late 1990s when devolution was first proposed and implemented, was that it created four different types of MP, and we are living with the results of that today. English MPs have always been at the bottom of the heap. I have to accept that Scottish MPs come here and vote on English health and English schools in my constituency, but I have no right to debate, or vote on, health and education in Scotland. That problem needs to be addressed, and we are suggesting a very mild and moderate way of starting to address it. I hope that the House will give England a hearing.

I find it extraordinary that so few English Labour MPs are present today, and that not one of them is standing up and speaking for England, saying “Let us make some small progress in redressing the balance.”

Several hon. Members *rose*—

John Redwood: I do not have time to give way, and others wish to speak.

Today is the chance to start to put right some of that injustice to England. Today is the chance to start to rebalance our precious United Kingdom. Today is the

chance to deal with lopsided devolution, and to give England something sensible to do. In the week of Trafalgar day, let me end by saying, “England expects every England MP to do his or her duty.”

2.37 pm

Kirsty Blackman (Aberdeen North) (SNP): I do not think that the right hon. Member for Wokingham (John Redwood) should say anything about the number of Members who are present, given that at one point when we last debated EVEL there were only four Conservatives in the entire Chamber.

Both the Leader of the House and the hon. Member for Milton Keynes South (Iain Stewart) have mentioned polling in relation to EVEL: that is, the polling of Scottish people. According to the result of the most recent polling that I have been able to find—obviously I did not select the polls that were selected by those hon. Members—54% of Scots support the holding of another referendum in the event of EVEL’s implementation. Strangely, the Conservative Members and the BBC selected the same polling when they were discussing the issue.

It has been said that devolution for England is good. It has also been said, from the Government Front Bench, that no one is going to tell the Speaker how to certify. You, Mr Speaker, are going to have to become an expert very, very quickly on quite a number of matters on which you are not currently an expert.

The shadow Leader of the House described this as a fundamental change in the constitution of our islands. As far as I can tell, it is the biggest change that will ever have been made by Standing Orders. It is a massive constitutional change. The Parliament Act 1922 is probably the biggest change that I can find in the Speaker’s role in terms of certification; that change was made by an Act of Parliament, and it was generally agreed that it was massive. However, the Speaker’s certification role in relation to money Bills is much more minor than the certification process that will take place in this context, and much less time-consuming as well.

Alex Salmond: My hon. Friend makes an extremely good point. The right hon. Member for Wokingham (John Redwood) was entirely wrong to suggest there was an analogous process in Scotland’s devolution. The devolution legislation on which the Scottish Parliament is established does not certify things as devolved. It has reserved issues and everything else is devolved. There is no role whatever for certification by the Speaker.

Kirsty Blackman: I appreciate that intervention and will come on to a similar point shortly.

Helen Goodman: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Kirsty Blackman: Not right now.

I want to talk about the only good thing that has come out of the English votes for English laws process: the fact that the estimates process has been highlighted. It has been brought to the front and centre, and I understand that the Procedure Committee is going to be looking at how the estimates process works. That is fantastic; I am looking forward to hearing Treasury representatives appearing before various Committees in this House and explaining how it will make the estimates

process more transparent and allow people to be involved in setting the budget, rather than keeping it hidden in the background. That will be excellent for the democracy of this House, and is the only good thing to come out of this.

There is a complete lack of understanding on the Government Benches about the devolution settlement and process for Scotland and how it works. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Gordon (Alex Salmond) said, there are powers that are reserved and the rest of the powers are decided by the Scottish Parliament. That is quite different from what is being decided here now.

The other thing that is not understood—or is being wilfully misunderstood, perhaps—by those on the Government Benches is the way funding works in the UK. This place decides how much money goes to Scotland.

Drew Hendry (Inverness, Nairn, Badenoch and Strathspey) (SNP): The Leader of the House said earlier today that he regarded this measure as a kind of trail. We have also heard from a senior member of the Scottish Office team—no matter how gamely he tries to reinterpret that position—that he would see Barnett consequential items such as spending on Heathrow included in decisions for English-only votes. Does my hon. Friend agree that this is the thin end of the wedge and that this is a subjective measure that will lead to further problems?

Kirsty Blackman: I absolutely agree. This is more evidence that the Conservative party is misunderstanding the way the funding settlement works. We cannot describe this as devolution for England. What will happen is that the English MPs will have discussions in Committee and will have a veto over things that have an effect on the Scottish finances. That is how this devolution works. If the Conservatives decide to restructure the way the finances in this place work—rather than just going to a full English Parliament, which we would support—and have English MPs take decisions on things that do not have a financial impact on Scotland, I am absolutely on board with that. I think that is a fantastic idea. In fact I would like to see a full federal system or independence for Scotland.

I do not understand what the Leader of the House is trying to do with this measure. It was put into the Conservatives’ manifesto, they won the election and now they do not know how to proceed. They are stuck with the proposal because it was in the manifesto and they have to support it. The Leader of the House has stood before various Committees of this House and before this House today and tried to say to the Scottish MPs, “This is a minor thing; this is a really small thing”, but he is trying to say to his own Back-Bench MPs, “This is a really big thing; this is going to solve all our problems.” That does not make sense; the two things cannot be joined together. It is either one thing or the other.

Helen Goodman: Given that this debate is only three and a half hours long and is of such significance, I wonder why the Leader of the House cannot even sit through it.

Kirsty Blackman: I urge the House not to take this step at all, but in the event that it does, Standing Orders are not the way to go. If the Government are going to take such a step, they need a proper process.

2.44 pm

Sir William Cash (Stone) (Con): Back in 1997 I sought to tackle the West Lothian question by tabling an amendment to the Scotland Bill, the effect of which was to amend our Standing Orders so as to ensure fairness for the English voters and taxpayers where exclusively English matters were to arise. It was clear that none of the party leaders at the time were prepared to countenance that, but I am afraid that it has caught up with us now.

There have been real consequences to the devolution process. Although I will not say that there is not a case for the Barnett formula, we do make a substantial amount of money available to Scotland—this is not a subject the hon. Member for Perth and North Perthshire (Pete Wishart), for example, has touched on today—and I can understand why, in the interests of the Union. That is a perfectly reasonable position, but I think it can be pushed too far, and I will say this: this is not about two classes of MPs; it is about two classes of function, which were created, as the right hon. Member for Gordon (Alex Salmond) more or less alluded to, because under the devolution settlement it was agreed that there would be reserved matters and classes of functions that would be transferred to Scotland. I cannot imagine that Scottish Members either in this House or the Scottish Parliament would countenance the idea of English MPs claiming to vote on matters that have been devolved to Scotland.

Alex Salmond: Does the hon. Gentleman understand that no decision of the Scottish Parliament can impact on the funding for English constituencies? Following his line of argument, will he say that the Heathrow airport issue, which would affect the funding for Scotland, cannot possibly be part of this process?

Sir William Cash: I appreciate the point the right hon. Member makes. I am not saying that I am against the Barnett formula. I think there is an issue with Barnett consequential, but the bottom line is this: we are now dealing with a constitutional question. It is constantly claimed that this is about two classes of MPs, but I am simply dismissing that because it is complete rubbish. There are not two classes of MPs. The right of people to vote in the Scottish Parliament or the UK Parliament derives from the functions conferred upon them by agreement of the whole House of Commons when the Scotland Bill was put through in 1997.

Peter Grant: Given that we agree that this is a constitutional problem, does the hon. Gentleman agree that it needs a constitutional solution? That constitutional solution is along the corridor; there is an English Parliament chamber just waiting to be occupied by politicians democratically elected to represent the people of England. What is it that is so defective about the people of England that they cannot have a Parliament in the same way as the people of the other nations represented in this Chamber?

Sir William Cash: I understand that, and there are very powerful forces for a move towards an English Parliament, because those on the Opposition Benches believe that is the way they will get their independence, but this is not about independence.

I say to the Leader of the House—or his deputy as he is not here at the moment—that these proposals are too complicated and far too long. I am extremely grateful to the Procedure Committee for its valuable work and for the manner in which it has managed these matters. I am also grateful to the Leader of the House, who has been amenable to its proposal for a pilot study. These proposals are a compromise, however; they are not perfect. They are far too complicated. You know only too well, Mr Speaker, that they involve 30 pages of unbelievably obscure changes, which will be a nightmare to interpret and to apply.

The Speaker's certificate is an answer. I put forward a proposal, which was agreed to by a former Clerk of the House and others of similar distinction, to deal with this problem in—believe it or not—seven lines of changes to Standing Orders. I am completely committed to the idea of these changes being done through Standing Orders. A lot of constitutional nonsense is being talked about doing this through an Act of Parliament. That would invite a judicial review, whereas this method would avoid one, which is absolutely essential. Article 9 of the Bill of Rights will prevail, whatever some Scottish ex-Law Lord might have said. The bottom line is that the courts will not want to interfere in these matters, and I do not believe that they will. If they did, it would raise a whole raft of matters relating to the Human Rights Act, which we are going to deal with anyway.

This is a manifesto commitment and I therefore completely understand why we have been presented with these proposals. A number of measures were put through during the previous Administration, but they were too complicated and the amendments that have been made to them are very minor. I also believe that 30 pages of Standing Orders are beyond the wit of man, and they will do nothing but create complications. I will vote for the proposals today simply because this is a manifesto commitment, but if they could be simplified, that would be the right way to go. Seven lines of changes to Standing Orders would be one way of dealing with that. I put that proposal to the Prime Minister at the Chequers meeting, but a decision was made subsequently to go down this route. I am not against the principle but we need to find a much simpler way of dealing with these matters.

2.50 pm

Jonathan Reynolds (Stalybridge and Hyde) (Lab/Co-op): This is one of those days when I find myself broadly disagreeing with everyone else in the House. The hon. Member for Gainsborough (Sir Edward Leigh) and my hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham North (Mr Allen) have summed up the issue in the most accurate way. I am sympathetic to the case put forward by the Leader of the House and other Conservative Members. The status quo is not a tenable settlement and it needs to be discussed and probably to change. I acknowledge that Labour has struggled with this issue. There is no doubt that the question of English votes for English laws poses a substantial problem for Labour MPs in England, such as myself. Once we have shattered the common interest between Scotland or Wales and the northern cities and London, it is hard to see how a non-Conservative Government could be elected here, based on the numbers in this House, yet it is reasonable to say that there are

millions of people in this country who have a legitimate aspiration for a non-Conservative Government at some point or other.

Increasingly, we are creating another political problem by denying that this problem exists and by failing to respond to it. There is no doubt that the status quo is a source of resentment, and some movement on the issue is essential, but I cannot agree with how the Government are dealing with it.

Mrs Madeleine Moon (Bridgend) (Lab): Would my hon. Friend acknowledge that the resentment is growing partly because of the suspicion among people in Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales that these measures represent further gerrymandering by a political party that they do not support in order to ensure that the spending that comes in our direction is not distributed equally? That resentment is growing.

Jonathan Reynolds: My hon. Friend makes a reasonable point, and it is one that Conservative Members need to hear. Having listened to the speeches so far, I wonder how many Conservative MPs spent a substantial amount of time in Scotland during the referendum campaign. They seem to have a cavalier attitude to these issues.

We are in a constitutional mess at the moment—there is no doubt about that—but the worst thing we could do would be to make that mess even worse by adopting ill-thought-through proposals that have not been properly considered and that would probably create an even bigger problem. There are many complicated issues that need to be considered. First, the proposals lack clarity. They are not easy to understand, and I can envisage a situation in which, even after a vote, we will not really know what has happened until we get the figures through.

Furthermore, the proposals will create two tiers of MPs, and it is pointless to pretend otherwise. We also need to consider the situations in Wales and in Scotland. I wonder how many Conservative MPs really appreciate just how slender a thread the Union is hanging by. We must also consider the role of the Lords and the question of English devolution to areas such as mine in Greater Manchester. Then there is the question of an English Parliament. Should this place be the English Parliament on some days but not on others? There is also the question of a possible federation in the UK.

Most of all, we need to consider the voting system for this place. The Labour party has got itself into a difficult position on that. We look at the electoral geography and we wonder how we can achieve an equitable solution that would give us the chance of a Labour Government now and again. The situation will get even worse if the newly gerrymandered constituencies are brought into being.

A change of this sort must be achieved through consensus and by convention. That is how we have done everything under our unwritten constitution in the past. I am afraid that to go down this route with such an obvious partisan advantage for one party, when only that party supports the change, is reckless and cavalier.

Helen Goodman: My hon. Friend is making an excellent case and pointing out all the complications. Does he not agree that using this device of Standing Orders, which means that the other place has no possibility of discussing

and voting on it, and giving us only an afternoon's debate is an utter disgrace? Does he not think that it amounts to a coup?

Jonathan Reynolds: I think that it is a disgrace, and I think that any fair-minded Conservative MP would say that.

Let me pose this question: by what measure can the new Standing Orders be revoked? We can clearly say that this House would have no authority to revoke the Scottish Parliament unless we followed a similar procedure to the one by which it was created. A referendum created the Scottish Parliament. I believe that we would at the very least need to have a referendum to decide whether it should cease to exist.

What is the process by which these Standing Orders could be changed? For instance, could a simple majority of the whole House, including Scottish and Welsh MPs, revoke the Standing Orders to get a result? Conservative MPs are nodding their heads. Could they not see that such an event might inadvertently trigger a constitutional crisis the like of which we have not seen for 100 years? These things have to be thought through, and there must be support and consensus for them. Such a process can be hard and slow, but look how long it took to get the Scottish Parliament or the Welsh Assembly. That is the kind of process that needs to be followed.

Frankly, what we are doing today, with a debate of only three and a half hours, is not good enough. As someone who is genuinely and honestly sympathetic to the cause of needing to look again at how we do these things in the House and, frankly, who is fairly convinced by the core argument behind it, I cannot in any way vote for the motion. It is imperative for Conservative MPs to understand that they are risking the integrity of this country. Quite frankly, I am astonished at the recklessness they are showing today.

2.56 pm

Michelle Donelan (Chippenham) (Con): Today's debate is not about devolving power to England or about reclassifying some MPs; it is about restoring the balance to give England a strong voice again on English matters, and in turn, to strengthen the Union. For too long, we have suffered from a halfway attempt at devolution. We must rectify that, especially as we are honouring the promises we made to deliver the Smith commission report and to devolve greater powers down to all parts of the United Kingdom.

Helen Goodman: On a point of order, Mr Speaker.

Mr Speaker: I hope it is a genuine point of order.

Helen Goodman: I seek your guidance, Mr Speaker. Obviously, the process being followed this afternoon is highly controversial. The hon. Member for Stone (Sir William Cash) referred to something called "the Chequers meeting". Most Opposition Members do not know what that was or whether it was a formal part of the process. I seek your guidance on how we might find out what the Chequers process was?

Mr Speaker: The answer is by persistent questioning of those who might be in the know, among whose number the Chair is not included.

Michelle Donelan: If we do not amend our system to provide for English votes for English laws, voters in Scotland will continue to vote for their own parliamentarians to make devolved laws, but those parliamentarians would perhaps have the casting vote and therefore the final say on matters that only affect constituents in England.

Ian Blackford: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Michelle Donelan: I will not give way. I do not have the time.

No change would mean that we continue to have two tiers of voters in the UK, with some having double sets of representation. Is that democratic or fair? I must acknowledge that with the majority Conservative Government we now have, there is less danger of English matters being voted down by Scottish or Welsh MPs. However, had the election produced a different result, we would face a totally different proposition. Is that right or democratic?

We must remember that resolving the issue of English votes for English laws is overdue. We must not get bogged down in the arguments against these procedural changes. The proposed changes are a just, fair, cost-effective and, above all, democratic way of resolving the issue. The changes seek to restore the voice of the English people. I am a strong believer in localism and in devolving powers, but I am not in favour of cherry-picking certain countries or areas at the expense of others. Voting for these changes will not only show the people of the United Kingdom that we have one voice in one country and that we will not allow the voice of one area to be drowned out, but reaffirm our commitment to a democratic UK, and strengthen and in turn protect the Union by forging a more equal footing on which to move forward.

Carol Monaghan (Glasgow North West) (SNP): Will the hon. Lady give way?

Michelle Donelan: I am afraid we do not have time because a lot of people want to speak.

The changes will go some way towards restoring faith in our system. They will still allow Members from all areas of the UK to debate all legislation, but will ensure that matters affecting only England have the consent of English MPs. They will relieve the bad feeling among our voters. That was echoed to me at door after door during the general election campaign in the Chippenham constituency.

Let us be clear: this change will not create two tiers of MPs. It was the Labour Government's half-botched attempt at devolution that created two tiers of MPs. Now is the time to put that right. This is a landmark change because it is so overdue. It has been 38 years since the former Member for West Lothian asked how long English residents and MPs would tolerate a settlement that left out England. Thirty-eight years later, we can answer that question with confidence and pride. This Government will ensure that the wait comes to an end.

I must stress that I support the extension of powers to the Scottish Parliament, the Welsh Assembly and the Northern Ireland Assembly. I also support further devolution to regions such as the south-west and Wiltshire—the engine room that drove our country long before any northern powerhouse was ever mentioned. Devolving powers to local areas is the right thing—

Mr Speaker: Order. I think that the hon. Lady has finished her remarks. That was a rather rude interruption. Please finish the sentence.

Michelle Donelan: It is surely also right to ensure that we give a fair deal to the English, including my constituents. As Chesterton famously wrote:

“Smile at us, pay us, pass us; but do not quite forget,

For we are the people of England, that never have spoken yet.”

Now is the time that the English speak.

3.1 pm

Alan Brown (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (SNP): Despite all the bluster we have heard about English votes for English laws being the No. 1 issue on the doorstep, this is a fudge of a solution to a problem that does not exist. [*Interruption.*] It is true and I will tell Government Members why. Since 2001, only 0.6% of votes have been affected by Scottish MPs. They can tell their constituents that there are only 59 Scottish MPs out of 650 MPs in this House, so clearly we cannot impose our will on the House. It is the other way about and we have had to put up with it for years. It has been estimated that under the last Government, there were only two England-only Bills that would have fallen under EVEL.

The issue cannot be that important because in the last couple of debates, most Government Members did not even bother to turn out. Sadly, the same is true today on the Labour Benches. The No. 1 story that we have heard over the years has been about the introduction of student fees. If that was such an issue to all youse guys, you could have abolished student fees in the last Parliament. Instead, you voted to increase them. If the Government introduce a Bill to abolish student fees, believe me, we will back them.

Jake Berry (Rossendale and Darwen) (Con): On the issue of what SNP Members will or will not back the Government on, the hon. Gentleman will be aware of their self-denying ordinance, as they call it, not to vote on England-only issues. The First Minister of Scotland restated that in 2008, using the example of fox hunting. Of course, that self-denying ordinance was broken in revenge, torpedoing all their arguments.

Alan Brown: It is good to see that the welfare of foxes is such a big issue that the Government want to stop SNP MPs voting on it. As a matter of fact, we did not vote on it—we just said that we might do and that was enough to have them running scared. The First Minister has said that we will vote for progressive policies in this House and that we will vote with other parties for those policies.

This is a mess of a proposal and I will outline why. It introduces further processes, delays and costs into the democratic process, when we are meant to be cutting costs. Earlier today, I mentioned that 44 new Lords have taken up their position in the other place since my election, and that is where we should be trying to cut costs.

This proposal does not take account of the Barnett consequential. Despite what the Leader of the House said earlier today, he does not understand how policy links to finance. He says the two are different, but I can guarantee that if a policy decision is made in this House

and the actual budget does not align with it, he will be back here trying to change the Standing Orders again, saying, “That’s not fair.”

As we have heard, using Standing Orders to make such a significant change is pretty undemocratic—this should be done through normal due process. We all know, as this has been said, that the approach being taken compromises the Speaker’s position. The Speaker will be asked to make decisions but has no obligation to explain them, and that lacks transparency. Despite Labour sending second-class MPs down here from Scotland for many years, this measure will make us second-class MPs and we do not want to be viewed as that.

This is supposed to be about addressing a democratic deficit, but the real democratic deficit is the fact that with only 15% of the vote in Scotland the Tories have consistently vetoed every proposed amendment to the Scotland Bill. That is the democratic deficit that we are living with, not to mention the fact that there is an unelected House of Lords that gets more and more bloated all the time. That is where we should start dealing with the democratic deficit, and we would be saving money and bringing transparency to the democratic process.

3.6 pm

Paul Maynard (Blackpool North and Cleveleys) (Con): It is a shame that four minutes will not be enough to do justice to this issue, but I will try to focus on some of the other points of view that we have heard today. First and foremost, the shadow Leader of the House, who is no longer in his place—possibly also in the Tea Room, if the hon. Member for Bishop Auckland (Helen Goodman) is to be believed—offered us “a voice but not a veto”. It is worth explaining why that is not good enough and why it is a pig in a poke. He wants to have an English-only Committee that will reach England-only views but which can then be overturned, just like that, by the House as a whole. He presented this as though it is the Labour party’s preferred solution, but that cannot be all that Labour Members have come up with.

The hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde (Jonathan Reynolds) made a thoughtful contribution and although I did not agree with all of it, I did agree with his point that our proposals for devolution at a local level here in England will mean that there will be more questions to answer as time goes on. Most importantly, England has to have a voice and a view, and the opportunity to offer its consent when it is being legislated upon by the wider House as a whole.

We hear from the SNP an interpretation that what I am seeking is in some way devolution for England—I believe that the hon. Member for Aberdeen North (Kirsty Blackman) used that phrase—but I dispute that. I am not seeking devolution for England; I am seeking devolution for Blackpool, Lancashire and the north-west, but not for England. I say to the hon. Member for Kilmarnock and Loudoun (Alan Brown) that this was the No.1 issue on the doorstep during my general election campaign. I represent a constituency with very strong links to Scotland. Many of his countrymen are staying in my constituency right now to enjoy the illuminations. Glasgow week is a key part of that—

Ian Blackford *rose*—

Paul Maynard: I am sorry but I am not going to give way now. Glasgow week is a key part of our economic cycle in the tourism year. Many Scottish people have moved down to Blackpool to retire and many of them were saying to me that they wanted some fairness in our democratic arrangements. What I say clearly is that there is no demand for a separate English Parliament. I see no demand for my constituents to have another suite of politicians being elected, consuming public expenses and confusing people as to who represents them. What we do seek is that when this Chamber as a whole seeks to legislate on matters pertaining to my constituents, they have an opportunity to know that the people of England—those who represent the people of England—have offered their consent in that matter.

I say gently to SNP Members that no one will be stopping them contributing in these matters. The SNP has some excellent spokespeople: the hon. Member for Central Ayrshire (Dr Whitford), who speaks on health; the hon. Member for Aberdeen South (Callum McCaig), who speaks on energy; and the hon. and learned Member for Edinburgh South West (Joanna Cherry), who speaks on justice and home affairs. They are all highly capable individuals and I make a point of listening to them and thinking about what they say on the briefs that they shadow. No one, not even the right hon. Member for Delyn (Mr Hanson), who is no longer in his place, will be prevented from contributing or voting on issues pertaining to what the House as a whole is discussing. But no one should deny my constituents the chance to have a representative as part of a wider group of English MPs who offer their consent to what is being done to us—just as SNP Members would expect to have that consent in their hands in the Scottish Parliament.

3.10 pm

Mr Alistair Carmichael (Orkney and Shetland) (LD): I am grateful to take part in the third debate on this matter. What we are discussing today is the third version of the Government’s proposals, which, regrettably, are still inviting us to do the wrong thing, and have identified the wrong way in which to do it. I am resigned to the fact that the Government will not listen to me or to anyone else on the Opposition Benches. None the less, I say to the Deputy Leader of the House, who is in her place, that she might do well to listen to some of her own colleagues in the other place. She should consider the contributions that were made by Lord Lang of Monkton and Lord Forsyth of Drumlean. What Lord Forsyth said goes to the heart of this matter:

“I really do think that constitutional change should carry consensus. If we proceed on the basis that we think it would be a good wheeze to make a constitutional change or that it might advantage one party or another, then other parties will do the same when they are in power. As a result, people will lose faith in the integrity of the institution and it will be greatly damaged.”—*[Official Report, House of Lords, 21 October 2015; Vol. 765, c. 759.]*

I have been involved in active politics for more than 30 years, and it is the first time that I have ever quoted with approval the noble Lord Forsyth of Drumlean, but these are clearly extraordinary times. The Minister and all those on the Government Front Bench should listen with some care to what he and others who know about this are saying.

Alberto Costa (South Leicestershire) (Con): The right hon. Gentleman says that we should listen. Let me say something that I have said before to him in this Chamber. The fact is that both of us greatly value the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, but we must address the simple fact that my constituents in South Leicestershire have repeatedly told me both before and after the election that they want a greater say in their own affairs. This is about fairness.

Mr Carmichael: Let me say to the hon. Gentleman that his constituents are absolutely entitled to that and they should get it. I just do not think that what the Government have brought forward today offers that. It does nothing to address the fact that the people of England are still served by a model of government that is outdated and highly centralised, with everything being controlled from Whitehall. These proposals do absolutely nothing to change that.

On the question of taxation and Barnett consequentials, Lord Forsyth said that the proposals risk driving a further wedge between Scotland and the rest of the United Kingdom. I believe that the hon. Member for South Leicestershire (Alberto Costa) is sincere when he says that he is committed to the continuation of that Union. As someone who is sincere, I invite him to take a pause, have a think and look at this matter in its totality. That is why the amendment tabled by the hon. Member for Nottingham North (Mr Allen) is so important.

The message from the Lords invites us to set up a Joint Committee. That is a sensible way in which to proceed. I do not understand the position of the Leader of the House in relation to this. He says that it is wrong for us to consult the other place, but at the same time he has invited, and has had an acceptance from, the Chairman of the Constitutional Committee in the House of Lords to be part of a review. Yet again the Government and the Leader of the House in particular are seeking to have their cake and eat it.

The Leader of the House had said that this was not about creating an English Parliament within the UK Parliament, but then today in answer to a question he said that it was in fact devolution for England. It is no such thing. The hon. Member for South Leicestershire is right that his constituents deserve to have the benefits of devolution in the same way that mine have had since 1999.

I reiterate the concerns previously expressed about the position of the Speaker being brought on to the field of play in a way that will be difficult for the holder of that office at any given time but that will be justiciable. Let me remind the House of exactly what Lord Hope of Craighead said last night. He needs better respect than has been given to him either by the Chairman of the Procedure Committee or the hon. Member for Stone (Sir William Cash).

Mr Charles Walker: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr Carmichael: I am sorry, but I do not have the time—[*Interruption.*]

Mr Walker: The right hon. Gentleman is getting a chance to speak because I limited myself to four minutes, so a bit of respect from him would not go amiss.

Mr Carmichael: I have respect for the hon. Gentleman and am grateful for the extra time that he has given me, but he did not demonstrate great respect for Lord Hope of Craighead in the way that I would suggest that noble gentleman deserves. Let me remind the House of what Lord Hope, a former justice in the Supreme Court and Lord President of the Court of Session for many years, said:

“I do not see how a Government can rely on legislation passed by this new procedure, which is subject to the risk of challenge in the courts, until the procedures have worked their way through the courts.”

He went on:

“The point is that so long as there is the risk of challenge, and the delay of waiting for the courts to resolve the issue, the legislation cannot be brought into effect, because of the risk of having to unravel everything if, by some mischance, it is declared to be invalid.”—[*Official Report, House of Lords, 21 October 2015; Vol. 765, c. 762.*]

There must be an answer to that point before we go down the road that the Government invite us to take today. As I said, I believe that England deserves better than this. If this is the major issue of the day, as Government Members have said, surely England deserves better than something that can be turned over in an afternoon by a future Government. If Members on the Government Benches genuinely want to empower their communities—I enjoin them to do so—they should do it in the way in which we were required to do it in Scotland and get together to build consensus and decide among themselves exactly what is required.

It seems to me that the Government have made these proposals in the way that they often do, on the basis that something has to be done. Those are the most dangerous words we will ever hear in Parliament and they normally precede something along the lines of the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991. Something needs to be done, but that something should be better than this and I invite the House, when we divide today, to at the very least support the amendment in the name of the hon. Member for Nottingham North.

3.17 pm

Mr Jacob Rees-Mogg (North East Somerset) (Con): My starting point is that the price of the Union for England is asymmetric devolution. England, by virtue of being more than 80% of the population and the richest part of the Union, must accept that devolution to Scotland, to Northern Ireland and to Wales cannot be equalled in England because if it were England would overwhelm the rest of the United Kingdom. That would be the greatest risk to the Union, which I want to preserve. I welcome these proposals because of their modesty, because they make the change through Standing Orders and because they maintain the equality of every Member of Parliament. Their modesty means that they are not seeking to create an English Parliament—

Ian Blackford *rose*—

Mr Rees-Mogg: Talking of modesty, of course I give way to the hon. Gentleman.

Ian Blackford: We understand on the SNP Benches that there must be fairness for the people of England and we fully support it, but we are faced with a situation in which the English will exert a veto on us when we

have come to this place with the support of the Scottish people to deliver home rule. That is what the people voted for, yet in the debate on the Scotland Bill the veto was used against us every time. Why is it right for the English Members of this Parliament to continue to have a veto against us?

Mr Rees-Mogg: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his intervention, but he seems to be forgetting that there was a referendum last year that decided quite decisively what would happen.

I think that Members have been ignoring the detail of these Standing Order changes. They provide that the English-only lock can take effect only if the matter both applies exclusively to England and, crucially, is in the competence of the Northern Ireland Assembly and the Scottish Parliament. If either side of the coin is not there, every MP continues as before. It is a minimal move to ensure that those matters that are devolved elsewhere are subject to a special stage for English MPs only. Crucially, it is done by Standing Order.

The right hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr Carmichael) gave us an interesting view on Lord Hope's opinion that our laws could be challenged if they are made using this procedure. I am afraid that is an eccentric position to take, because our laws are made in the House of Commons according to a mix of convention and Standing Order. The reason we have First Reading, Second Reading, Committee stage, Report stage and Third Reading is because of convention and Standing Order, not because of legislation.

Indeed, there are only two bits of legislation that say how we must make laws: one is the Parliament Act 1911, which is there to provide an override for the democratic House; and the other, rather obscurely, is a 1968 law concerning Royal Assent, the ceremony for which was so elaborate that it had to be simplified, and that needed to be done by legislation. [*Interruption.*] My hon. Friend the Member for Northampton North (Michael Ellis) says that was a shame, and I have no doubt that he has consulted Her Majesty on the matter.

Otherwise, we always legislate by convention and Standing Order. That is absolutely crucial, because the last general election could easily have returned a result that meant that the Government would be made up of Labour Members who were dependent on Scottish Members for their majority. It would then have been quite proper for them to suspend the Standing Orders in order to ensure that the Government were able to function. That is something that those of us who support these changes to the Standing Orders must accept; it is weak, and therefore it can be overturned, with a political cost, to ensure that the Queen's Government can be carried on. Those words—"that the Queen's Government can be carried on"—is a fundamental part of a Tory view of how the country should be run.

I will conclude my remarks by addressing the amendment tabled by the hon. Member for Nottingham North (Mr Allen) on the Lords message. The Lords are once again trespassing on our privilege when they ask for a Joint Committee on our Standing Orders. The Bradlaugh case established very clearly that each House is responsible for its own procedures. They might want a Joint Committee on how devolution for England works, but it was an impertinence of their lordships' House to ask for a Joint Committee to discuss our Standing Orders. We must

vote the amendment down with a big majority to reassert the rights of the House of Commons, and we may have to remind their lordships of something similar on Monday.

3.22 pm

Patrick Grady (Glasgow North) (SNP): I agree that every piece of legislation brought before this House should be examined to determine whether it affects voters in Scotland. However, with the greatest respect, that should be a decision not for whoever occupies your office, Mr Speaker, but for the people who represent the voters of Scotland: Scottish Members of Parliament, either individually or collectively through the party system. We are the ones with the mandate from our constituents to represent their interests, and elements of that right are being taken away from us today.

I pay tribute to the work of the Procedure Committee, of which I am member. It was placed in an invidious position, with far too short a period of time for reflection, and with no indication from the Government that they were prepared to entertain any significant number of amendments or, better yet, to put the whole process on pause. The fact that the Committee was unable to reach a consensus should be a warning to the House about the longer-term consequences of these changes, because it is not just the Committee that was in a difficult position; you, Mr Speaker, are now holding an office that risks being politicised and subjected to much greater scrutiny and question and, as the Committee reports, is one to which eventual legal challenge cannot be ruled out.

The Government may be setting up a chain of events that quickly escalates out of its control. That is why I welcome the Procedure Committee's decision to investigate the Estimates and Supply process in this House. The Leader of the House says that there are no such thing as Barnett consequential, and I hope that his Treasury colleagues were listening, because I look forward to questioning them about their receptiveness to scrutiny of the Estimates and Supply process and tabling all kinds of exciting amendments in due course.

Then there is the question of perception. No matter how the Leader of the House tries to dress it up, and whatever assurances he tries to give, the fact remains that during the legislative consent stages, my SNP colleagues and I will be sat here on these Benches while other hon. Members walk through the Lobby to vote.

Jake Berry: The hon. Gentleman started by saying that the decision about whether something is an England-only matter should be made by Scottish MPs. Does he accept that the SNP's decision to drop its self-denying ordinance on the foxhunting proposals—I supported that; I do not think we should bring foxhunting back—means that they cannot be trusted not to drop that convention, because they will take short-term political gain over principle—

Mr Speaker: Order. I am immensely grateful to the hon. Gentleman. Interventions from now on must be extremely brief.

Patrick Grady: We do not know whether the foxhunting Bill would have been certified even if had come forward. We promised to be a progressive voice for our constituents, and my constituency in-box was full of people asking us to vote.

[Patrick Grady]

Voters in Scotland will be watching, as they have done assiduously since May. They will see us sitting on our hands in this Chamber while other Members vote, with the creation of a second class of Members of Parliament in this House: ironically, a class of MP told during the referendum that they should be leading the UK, not leaving it. Perhaps the Government simply do not care; perhaps they actually want us to leave.

Earlier today, my hon. Friend the Member for Perth and North Perthshire (Pete Wishart) likened the Leader of the House to the movie character, Dr Evil, whose theme song was written by the band, They Might Be Giants. The lyrics go like this:

“When your name is Evil, that is good
Or so you think
But you’re so very wrong
It’s Evil
But being wrong is right
So then you’re good again
Which is the evilest thing of all”.

If that sounds absurd, I mention it only because that absurdity applies equally to the EVEL that is being debated in the House today.

3.26 pm

Chris Davies (Brecon and Radnorshire) (Con): “Fairness” seems to be the word of the day—the word of English votes for English laws. I heard it when the Prime Minister was on the steps of Downing Street following the Scottish referendum, I heard it when William Hague was drafting these proposals, and I now hear it every time this Bill is mentioned: “English votes for English laws—it’s all about fairness.” It is, after all, why we all are here—why this Chamber exists. We are here to decide the fairest way to spend our taxpayers’ money, the fairest way to operate our public services, and the fairest way to run our country. Fairness, fairness, fairness—but what exactly is fair about this Bill?

Mr MacNeil: In reality, the hon. Gentleman is talking about a grievance—an English grievance. They never finish in this place talking about Scots with a grievance, but the reality is that the grievance is an English grievance and they dress it up with the word “fairness”. This is grievance, grievance, grievance on the English side.

Chris Davies: I will stay with “fairness” for now, thank you very much.

Is it fair that I will have no power over whether a vote that will affect my constituents will be vetoed? As a Welsh MP with my constituency bordering England, I will, in effect, lose my voice on matters across the border.

The word the Bill uses is “relates”. What matters relate to my constituency, but what matters do not relate to my—border—constituency? I have constituents whose children go across the border to school in Shropshire or Herefordshire. I have constituents who get their healthcare across the border. Indeed, my own wife, who is a cancer radiographer, works in Hereford hospital and treats many patients from Brecon and Radnorshire on a daily basis. How can I look them in the eye and say, when a Bill gets vetoed by the new system, “This does

affect you but, sorry, the House said it does not relate to us, so there is nothing I can do”? That is what this Bill is asking me to do, and so I ask: is that fairness?

Or is it fair, Mr Speaker—I fully realise the risk I take here—that it is down to the occupant of your Chair and your office to decide which Bills “relate” and which do not? I hope you remain in that Chair for many, many years to come, but we may end up in future with a Speaker who hails from a devolved nation and find ourselves in some difficulty. I defy any Speaker from a devolved nation not to feel a certain pang of desire for their and their fellow countrymen and women’s voices to be heard. Would that be fair?

Given what I have said so far, people may be forgiven for thinking that I am totally opposed to this Bill, but they would be mistaken. I cannot fault the principle behind it—it is absolutely right. It is not fair that a Member of this House is able to vote according to their opinion when the result of their judgment will not affect their constituents. The current system opens the door to opportunism and divisiveness, as we have already heard today. I hope that some Members’ opposition to the Bill does not fall into that category.

Wes Streeting (Ilford North) (Lab): I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way and for some of the excellent points he is making, but may I gently point out to him that this is not a Bill? If it were a Bill, a lot of the complexities would be worked out in Committee stage and through evidence and all the usual channels. It is an indictment on those on the Treasury Bench that this is not a Bill.

Chris Davies: The hon. Gentleman is quite right and I thank him for correcting me.

It would not be a stretch to believe that Members who will not feel the consequences of this Bill will nevertheless vote against it. That is wrong and it would not be fair.

Ultimately, I guess it comes down to this: for me, being asked to vote on this issue is a question not of voting for English votes for English laws, but of voting on whether my own voice, and therefore the voice of the people of Brecon and Radnorshire, is to have its volume turned down in this place. Would that be fair? I am not convinced, but I am convinced that the issue needs to be addressed.

This is a sticky wicket for all involved, so I can only urge Members to vote on this Bill, not for political reasons—

Drew Hendry: It’s not a Bill!

Chris Davies: You’re right again; thank you for your help.

I urge Members to vote in favour because it is the right thing to do. I believe that this Bill is a start—[*Interruption.*] I have given Members three chances to correct me! This is the start, but it is by no means the end, of this debate.

3.31 pm

Ronnie Cowan (Inverclyde) (SNP): The Leader of the House said in July 2015 that EVEL would ensure that English MPs had their voice recognised within the Union.

The perceived grievance that somehow MPs from outside England pose an insidious influence on English affairs is totally incorrect. If MPs in England want a particular piece of legislation, they have the numbers to ensure that it progresses. With 533 of the 650 Members, English votes already have the capability to win every single time.

House of Commons Library research shows that between 2010 and 2015, the majority votes of English MPs matched the majority votes of the UK as a whole in 99% of Divisions. Yet the UK Government are pressing ahead with a major constitutional change that will fundamentally change the relationship between this House, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

It is next to impossible to identify all the knock-on effects of EVEL on Scotland. One piece of legislation does not lead to one direct outcome: legislation is non-linear. My hon. Friend the Member for Perth and North Perthshire (Pete Wishart) said it best when he gave evidence to the Procedure Committee last month. He told it that, in taking forward EVEL proposals, the Leader of the House was using

“the most massive sledgehammer to crush the tiniest of nuts.”

The UK Government have indicated that EVEL is primarily an issue of fairness, and I fully concur that fairness should be a central principle in debating any constitutional change.

Andrew Stephenson (Pendle) (Con): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Ronnie Cowan: No.

I believe, for example, that it is fair for Scotland's decision on our membership of the European Union to be respected and that under no circumstances should we be dragged out of the EU without the consent of the people of Scotland. Scotland should also have a fair say on UK national infrastructure projects, such as the expansion of Heathrow airport. Despite Scotland's financial contribution to such projects, the hon. Member for Milton Keynes South (Iain Stewart) stated that it could be deemed an English-only issue. Heathrow is an important issue to Scotland, yet our voice could be greatly weakened in the debate. Constitutional fairness should apply equally to all parts of the UK and it is worth remembering that the current UK Government did not receive an electoral mandate from the people of Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland.

I hope that the concerns raised by SNP Members are not misconstrued. Indeed, we fully support the rights of our friends and neighbours in England to a more representative and vibrant democracy. The independence referendum campaign made Scotland the most exciting and politically engaged part of the UK, and we believe that people in England could also benefit from greater control over the issues that affect their lives and from a Parliament that is more responsive to their needs. However, the Government should not increase the rights of one group of people by decreasing the rights of others.

Ultimately, the proposals will only hasten Scottish independence, and for that I am truly grateful. EVEL is ill conceived. It will unnecessarily politicise the Speaker, and for that reason alone it should be rejected. In the meantime, I cannot argue in favour of a proposal that would decrease Scotland's voice in this place and

I hope that the proposals will be abandoned. I urge the Government to use this opportunity to move the UK towards a genuine, federal system of government, instead of the piecemeal and inadequate constitutional measures we have seen thus far. I say to the people of England: you are not too wee, you are not too poor—and on that I shall leave it.

Mr Speaker: I call Mr Christopher Pincher, who I am sure will speak with commendable succinctness.

3.36 pm

Christopher Pincher (Tamworth) (Con): I fear you flatter me, Mr Speaker. After three hours of debate I think that everything that can be said has been said, although not everybody who can say something has done so. In that spirit, I will be brief.

We have heard fine and passionate speeches, not least from the right hon. Member for Delyn (Mr Hanson) who said that this proposal will bring about a subtle change in the House. He is right, but that is because of the glaring change brought about by the constitutional settlement that the Labour Government foisted on our country in 1999 by creating a Scottish Parliament and a Welsh Assembly.

Martin John Docherty (West Dunbartonshire) (SNP): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Christopher Pincher: I will not because I want to be succinct, as the Speaker asked me to be. Multiple Parliaments have changed the nature of this Parliament, and four Parliaments after that change, it is high time that we got on and fixed the problem.

Other Members also made fine speeches—my hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough (Sir Edward Leigh) and the hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde (Jonathan Reynolds) urged the House to have a care and think of the Union, and said that we should not give a lever to the SNP. I say that we should have a care because the SNP is quite capable of finding a lever of its own. It is not a unionist party; it wants to break the Union.

If SNP Members cannot foment a grievance—that is the word used by the shadow Leader of the House—they will invent one. That is in the order of things: dogs bark, cats miaow, and the hon. Member for Perth and North Perthshire (Pete Wishart) claims that he is a second-class Member. My constituents believe that they have a second-class Member—[*Interruption.*] Some of them may well be right, but unfortunately for my Labour opponent, not enough. They feel that because I cannot vote on matters of health or education in Scotland, yet Scottish Members can vote on health and education in my constituency, that makes me a second-class Member.

Three tests matter. First, is this proposal modest? It is a modest proposal compared with others that may be put forward. Secondly, is it flexible and testable? It is. The Leader of the House has made clear that he will test this proposal over five Bills to ensure that it works, and he will tweak it if necessary. Thirdly, is it changeable or reversible? We heard in the eloquent speech by my hon. Friend the Member for North East Somerset (Mr Rees-Mogg) that this proposal is reversible if we do

[Christopher Pincher]

not like it and it does not work. Because the proposal is modest, testable, and changeable, I think it is reasonable, and we must back it tonight.

3.39 pm

Tommy Sheppard (Edinburgh East) (SNP): I would be the first to acknowledge that the decisions of this Parliament over the last two decades to devolve political power within the United Kingdom have created an anomaly in terms of the governance of England. There are many ways for that anomaly to be solved. We could have an English Parliament. We could have English legislative assemblies. We could even consider giving a quasi-legislative function to some of the existing structures of local government. They would give English people more power and more control over their own lives. These proposals would not.

These proposals are not an exercise in the decentralisation of the state and they are not an exercise in the devolution of political power. They are a political tactic by the Conservative party to try to pander to the English nationalism of the UK Independence party and to try to shore up haemorrhaging support from its right flank. I say that to the right hon. Member for Wokingham (John Redwood) and his colleagues here today. I say to the English people: be very careful about what they are promising, because they are abusing your trust. They are hijacking your aspiration for their own political ends.

Mr MacNeil: My hon. Friend is making a fine speech and he is absolutely correct. What we are seeing here today from the Tory Benches is a grievance culture. They never hesitate to point at us and talk about a grievance culture. Does my hon. Friend agree that there is the grievance culture right in front of us?

Tommy Sheppard: I agree completely with my hon. Friend. The process Tories are engaged in—it is fair enough; it is a political party and I understand that—would be all well and good and just so much political banter were it not for the point that in doing so they are trying to corrupt and degenerate the procedures of this institution.

Alberto Costa: The hon. Gentleman—the Member for Edinburgh East—does not speak for any constituency in England. It is the people of England who voted for the Conservative party. They voted for a manifesto that clearly said English votes for English laws.

Tommy Sheppard: And we know that you know that we know that you never thought you would have to implement this proposal. Now you have a dilemma on your hands. Here is the nub of the problem: the Tories are trying to make this Parliament be two things. As well as being the legislator for the United Kingdom, they are trying to make it be the legislator for England. That cannot be done without creating two classes of MP.

Martin John Docherty: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Tommy Sheppard: I would rather press on, if my hon. Friend does not mind.

At this point in time, all MPs are equal. I can vote on everything the Leader of the House can vote on in this Chamber. If the proposals go through, then from tonight onwards I will be denied the opportunity to vote on behalf of the people who elected me on matters that may affect them. That is wrong. [Interruption.] If Conservative Members do not believe it, look at proposed Standing Order No. 83N(4). It describes not just a process of creating an additional layer of consent, but a process of vetoing the opinions of some Members of this House. It says quite clearly that if the consent is not given, then the matter goes no further and the Bill “shall not pass”.

What is being described is a process that will work like this: a piece of proposed legislation will come before the House and in the middle of our proceedings there will come a point where the representatives of the people of Scotland will be asked to leave the room and take no further part in the discussion.

Tom Tugendhat (Tonbridge and Malling) (Con): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Tommy Sheppard: I will press on, I am afraid. I have already given way.

If, in the process of your discussion without us, you decide that the proposed legislation will not pass any further, we get no further say in the matter. That is exactly what is wrong with these proposals.

There is another point on which there has been much comment. Who decides whether a matter is of relevance to our constituents? It has been proposed that we have this invidious role for the Speaker, pushing him into what can only be a legal conundrum. I ask the Leader of the House: what happens if there is a disagreement? What happens if the people who elected me in Edinburgh believe that something is being discussed in this House that is relevant to them and they should have a right to vote on it? They will have no opportunity but to seek redress in the courts through the process of judicial review. Is that really the conundrum in which we wish to place the Speaker? I hope not.

As remarked upon, why should this apply only to Members of the House of Commons? I would love to see the House of Lords abolished, but it exists at the moment, and is it not remarkable that of all the constitutional imperfections in our system, we are discussing this one, rather than the fact that most Members of Parliament are not even elected in the first place? Conservative Members will say that those Members do not represent territorial or geographic interests. It is part of their collective self-delusion that they do. From the Marquess of Lothian to the Lords of Springburn, Bearsden and Glenscorrodale, they believe they represent the communities in which they operate, yet there is no suggestion that we limit their powers to debate and vote on legislation. Why just pick on us? The answer can only be: this is payback for the general election, when the SNP won convincingly in Scotland and the Conservative party won only 14% of the vote.

To finish, I know it is in your manifesto, but just because it is in your manifesto does not make it right—

Mr Speaker: Order. I do not wish to interrupt the eloquence of the hon. Gentleman's flow or the flow of his eloquence, but I gently remind him that it was not in my manifesto.

Tommy Sheppard: I apologise, Mr Speaker. How should I phrase it then? The hon. Members opposite, in their collective majesty, have a manifesto commitment that they are trying to discharge, but just because it is in their manifesto does not make it right. They should be careful what they do here. They talk about us creating dissent in the UK. These proposals, if they go through, will drive a wedge between our two countries greater than any that I would drive between them.

3.46 pm

Melanie Onn (Great Grimsby) (Lab): I respect the wide range of views shared in this lively debate, and I take on board the Conservative manifesto commitment, but sadly I do not believe that these proposals will deliver the promised empowerment in Parliament or encourage further engagement in Parliament by the people to whom they made that commitment.

I want to say something about the perception the general public have of this place. I believe they largely have little understanding of exactly what goes on in here. Perhaps we might all agree on that at some point. The differences between a Bill, a statutory instrument and a money resolution are lost on most people. In fact, I and my colleagues who joined in May are still learning the intricacies of Parliament's processes. Indeed, there are some more experienced Members who still have to be reminded of parliamentary procedure, as we saw with the Business Secretary earlier this week.

The transparency of the legislative process is of utmost importance within our democracy. We have a duty to ensure that the procedures are as clear, simple and intelligible as possible, so that the public can properly hold us to account for our actions. By adding extra stages to the passing of a Bill, the Government's proposals will make the process unnecessarily complex and bureaucratic, and in doing so, they are making it harder for the public properly to engage with the legislative process.

England needs a strong voice in Parliament. There is no debate on that point. The English people deserve a greater say over the issues that affect them.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Melanie Onn: Members have had plenty of opportunity to intervene during this debate, so I will not take interventions.

Labour supports much of what was proposed by the Government's own McKay commission, but the proposals today fly in the face of the commission's proposals. I agree with the hon. Member for Harwich and North Essex (Mr Jenkin), who considered these proposals to be fantastically complicated, and the hon. Member for Stone (Sir William Cash), who said they would be a nightmare to implement.

On the House of Lords, it cannot be right that an unelected Scottish peer will be able to vote on some Bills that an elected Scottish MP will not be able to. It simply does not make sense. My right hon. Friends the Members for Delyn (Mr Hanson) and for Manchester, Gorton (Sir Gerald Kaufman) made impassioned speeches about reducing some MPs from an equal footing with all others regardless of the location of their constituency. By creating two tiers of MP—some will have more powers than others—these changes risk legislative gridlock.

This Parliament can take pride that we do not have a system by which Bills are regularly blocked despite having majority support. Why would we want to change that by giving some MPs a veto?

We have heard about the importance of consensus from many hon. Members, including my hon. Friend the Member for Stalybridge and Hyde (Jonathan Reynolds) and the hon. Member for Perth and North Perthshire (Pete Wishart). The Government should not underestimate the importance of trying to reach agreement to achieve a workable solution. The McKay commission was clear in its recommendation against giving English and Welsh MPs an exclusive veto. By creating two tiers of MPs and by ignoring Barnett consequentials, these changes put our Union at risk. At a time when the Scottish Government are openly considering a second referendum, all Unionists today should oppose any measures that might splinter the Union.

The hon. Member for Broxbourne (Mr Walker) made clear his concern that there should be no truncation of Report stages and acknowledged the potentially serious consequences without further close consideration. He is right to say so, as this is a serious and complex change to our constitution and to the way that laws are made in this country. We should not rush this through. The right hon. Member for Wokingham (John Redwood) called this "half a job". The Government should have allowed proper time to debate these changes. It is disappointing that they are using their majority to push through such a fundamental change.

As I have said, England needs a strong distinctive voice in Parliament, but the proposed changes are an incomprehensible mess. Every expert panel that has examined these proposals believes that they are not the way to deliver a better role for English MPs in Parliament. This is too important a change to rush through and get wrong. We have put forward new proposals that would give full voice to English MPs, simplify the process and stop the Government's cumbersome and unintelligible proposed process.

We have been lectured on the unintended consequences of Labour's post-1997 devolution pledge, which the Conservatives opposed in its entirety. This time, I ask the Government to consider their own unintended consequences from these changes. If our amendments fall, Labour will vote against the changes to Standing Orders. They threaten our United Kingdom; they add unnecessary bureaucracy and complexity to the legislative process. Most importantly, they fail to give the English people a truly stronger voice in Parliament.

3.52 pm

The Deputy Leader of the House of Commons (Dr Thérèse Coffey): It is a pleasure to reply to this lively debate. I am grateful to hon. Members of all parties for their considered contributions. I shall try to address as many points as I can.

The thrust of these proposals has been in our manifesto for the last three elections. The journey within Parliament started with the McKay Commission and it continued with the Command Paper, which was debated in the last Parliament and whose proposals were in our manifesto this year. As I reminded Members in the summer, the official Opposition were invited to participate in drawing up proposals last year, but they declined to do so.

[*Dr Thérèse Coffey*]

Over the last few months, my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House and I have engaged with Members across the House since our proposals were introduced in this Session. We have listened, reflected and provided extra time for debate. There were debates on 7 July and 15 July, and we have modified our proposals to reflect those debates and discussions, and indeed the work of the Procedure Committee.

Certain themes arose in hon. Members' contributions, including cross-border issues, Barnett consequentials, certification and, indeed, the future of the Union. I shall try to address issues that were not covered earlier by my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House, and I shall speak briefly to the amendments.

Lady Hermon *rose*—

Dr Coffey: I am sorry, but I need to get through my response to what has been said today. If I have any time at the end, I will see if I can take any interventions.

On amendment (a), the Government have been very clear that we do not believe that having a Joint Committee is the right approach in this instance. As my hon. Friend the Member for North East Somerset (Mr Rees-Mogg) said, these proposals are about Standing Orders in this House, and my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House has already invited the Lords Constitution Committee to submit to the review that he intends to set up, and we know that the review is happening with the Procedure Committee.

On amendment (e) and the timing, these proposals build on the work of the former Leader of the House, and we believe it important to implement the proposals now in tandem with further devolution. As everybody knows, we have invited the Procedure Committee to review the operation of the proposals next year, and I have been clear that we welcome this as a review period rather than a pilot after which these proposals would simply fall, as my right hon. Friend explained.

I turn now to amendments (f) and (g). I am sure that the shadow Leader of the House will recognise that many of the amendments he has tabled are indeed consequential. Trying to combine something as being minor “and” consequential as opposed to minor “or” consequential might seem like a deceptively simple change, but it has profound consequences for the amendments that might be needed.

I can offer the hon. Gentleman the example of the Children and Families Act 2014. Section 3 refers to an adoption agency. We changed the criterion because we listened to the view of the Welsh Assembly Government. We tabled a consequential amendment so that the provision took effect only in England, as opposed to England and Wales. That is the kind of issue that we consider to be consequential, and not minor. We therefore do not believe that the amendments should be accepted.

Alex Salmond *rose*—

Dr Coffey: Amendments (h) to (t) propose to leave out Standing Orders 83M to 83O, which relate to consent motions, the reconsideration stage, and consideration of certified motions or amendments relating to Lords amendments.

Alex Salmond *rose*—

Mr Speaker: Order. The Deputy Leader of the House is not giving way.

Dr Coffey: Our proposals balance the principle of English consent for English measures with MPs from all parts of the United Kingdom continuing to deliberate and vote together. Removing the proposed consent motions for the Legislative Grand Committee stage would fundamentally undermine the process that is being proposed, and the same applies to further stages.

The amendments tabled by the hon. Member for Wrexham (Ian C. Lucas) raise the issue of Welsh-only votes. In our proposals, we are not talking about matters that are still reserved to this Parliament; we are talking about matters that have been devolved elsewhere. That is why we believe that the hon. Gentleman's proposals do not stand.

I recognise the cross-border issues that have been raised by Members representing Welsh constituencies. We have met previously and debated the matter specifically, but let me emphasise that every Member will continue, in legislative terms, to participate in Second Reading debates, in Report stages—when they can table amendments—and in Third Reading debates, as they do now.

The hon. Gentleman mentioned clause 44 of the Housing and Planning Bill. Of course it will be for the Speaker to determine the certification of the clause, but it is making a change that applies to England on a matter that is already devolved in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. That is the information that the Government will provide on the clause.

As for the small number of Divisions, I believe that, unlike the last Labour Government, we have kept up the pace of devolution—we have published a Scotland Bill and a Wales Bill—so the issue will come up increasingly in the future.

The Speaker already certifies money Bills and selects amendments. I am sure that he will take advice on what should be a technical decision, as he does now. We agree with the Procedure Committee that the Speaker should be able to appoint two members of the Panel of Chairs to examine that advice, and we modified our proposals accordingly.

Let me now say something about Barnett consequentials. Spending is voted on through the estimates, which are given effect by law—by the Supply and Appropriation Bill, on which all Members voted. Many individual pieces of legislation lead to some changes in funding, but that does not necessarily mean that the funding for the UK Government Department changes. It does not follow that it has a directly identifiable impact on the block grant to the devolved Administrations, so efficiencies in one area could be redirected to front-line services without Barnett consequentials. My right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary to the Treasury has written to my hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough (Sir Edward Leigh) reiterating that point.

The voting arrangements on the block grant allocations awarded to the devolved Administrations are unchanged by the introduction of this process. The Government recognise the importance of the House voting as a whole on how money from the Consolidated Fund is allocated. That is why the supply estimates process and money resolutions will not be subject to this process.

The funding implications of individual pieces of legislation do not exist in isolation. Efficiency savings, or indeed additional expenditure, could be connected to one piece of legislation, and could be directed back to other front-line services. When we have increased spending, as happened with free school meals, we look for efficiencies elsewhere.

Scrutiny of the individual supply estimates is mainly undertaken by departmental Select Committees, supported by the parliamentary Scrutiny Unit. When I was a member of the Culture, Media and Sport Committee, we certainly undertook that process. The Liaison Committee then chooses the subjects for debate. Following the debates, the estimates are approved by resolution of the House of Commons, as has happened in the past. That is why Barnett consequentials are calculated on changes to overall departmental spending at spending reviews and why we end up voting on the estimates voting process.

The hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Melanie Onn) said that this proposal adds complexity and will be difficult to follow. What members of the public will find incredible is that the Labour party seeks to deny that effective voice to the people of England. What our standing orders give effect to is that legislation on a matter that is devolved to another Parliament and that affects England or England and Wales only requires the explicit consent of MPs representing those countries only. My hon. Friends have discussed fairness. As the hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde (Jonathan Reynolds) recognised, we need to address this issue. This is a point of fairness. This is about strengthening the Union. This is about fulfilling our manifesto commitments, and I commend this motion to the House.

4 pm

The Speaker put the questions necessary for the disposal of the business to be concluded at that time (Order, 20 October),

Amendment proposed: (a), in line 1, leave out from “That” to end and insert —

“this House concurs with the Lords Message of 21 July, that it is expedient that a joint committee of Lords and Commons be appointed to consider and report on the constitutional implications of the Government’s revised proposals to change the Standing Orders of the House of Commons in order to give effect to English Votes for English Laws, and that the committee should report on the proposals by 30 March 2016.”—(*Mr Graham Allen.*)

The House divided: Ayes 215, Noes 312.

Division No. 84]

[4 pm

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane	Blomfield, Paul
Abrahams, Debbie	Bradshaw, rh Mr Ben
Alexander, Heidi	Brake, rh Tom
Ali, Rushanara	Brennan, Kevin
Allen, Mr Graham	Brown, Lyn
Anderson, Mr David	Bryant, Chris
Ashworth, Jonathan	Buck, Ms Karen
Austin, Ian	Burden, Richard
Bailey, Mr Adrian	Burgon, Richard
Barron, rh Kevin	Burnham, rh Andy
Beckett, rh Margaret	Butler, Dawn
Benn, rh Hilary	Byrne, rh Liam
Berger, Luciana	Cadbury, Ruth
Betts, Mr Clive	Campbell, rh Mr Alan
Blackman-Woods, Dr Roberta	Campbell, Mr Ronnie

Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair	Jones, Graham
Champion, Sarah	Jones, Helen
Coaker, Vernon	Jones, Susan Elan
Coffey, Ann	Kane, Mike
Cooper, Julie	Keeley, Barbara
Cooper, rh Yvette	Kendall, Liz
Corbyn, Jeremy	Khan, rh Sadiq
Cox, Jo	Kinnock, Stephen
Coyle, Neil	Kyle, Peter
Crausby, Mr David	Lamb, rh Norman
Creasy, Stella	Lammy, rh Mr David
Cruddas, Jon	Lavery, Ian
Cummins, Judith	Leslie, Chris
Cunningham, Alex	Lewell-Buck, Mrs Emma
Cunningham, Mr Jim	Lewis, Clive
Dakin, Nic	Long Bailey, Rebecca
Danczuk, Simon	Lucas, Ian C.
David, Wayne	Mactaggart, rh Fiona
Davies, Geraint	Madders, Justin
De Piero, Gloria	Mahmood, Mr Khalid
Dodds, rh Mr Nigel	Mahmood, Shabana
Donaldson, rh Mr Jeffrey M.	Malhotra, Seema
Doughty, Stephen	Mann, John
Dowd, Peter	Marris, Rob
Dromey, Jack	Marsden, Mr Gordon
Dugher, Michael	Maskell, Rachael
Durkan, Mark	Matheson, Christian
Eagle, Ms Angela	McCabe, Steve
Edwards, Jonathan	McCarthy, Kerry
Efford, Clive	McDonagh, Siobhain
Elliott, Julie	McDonald, Andy
Ellman, Mrs Louise	McDonnell, Dr Alasdair
Esterson, Bill	McDonnell, John
Evans, Chris	McFadden, rh Mr Pat
Farrelly, Paul	McGinn, Conor
Fitzpatrick, Jim	McGovern, Alison
Flelo, Robert	McInnes, Liz
Fletcher, Colleen	McKinnell, Catherine
Flint, rh Caroline	Meale, Sir Alan
Flynn, Paul	Mearns, Ian
Fovargue, Yvonne	Miliband, rh Edward
Gapes, Mike	Moon, Mrs Madeleine
Gardiner, Barry	Morden, Jessica
Glass, Pat	Morris, Grahame M.
Glendon, Mary	Murray, Ian
Godsiff, Mr Roger	Nandy, Lisa
Goodman, Helen	Onn, Melanie
Green, Kate	Onwurah, Chi
Greenwood, Margaret	Osamor, Kate
Griffith, Nia	Paisley, Ian
Gwynne, Andrew	Pearce, Teresa
Haigh, Louise	Pennycook, Matthew
Hamilton, Fabian	Phillips, Jess
Hanson, rh Mr David	Phillipson, Bridget
Harman, rh Ms Harriet	Powell, Lucy
Harris, Carolyn	Qureshi, Yasmin
Hayes, Helen	Rayner, Angela
Hayman, Sue	Reed, Mr Jamie
Healey, rh John	Reed, Mr Steve
Hendrick, Mr Mark	Rees, Christina
Hepburn, Mr Stephen	Reynolds, Emma
Hermon, Lady	Reynolds, Jonathan
Hodgson, Mrs Sharon	Rimmer, Marie
Hollern, Kate	Ritchie, Ms Margaret
Hopkins, Kelvin	Robinson, Gavin
Howarth, rh Mr George	Robinson, Mr Geoffrey
Hunt, Tristram	Rotheram, Steve
Huq, Dr Rupa	Ryan, rh Joan
Hussain, Imran	Saville Roberts, Liz
Irranca-Davies, Huw	Shah, Naz
Jarvis, Dan	Sharma, Mr Virendra
Jones, Gerald	Sheerman, Mr Barry

Sherriff, Paula
 Shuker, Mr Gavin
 Siddiq, Tulip
 Simpson, David
 Skinner, Mr Dennis
 Slaughter, Andy
 Smeeth, Ruth
 Smith, rh Mr Andrew
 Smith, Angela
 Smith, Cat
 Smith, Jeff
 Smith, Nick
 Smith, Owen
 Spellar, rh Mr John
 Starmer, Keir
 Stevens, Jo
 Streeting, Wes
 Stringer, Graham
 Stuart, rh Ms Gisela
 Tami, Mark
 Thomas, Mr Gareth
 Thomas-Symonds, Nick

Thornberry, Emily
 Timms, rh Stephen
 Trickett, Jon
 Turner, Karl
 Twigg, Derek
 Twigg, Stephen
 Umunna, Mr Chuka
 Vaz, rh Keith
 Vaz, Valerie
 Watson, Mr Tom
 West, Catherine
 Whitehead, Dr Alan
 Williams, Hywel
 Wilson, Sammy
 Winnick, Mr David
 Winterton, rh Ms Rosie
 Woodcock, John
 Wright, Mr Iain
 Zeichner, Daniel

Tellers for the Ayes:
Holly Lynch and
Vicky Foxcroft

NOES

Adams, Nigel
 Afriyie, Adam
 Aldous, Peter
 Allan, Lucy
 Allen, Heidi
 Amess, Sir David
 Andrew, Stuart
 Ansell, Caroline
 Argar, Edward
 Atkins, Victoria
 Bacon, Mr Richard
 Baker, Mr Steve
 Baldwin, Harriett
 Barclay, Stephen
 Baron, Mr John
 Barwell, Gavin
 Bebb, Guto
 Bellingham, Mr Henry
 Benyon, Richard
 Beresford, Sir Paul
 Berry, Jake
 Berry, James
 Bingham, Andrew
 Blackman, Bob
 Blackwood, Nicola
 Blunt, Crispin
 Boles, Nick
 Bone, Mr Peter
 Borwick, Victoria
 Bottomley, Sir Peter
 Bradley, Karen
 Brady, Mr Graham
 Brazier, Mr Julian
 Bridgen, Andrew
 Brine, Steve
 Brokenshire, rh James
 Bruce, Fiona
 Buckland, Robert
 Burns, Conor
 Burns, rh Sir Simon
 Burrowes, Mr David
 Burt, rh Alistair
 Cairns, Alun
 Carmichael, Neil
 Cartledge, James
 Cash, Sir William
 Caulfield, Maria

Chalk, Alex
 Chishtil, Rehman
 Chope, Mr Christopher
 Churchill, Jo
 Clark, rh Greg
 Cleverly, James
 Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
 Coffey, Dr Thérèse
 Collins, Damian
 Colville, Oliver
 Costa, Alberto
 Cox, Mr Geoffrey
 Crabb, rh Stephen
 Crouch, Tracey
 Davies, Byron
 Davies, Chris
 Davies, David T. C.
 Davies, Glyn
 Davies, Dr James
 Davies, Mims
 Davies, Philip
 Dinenage, Caroline
 Djanogly, Mr Jonathan
 Donelan, Michelle
 Dorries, Nadine
 Double, Steve
 Dowden, Oliver
 Drax, Richard
 Drummond, Mrs Flick
 Duncan, rh Sir Alan
 Duncan Smith, rh Mr Iain
 Dunne, Mr Philip
 Ellis, Michael
 Ellison, Jane
 Ellwood, Mr Tobias
 Elphicke, Charlie
 Evans, Graham
 Evans, Mr Nigel
 Fabricant, Michael
 Fallon, rh Michael
 Fernandes, Suella
 Field, rh Mark
 Foster, Kevin
 Fox, rh Dr Liam
 Frazer, Lucy
 Freeman, George
 Freer, Mike

Fuller, Richard
 Fysh, Marcus
 Gale, Sir Roger
 Garnier, rh Sir Edward
 Garnier, Mark
 Gauke, Mr David
 Ghani, Nusrat
 Gibb, Mr Nick
 Gillan, rh Mrs Cheryl
 Glen, John
 Goldsmith, Zac
 Goodwill, Mr Robert
 Gove, rh Michael
 Graham, Richard
 Grant, Mrs Helen
 Gray, Mr James
 Grayling, rh Chris
 Green, Chris
 Green, rh Damian
 Greening, rh Justine
 Grieve, rh Mr Dominic
 Griffiths, Andrew
 Gummer, Ben
 Gyimah, Mr Sam
 Halfon, rh Robert
 Hall, Luke
 Hammond, Stephen
 Hancock, rh Matthew
 Hands, rh Greg
 Harper, rh Mr Mark
 Harrington, Richard
 Harris, Rebecca
 Hart, Simon
 Haselhurst, rh Sir Alan
 Hayes, rh Mr John
 Heald, Sir Oliver
 Heappey, James
 Heaton-Harris, Chris
 Heaton-Jones, Peter
 Henderson, Gordon
 Herbert, rh Nick
 Hinds, Damian
 Hoare, Simon
 Hollingbery, George
 Hollinrake, Kevin
 Hollobone, Mr Philip
 Holloway, Mr Adam
 Hopkins, Kris
 Howarth, Sir Gerald
 Howell, John
 Howlett, Ben
 Huddleston, Nigel
 Hunt, rh Mr Jeremy
 Hurd, Mr Nick
 Jackson, Mr Stewart
 James, Margot
 Javid, rh Sajid
 Jayawardena, Mr Ranil
 Jenkin, Mr Bernard
 Jenkyns, Andrea
 Jenrick, Robert
 Johnson, Boris
 Johnson, Gareth
 Johnson, Joseph
 Jones, Andrew
 Jones, rh Mr David
 Jones, Mr Marcus
 Kawczynski, Daniel
 Kennedy, Seema
 Kirby, Simon
 Knight, rh Sir Greg
 Knight, Julian

Kwarteng, Kwasi
 Lancaster, Mark
 Latham, Pauline
 Leadsom, Andrea
 Lee, Dr Phillip
 Lefroy, Jeremy
 Leigh, Sir Edward
 Leslie, Charlotte
 Letwin, rh Mr Oliver
 Lewis, Brandon
 Lewis, rh Dr Julian
 Liddell-Grainger, Mr Ian
 Lidington, rh Mr David
 Lilley, rh Mr Peter
 Lopresti, Jack
 Lord, Jonathan
 Loughton, Tim
 Lumley, Karen
 Mackinlay, Craig
 Mackintosh, David
 Main, Mrs Anne
 Mak, Mr Alan
 Malthouse, Kit
 Mann, Scott
 Mathias, Dr Tania
 May, rh Mrs Theresa
 Maynard, Paul
 McCartney, Jason
 McCartney, Karl
 McPartland, Stephen
 Menzies, Mark
 Mercer, Johnny
 Merriman, Huw
 Metcalfe, Stephen
 Miller, rh Mrs Maria
 Milling, Amanda
 Mills, Nigel
 Milton, rh Anne
 Mitchell, rh Mr Andrew
 Mordaunt, Penny
 Morgan, rh Nicky
 Morris, Anne Marie
 Morris, David
 Morris, James
 Morton, Wendy
 Mowat, David
 Mundell, rh David
 Murray, Mrs Sheryll
 Murrison, Dr Andrew
 Neill, Robert
 Newton, Sarah
 Nokes, Caroline
 Nuttall, Mr David
 Offord, Dr Matthew
 Opperman, Guy
 Osborne, rh Mr George
 Parish, Neil
 Patel, rh Priti
 Paterson, rh Mr Owen
 Pawsey, Mark
 Penning, rh Mike
 Penrose, John
 Percy, Andrew
 Perry, Claire
 Phillips, Stephen
 Philp, Chris
 Pickles, rh Sir Eric
 Pincher, Christopher
 Poulter, Dr Daniel
 Pow, Rebecca
 Prentis, Victoria
 Prisk, Mr Mark

Pritchard, Mark
 Pursglove, Tom
 Quin, Jeremy
 Quince, Will
 Raab, Mr Dominic
 Redwood, rh John
 Rees-Mogg, Mr Jacob
 Robertson, Mr Laurence
 Robinson, Mary
 Rosindell, Andrew
 Rudd, rh Amber
 Rutley, David
 Sandbach, Antoinette
 Scully, Paul
 Selous, Andrew
 Shapps, rh Grant
 Sharma, Alok
 Shelbrooke, Alec
 Simpson, rh Mr Keith
 Skidmore, Chris
 Smith, Chloe
 Smith, Henry
 Smith, Julian
 Smith, Royston
 Soames, rh Sir Nicholas
 Solloway, Amanda
 Soubry, rh Anna
 Spelman, rh Mrs Caroline
 Spencer, Mark
 Stephenson, Andrew
 Stevenson, John
 Stewart, Bob
 Stewart, Iain
 Stewart, Rory
 Streeter, Mr Gary
 Stride, Mel
 Stuart, Graham
 Swayne, rh Mr Desmond
 Swire, rh Mr Hugo

Syms, Mr Robert
 Thomas, Derek
 Throup, Maggie
 Tolhurst, Kelly
 Tomlinson, Justin
 Tomlinson, Michael
 Tracey, Craig
 Tredinnick, David
 Truss, rh Elizabeth
 Tugendhat, Tom
 Turner, Mr Andrew
 Tyrrie, rh Mr Andrew
 Vaizey, Mr Edward
 Vara, Mr Shailesh
 Vickers, Martin
 Walker, Mr Charles
 Walker, Mr Robin
 Wallace, Mr Ben
 Warburton, David
 Warman, Matt
 Watkinson, Dame Angela
 Wharton, James
 Whately, Helen
 Wheeler, Heather
 White, Chris
 Whittaker, Craig
 Whittingdale, rh Mr John
 Wiggin, Bill
 Williams, Craig
 Williamson, rh Gavin
 Wilson, Mr Rob
 Wollaston, Dr Sarah
 Wood, Mike
 Wragg, William
 Wright, rh Jeremy

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr David Evennett and
Jackie Doyle-Price

Campbell, Mr Ronnie
 Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair
 Champion, Sarah
 Chapman, Douglas
 Cherry, Joanna
 Coaker, Vernon
 Coffey, Ann
 Cooper, Julie
 Cooper, rh Yvette
 Corbyn, Jeremy
 Cowan, Ronnie
 Cox, Jo
 Coyle, Neil
 Crausby, Mr David
 Crawley, Angela
 Creasy, Stella
 Cruddas, Jon
 Cummins, Judith
 Cunningham, Alex
 Cunningham, Mr Jim
 Dakin, Nic
 Danczuk, Simon
 David, Wayne
 Davies, Geraint
 Day, Martyn
 De Piero, Gloria
 Docherty, Martin John
 Dodds, rh Mr Nigel
 Donaldson, rh Mr Jeffrey M.
 Donaldson, Stuart Blair
 Doughty, Stephen
 Dowd, Peter
 Dromey, Jack
 Dugher, Michael
 Durkan, Mark
 Eagle, Ms Angela
 Edwards, Jonathan
 Efford, Clive
 Elliott, Julie
 Ellman, Mrs Louise
 Esterson, Bill
 Evans, Chris
 Farrelly, Paul
 Fellows, Marion
 Ferrier, Margaret
 Fitzpatrick, Jim
 Ffello, Robert
 Fletcher, Colleen
 Flint, rh Caroline
 Flynn, Paul
 Fovargue, Yvonne
 Gapes, Mike
 Gardiner, Barry
 Gethins, Stephen
 Gibson, Patricia
 Glass, Pat
 Glindon, Mary
 Goodman, Helen
 Grady, Patrick
 Grant, Peter
 Gray, Neil
 Green, Kate
 Greenwood, Margaret
 Griffith, Nia
 Gwynne, Andrew
 Haigh, Louise
 Hamilton, Fabian
 Hanson, rh Mr David
 Harman, rh Ms Harriet
 Harris, Carolyn
 Hayes, Helen
 Hayman, Sue

Healey, rh John
 Hendrick, Mr Mark
 Hendry, Drew
 Hepburn, Mr Stephen
 Hermon, Lady
 Hodgson, Mrs Sharon
 Hollern, Kate
 Hopkins, Kelvin
 Hosie, Stewart
 Howarth, rh Mr George
 Hunt, Tristram
 Huq, Dr Rupa
 Hussain, Imran
 Irranca-Davies, Huw
 Jarvis, Dan
 Jones, Gerald
 Jones, Graham
 Jones, Helen
 Jones, Susan Elan
 Kane, Mike
 Keeley, Barbara
 Kendall, Liz
 Kerevan, George
 Kerr, Calum
 Khan, rh Sadiq
 Kinnock, Stephen
 Kyle, Peter
 Lamb, rh Norman
 Lammy, rh Mr David
 Lavery, Ian
 Law, Chris
 Leslie, Chris
 Lewell-Buck, Mrs Emma
 Lewis, Clive
 Long Bailey, Rebecca
 Lucas, Ian C.
 MacNeil, Mr Angus Brendan
 Mactaggart, rh Fiona
 Madders, Justin
 Mahmood, Mr Khalid
 Mahmood, Shabana
 Malhotra, Seema
 Mann, John
 Marris, Rob
 Marsden, Mr Gordon
 Maskell, Rachael
 Matheson, Christian
 Mc Nally, John
 McCabe, Steve
 McCaig, Callum
 McCarthy, Kerry
 McDonagh, Siobhain
 McDonald, Andy
 McDonald, Stewart Malcolm
 McDonald, Stuart C.
 McDonnell, Dr Alasdair
 McDonnell, John
 McFadden, rh Mr Pat
 McGarry, Natalie
 McGinn, Conor
 McGovern, Alison
 McInnes, Liz
 McKinnell, Catherine
 McLaughlin, Anne
 Meale, Sir Alan
 Mearns, Ian
 Miliband, rh Edward
 Monaghan, Carol
 Monaghan, Dr Paul
 Moon, Mrs Madeleine
 Morden, Jessica
 Morris, Grahame M.

Question accordingly negated.

Amendment proposed: (e), in paragraph (1), leave out “be made” and insert

“shall have effect for the remainder of this Session of Parliament”.—
(Chris Bryant.)

Question put, That the amendment be made.

The House divided: Ayes 269, Noes 312.

Division No. 85]

[4.13 pm

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
 Abrahams, Debbie
 Ahmed-Sheikh, Ms Tasmina
 Alexander, Heidi
 Ali, Rushanara
 Allen, Mr Graham
 Anderson, Mr David
 Arkless, Richard
 Ashworth, Jonathan
 Austin, Iain
 Bailey, Mr Adrian
 Bardell, Hannah
 Barron, rh Kevin
 Beckett, rh Margaret
 Benn, rh Hilary
 Berger, Luciana
 Betts, Mr Clive
 Black, Mhairi
 Blackford, Iain

Blackman, Kirsty
 Blackman-Woods, Dr Roberta
 Blomfield, Paul
 Bradshaw, rh Mr Ben
 Brake, rh Tom
 Brennan, Kevin
 Brock, Deidre
 Brown, Alan
 Brown, Lyn
 Bryant, Chris
 Buck, Ms Karen
 Burden, Richard
 Burgon, Richard
 Burnham, rh Andy
 Butler, Dawn
 Byrne, rh Liam
 Cadbury, Ruth
 Cameron, Dr Lisa
 Campbell, rh Mr Alan

Mullin, Roger
 Murray, Ian
 Nandy, Lisa
 Newlands, Gavin
 Nicolson, John
 O'Hara, Brendan
 Onn, Melanie
 Onwurah, Chi
 Osamor, Kate
 Oswald, Kirsten
 Paisley, Ian
 Paterson, Steven
 Pearce, Teresa
 Pennycook, Matthew
 Phillips, Jess
 Phillipson, Bridget
 Pound, Stephen
 Powell, Lucy
 Qureshi, Yasmin
 Rayner, Angela
 Reed, Mr Jamie
 Reed, Mr Steve
 Rees, Christina
 Reynolds, Emma
 Reynolds, Jonathan
 Rimmer, Marie
 Ritchie, Ms Margaret
 Robertson, rh Angus
 Robinson, Gavin
 Robinson, Mr Geoffrey
 Rotheram, Steve
 Ryan, rh Joan
 Salmond, rh Alex
 Saville Roberts, Liz
 Shah, Naz
 Sharma, Mr Virendra
 Sheerman, Mr Barry
 Sheppard, Tommy
 Sherriff, Paula
 Shuker, Mr Gavin
 Siddiq, Tulip
 Simpson, David
 Skinner, Mr Dennis
 Slaughter, Andy
 Smeeth, Ruth
 Smith, rh Mr Andrew

Smith, Angela
 Smith, Cat
 Smith, Jeff
 Smith, Nick
 Smith, Owen
 Spellar, rh Mr John
 Starmer, Keir
 Stephens, Chris
 Stevens, Jo
 Streeting, Wes
 Stringer, Graham
 Stuart, rh Ms Gisela
 Tami, Mark
 Thewliss, Alison
 Thomas, Mr Gareth
 Thomas-Symonds, Nick
 Thompson, Owen
 Thornberry, Emily
 Timms, rh Stephen
 Trickett, Jon
 Turner, Karl
 Twigg, Derek
 Twigg, Stephen
 Umunna, Mr Chuka
 Vaz, rh Keith
 Vaz, Valerie
 Watson, Mr Tom
 Weir, Mike
 West, Catherine
 Whiteford, Dr Eilidh
 Whitehead, Dr Alan
 Whitford, Dr Philippa
 Williams, Hywel
 Wilson, Corri
 Wilson, Sammy
 Winnick, Mr David
 Winterton, rh Ms Rosie
 Wishart, Pete
 Woodcock, John
 Wright, Mr Iain
 Zeichner, Daniel

Tellers for the Ayes:
Holly Lynch and
Vicky Foxcroft

NOES

Adams, Nigel
 Afriyie, Adam
 Aldous, Peter
 Allan, Lucy
 Allen, Heidi
 Amess, Sir David
 Andrew, Stuart
 Ansell, Caroline
 Argar, Edward
 Atkins, Victoria
 Bacon, Mr Richard
 Baker, Mr Steve
 Baldwin, Harriett
 Barclay, Stephen
 Baron, Mr John
 Barwell, Gavin
 Bebb, Guto
 Bellingham, Mr Henry
 Benyon, Richard
 Beresford, Sir Paul
 Berry, Jake
 Berry, James
 Bingham, Andrew

Blackman, Bob
 Blackwood, Nicola
 Blunt, Crispin
 Boles, Nick
 Bone, Mr Peter
 Borwick, Victoria
 Bottomley, Sir Peter
 Bradley, Karen
 Brady, Mr Graham
 Brazier, Mr Julian
 Bridgen, Andrew
 Brine, Steve
 Brokenshire, rh James
 Bruce, Fiona
 Buckland, Robert
 Burns, Conor
 Burns, rh Sir Simon
 Burrowes, Mr David
 Burt, rh Alistair
 Cairns, Alun
 Carmichael, Neil
 Cartledge, James
 Cash, Sir William

Caulfield, Maria
 Chalk, Alex
 Chishtii, Rehman
 Chope, Mr Christopher
 Churchill, Jo
 Clark, rh Greg
 Cleverly, James
 Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
 Coffey, Dr Thérèse
 Collins, Damian
 Colvile, Oliver
 Costa, Alberto
 Cox, Mr Geoffrey
 Crabb, rh Stephen
 Crouch, Tracey
 Davies, Byron
 Davies, Chris
 Davies, David T. C.
 Davies, Glyn
 Davies, Dr James
 Davies, Mims
 Davies, Philip
 Dinenage, Caroline
 Djanogly, Mr Jonathan
 Donelan, Michelle
 Dorries, Nadine
 Double, Steve
 Dowden, Oliver
 Drax, Richard
 Drummond, Mrs Flick
 Duncan, rh Sir Alan
 Duncan Smith, rh Mr Iain
 Dunne, Mr Philip
 Ellis, Michael
 Ellison, Jane
 Ellwood, Mr Tobias
 Elphicke, Charlie
 Evans, Graham
 Evans, Mr Nigel
 Fabricant, Michael
 Fallon, rh Michael
 Fernandes, Suella
 Field, rh Mark
 Foster, Kevin
 Fox, rh Dr Liam
 Frazer, Lucy
 Freeman, George
 Freer, Mike
 Fuller, Richard
 Fysh, Marcus
 Gale, Sir Roger
 Garnier, rh Sir Edward
 Garnier, Mark
 Gauke, Mr David
 Ghani, Nusrat
 Gibb, Mr Nick
 Gillan, rh Mrs Cheryl
 Glen, John
 Goldsmith, Zac
 Goodwill, Mr Robert
 Gove, rh Michael
 Graham, Richard
 Grant, Mrs Helen
 Gray, Mr James
 Grayling, rh Chris
 Green, Chris
 Green, rh Damian
 Greening, rh Justine
 Grieve, rh Mr Dominic
 Griffiths, Andrew
 Gummer, Ben
 Gyimah, Mr Sam

Halfon, rh Robert
 Hall, Luke
 Hammond, Stephen
 Hancock, rh Matthew
 Hands, rh Greg
 Harper, rh Mr Mark
 Harrington, Richard
 Harris, Rebecca
 Hart, Simon
 Haselhurst, rh Sir Alan
 Hayes, rh Mr John
 Heald, Sir Oliver
 Heapey, James
 Heaton-Harris, Chris
 Heaton-Jones, Peter
 Henderson, Gordon
 Herbert, rh Nick
 Hinds, Damian
 Hoare, Simon
 Hollingbery, George
 Hollinrake, Kevin
 Hollobone, Mr Philip
 Holloway, Mr Adam
 Hopkins, Kris
 Howarth, Sir Gerald
 Howell, John
 Howlett, Ben
 Huddleston, Nigel
 Hunt, rh Mr Jeremy
 Hurd, Mr Nick
 Jackson, Mr Stewart
 James, Margot
 Javid, rh Sajid
 Jayawardena, Mr Ranil
 Jenkin, Mr Bernard
 Jenkyns, Andrea
 Jenrick, Robert
 Johnson, Boris
 Johnson, Gareth
 Johnson, Joseph
 Jones, Andrew
 Jones, rh Mr David
 Jones, Mr Marcus
 Kawczynski, Daniel
 Kennedy, Seema
 Kirby, Simon
 Knight, rh Sir Greg
 Knight, Julian
 Kwarteng, Kwasi
 Lancaster, Mark
 Latham, Pauline
 Leadsom, Andrea
 Lee, Dr Phillip
 Lefroy, Jeremy
 Leigh, Sir Edward
 Leslie, Charlotte
 Letwin, rh Mr Oliver
 Glen, John
 Lewis, rh Dr Julian
 Liddell-Grainger, Mr Ian
 Lidington, rh Mr David
 Lilley, rh Mr Peter
 Lopresti, Jack
 Lord, Jonathan
 Loughton, Tim
 Lumley, Karen
 Mackinlay, Craig
 Mackintosh, David
 Main, Mrs Anne
 Mak, Mr Alan
 Malthouse, Kit
 Mann, Scott

Mathias, Dr Tania
 May, rh Mrs Theresa
 Maynard, Paul
 McCartney, Jason
 McCartney, Karl
 McPartland, Stephen
 Menzies, Mark
 Mercer, Johnny
 Merriman, Huw
 Metcalfe, Stephen
 Miller, rh Mrs Maria
 Milling, Amanda
 Mills, Nigel
 Milton, rh Anne
 Mitchell, rh Mr Andrew
 Mordaunt, Penny
 Morgan, rh Nicky
 Morris, Anne Marie
 Morris, David
 Morris, James
 Morton, Wendy
 Mowat, David
 Mundell, rh David
 Murray, Mrs Sheryll
 Murrison, Dr Andrew
 Neill, Robert
 Newton, Sarah
 Nokes, Caroline
 Nuttall, Mr David
 Offord, Dr Matthew
 Opperman, Guy
 Osborne, rh Mr George
 Parish, Neil
 Patel, rh Priti
 Paterson, rh Mr Owen
 Pawsey, Mark
 Penning, rh Mike
 Penrose, John
 Percy, Andrew
 Perry, Claire
 Phillips, Stephen
 Philp, Chris
 Pickles, rh Sir Eric
 Pincher, Christopher
 Poulter, Dr Daniel
 Pow, Rebecca
 Prentis, Victoria
 Prisk, Mr Mark
 Pritchard, Mark
 Pursglove, Tom
 Quin, Jeremy
 Quince, Will
 Raab, Mr Dominic
 Redwood, rh John
 Rees-Mogg, Mr Jacob
 Robertson, Mr Laurence
 Robinson, Mary
 Rosindell, Andrew
 Rudd, rh Amber
 Rutley, David
 Sandbach, Antoinette
 Scully, Paul
 Selous, Andrew

Shapps, rh Grant
 Sharma, Alok
 Shelbrooke, Alec
 Simpson, rh Mr Keith
 Skidmore, Chris
 Smith, Chloe
 Smith, Henry
 Smith, Julian
 Smith, Royston
 Soames, rh Sir Nicholas
 Solloway, Amanda
 Soubry, rh Anna
 Spelman, rh Mrs Caroline
 Spencer, Mark
 Stephenson, Andrew
 Stevenson, John
 Stewart, Bob
 Stewart, Iain
 Stewart, Rory
 Streeter, Mr Gary
 Stride, Mel
 Stuart, Graham
 Swayne, rh Mr Desmond
 Swire, rh Mr Hugo
 Syms, Mr Robert
 Thomas, Derek
 Throup, Maggie
 Tolhurst, Kelly
 Tomlinson, Justin
 Tomlinson, Michael
 Tracey, Craig
 Tredinnick, David
 Truss, rh Elizabeth
 Tugendhat, Tom
 Turner, Mr Andrew
 Tyrie, rh Mr Andrew
 Vaizey, Mr Edward
 Vara, Mr Shailesh
 Vickers, Martin
 Walker, Mr Charles
 Walker, Mr Robin
 Wallace, Mr Ben
 Warburton, David
 Warman, Matt
 Watkinson, Dame Angela
 Wharton, James
 Whately, Helen
 Wheeler, Heather
 White, Chris
 Whittaker, Craig
 Whittingdale, rh Mr John
 Wiggin, Bill
 Williams, Craig
 Williamson, rh Gavin
 Wilson, Mr Rob
 Wollaston, Dr Sarah
 Wood, Mike
 Wragg, William
 Wright, rh Jeremy

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr David Evennett and
Jackie Doyle-Price

Question accordingly negated.

Amendment proposed: (f), in proposed Standing Order No. 83J(2), leave out second “or” and insert “and”.
 —(Chris Bryant.)

Question put, That the amendment be made.

The House divided: Ayes 269, Noes 312.

Division No. 86]

[4.26 pm

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
 Abrahams, Debbie
 Ahmed-Sheikh, Ms Tasmina
 Alexander, Heidi
 Ali, Rushanara
 Allen, Mr Graham
 Anderson, Mr David
 Arkless, Richard
 Ashworth, Jonathan
 Austin, Ian
 Bailey, Mr Adrian
 Bardell, Hannah
 Barron, rh Kevin
 Beckett, rh Margaret
 Benn, rh Hilary
 Berger, Luciana
 Betts, Mr Clive
 Black, Mhairi
 Blackford, Ian
 Blackman, Kirsty
 Blackman-Woods, Dr Roberta
 Blomfield, Paul
 Bradshaw, rh Mr Ben
 Brake, rh Tom
 Brennan, Kevin
 Brock, Deidre
 Brown, Alan
 Brown, Lyn
 Bryant, Chris
 Buck, Ms Karen
 Burden, Richard
 Burgon, Richard
 Burnham, rh Andy
 Butler, Dawn
 Byrne, rh Liam
 Cadbury, Ruth
 Cameron, Dr Lisa
 Campbell, rh Mr Alan
 Campbell, Mr Ronnie
 Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair
 Champion, Sarah
 Chapman, Douglas
 Cherry, Joanna
 Coaker, Vernon
 Coffey, Ann
 Cooper, Julie
 Cooper, rh Yvette
 Corbyn, Jeremy
 Cowan, Ronnie
 Cox, Jo
 Coyle, Neil
 Crausby, Mr David
 Crawley, Angela
 Creasy, Stella
 Cruddas, Jon
 Cummins, Judith
 Cunningham, Alex
 Cunningham, Mr Jim
 Dakin, Nic
 Danczuk, Simon
 David, Wayne
 Davies, Geraint
 Day, Martyn
 De Piero, Gloria
 Docherty, Martin John
 Dodds, rh Mr Nigel
 Donaldson, rh Mr Jeffrey M.
 Donaldson, Stuart Blair
 Doughty, Stephen
 Dowd, Peter
 Dromey, Jack
 Dugher, Michael
 Durkan, Mark
 Eagle, Ms Angela
 Edwards, Jonathan
 Efford, Clive
 Elliott, Julie
 Ellman, Mrs Louise
 Esterson, Bill
 Evans, Chris
 Farrelly, Paul
 Fellows, Marion
 Ferrier, Margaret
 Fitzpatrick, Jim
 Ffello, Robert
 Fletcher, Colleen
 Flint, rh Caroline
 Flynn, Paul
 Fovargue, Yvonne
 Gapes, Mike
 Gardiner, Barry
 Gethins, Stephen
 Gibson, Patricia
 Glass, Pat
 Glindon, Mary
 Goodman, Helen
 Grady, Patrick
 Grant, Peter
 Gray, Neil
 Green, Kate
 Greenwood, Margaret
 Griffith, Nia
 Gwynne, Andrew
 Haigh, Louise
 Hamilton, Fabian
 Hanson, rh Mr David
 Harman, rh Ms Harriet
 Harris, Carolyn
 Hayes, Helen
 Hayman, Sue
 Healey, rh John
 Hendrick, Mr Mark
 Hendry, Drew
 Hepburn, Mr Stephen
 Hermon, Lady
 Hodgson, Mrs Sharon
 Hollern, Kate
 Hopkins, Kelvin
 Hosie, Stewart
 Howarth, rh Mr George
 Hunt, Tristram
 Huq, Dr Rupa
 Hussain, Imran
 Irranca-Davies, Huw
 Jarvis, Dan
 Jones, Gerald
 Jones, Graham
 Jones, Helen
 Jones, Susan Elan
 Kane, Mike
 Keeley, Barbara
 Kendall, Liz
 Kerevan, George
 Kerr, Calum

Khan, rh Sadiq
 Kinnock, Stephen
 Kyle, Peter
 Lamb, rh Norman
 Lammy, rh Mr David
 Lavery, Ian
 Law, Chris
 Leslie, Chris
 Lewell-Buck, Mrs Emma
 Lewis, Clive
 Long Bailey, Rebecca
 Lucas, Ian C.
 MacNeil, Mr Angus Brendan
 Mactaggart, rh Fiona
 Madders, Justin
 Mahmood, Mr Khalid
 Mahmood, Shabana
 Malhotra, Seema
 Mann, John
 Marris, Rob
 Marsden, Mr Gordon
 Maskell, Rachael
 Matheson, Christian
 Mc Nally, John
 McCabe, Steve
 McCaig, Callum
 McCarthy, Kerry
 McDonagh, Siobhain
 McDonald, Andy
 McDonald, Stewart Malcolm
 McDonald, Stuart C.
 McDonnell, Dr Alasdair
 McDonnell, John
 McFadden, rh Mr Pat
 McGarry, Natalie
 McGinn, Conor
 McGovern, Alison
 McInnes, Liz
 McKinnell, Catherine
 McLaughlin, Anne
 Meale, Sir Alan
 Mearns, Ian
 Miliband, rh Edward
 Monaghan, Carol
 Monaghan, Dr Paul
 Moon, Mrs Madeleine
 Morden, Jessica
 Morris, Grahame M.
 Mullin, Roger
 Murray, Ian
 Nandy, Lisa
 Newlands, Gavin
 Nicolson, John
 O'Hara, Brendan
 Onn, Melanie
 Onwurah, Chi
 Osamor, Kate
 Oswald, Kirsten
 Paisley, Ian
 Paterson, Steven
 Pearce, Teresa
 Pennycook, Matthew
 Phillips, Jess
 Phillipson, Bridget
 Pound, Stephen
 Powell, Lucy
 Qureshi, Yasmin
 Rayner, Angela
 Reed, Mr Jamie
 Reed, Mr Steve

Rees, Christina
 Reynolds, Emma
 Reynolds, Jonathan
 Rimmer, Marie
 Ritchie, Ms Margaret
 Robertson, rh Angus
 Robinson, Gavin
 Robinson, Mr Geoffrey
 Rotheram, Steve
 Ryan, rh Joan
 Salmond, rh Alex
 Saville Roberts, Liz
 Shah, Naz
 Sharma, Mr Virendra
 Sheerman, Mr Barry
 Sheppard, Tommy
 Sherriff, Paula
 Shuker, Mr Gavin
 Siddiq, Tulip
 Simpson, David
 Skinner, Mr Dennis
 Slaughter, Andy
 Smeeth, Ruth
 Smith, rh Mr Andrew
 Smith, Angela
 Smith, Cat
 Smith, Jeff
 Smith, Nick
 Smith, Owen
 Spellar, rh Mr John
 Starmer, Keir
 Stephens, Chris
 Stevens, Jo
 Streeting, Wes
 Stringer, Graham
 Stuart, rh Ms Gisela
 Tami, Mark
 Thewliss, Alison
 Thomas, Mr Gareth
 Thomas-Symonds, Nick
 Thompson, Owen
 Thornberry, Emily
 Timms, rh Stephen
 Trickett, Jon
 Turner, Karl
 Twigg, Derek
 Twigg, Stephen
 Umunna, Mr Chuka
 Vaz, rh Keith
 Vaz, Valerie
 Watson, Mr Tom
 Weir, Mike
 West, Catherine
 Whiteford, Dr Eilidh
 Whitehead, Dr Alan
 Whitford, Dr Philippa
 Williams, Hywel
 Wilson, Corri
 Wilson, Sammy
 Winnick, Mr David
 Winterton, rh Ms Rosie
 Wishart, Pete
 Woodcock, John
 Wright, Mr Iain
 Zeichner, Daniel

Tellers for the Ayes:

Vicky Foxcroft and
 Holly Lynch

NOES

Adams, Nigel
 Afriyie, Adam
 Aldous, Peter
 Allan, Lucy
 Allen, Heidi
 Amess, Sir David
 Andrew, Stuart
 Ansell, Caroline
 Argar, Edward
 Atkins, Victoria
 Bacon, Mr Richard
 Baker, Mr Steve
 Baldwin, Harriett
 Barclay, Stephen
 Baron, Mr John
 Barwell, Gavin
 Bebb, Guto
 Bellingham, Mr Henry
 Benyon, Richard
 Beresford, Sir Paul
 Berry, Jake
 Berry, James
 Bingham, Andrew
 Blackman, Bob
 Blackwood, Nicola
 Blunt, Crispin
 Boles, Nick
 Bone, Mr Peter
 Borwick, Victoria
 Bottomley, Sir Peter
 Bradley, Karen
 Brady, Mr Graham
 Brazier, Mr Julian
 Bridgen, Andrew
 Brine, Steve
 Brokenshire, rh James
 Bruce, Fiona
 Buckland, Robert
 Burns, Conor
 Burns, rh Sir Simon
 Burrowes, Mr David
 Burt, rh Alistair
 Cairns, Alun
 Carmichael, Neil
 Cartlidge, James
 Cash, Sir William
 Caulfield, Maria
 Chalk, Alex
 Chishti, Rehman
 Chope, Mr Christopher
 Churchill, Jo
 Clark, rh Greg
 Cleverly, James
 Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
 Coffey, Dr Thérèse
 Collins, Damian
 Colvile, Oliver
 Costa, Alberto
 Cox, Mr Geoffrey
 Crabb, rh Stephen
 Crouch, Tracey
 Davies, Byron
 Davies, Chris
 Davies, David T. C.
 Davies, Glyn
 Davies, Dr James
 Davies, Mims
 Davies, Philip
 Dinage, Caroline
 Djanogly, Mr Jonathan
 Donelan, Michelle
 Dorries, Nadine
 Double, Steve
 Dowden, Oliver
 Drax, Richard
 Drummond, Mrs Flick
 Duncan, rh Sir Alan
 Duncan Smith, rh Mr Iain
 Dunne, Mr Philip
 Ellis, Michael
 Ellison, Jane
 Ellwood, Mr Tobias
 Elphicke, Charlie
 Evans, Graham
 Evans, Mr Nigel
 Fabricant, Michael
 Fallon, rh Michael
 Fernandes, Suella
 Field, rh Mark
 Foster, Kevin
 Fox, rh Dr Liam
 Frazer, Lucy
 Freeman, George
 Freer, Mike
 Fuller, Richard
 Fysh, Marcus
 Gale, Sir Roger
 Garnier, rh Sir Edward
 Garnier, Mark
 Gauke, Mr David
 Ghani, Nusrat
 Gibb, Mr Nick
 Gillan, rh Mrs Cheryl
 Glen, John
 Goldsmith, Zac
 Goodwill, Mr Robert
 Gove, rh Michael
 Graham, Richard
 Grant, Mrs Helen
 Gray, Mr James
 Grayling, rh Chris
 Green, Chris
 Green, rh Damian
 Greening, rh Justine
 Grieve, rh Mr Dominic
 Griffiths, Andrew
 Gummer, Ben
 Gyimah, Mr Sam
 Halfon, rh Robert
 Hall, Luke
 Hammond, Stephen
 Hancock, rh Matthew
 Hands, rh Greg
 Harper, rh Mr Mark
 Harrington, Richard
 Harris, Rebecca
 Hart, Simon
 Haselhurst, rh Sir Alan
 Hayes, rh Mr John
 Heald, Sir Oliver
 Heappey, James
 Heaton-Harris, Chris
 Heaton-Jones, Peter
 Henderson, Gordon
 Herbert, rh Nick
 Hinds, Damian
 Hoare, Simon
 Hollingbery, George
 Hollinrake, Kevin
 Hollobone, Mr Philip
 Holloway, Mr Adam
 Hopkins, Kris

Howarth, Sir Gerald
 Howell, John
 Howlett, Ben
 Huddleston, Nigel
 Hunt, rh Mr Jeremy
 Hurd, Mr Nick
 Jackson, Mr Stewart
 James, Margot
 Javid, rh Sajid
 Jayawardena, Mr Ranil
 Jenkin, Mr Bernard
 Jenkyns, Andrea
 Jenrick, Robert
 Johnson, Boris
 Johnson, Gareth
 Johnson, Joseph
 Jones, Andrew
 Jones, rh Mr David
 Jones, Mr Marcus
 Kawczynski, Daniel
 Kennedy, Seema
 Kirby, Simon
 Knight, rh Sir Greg
 Knight, Julian
 Kwarteng, Kwasi
 Lancaster, Mark
 Latham, Pauline
 Leadsom, Andrea
 Lee, Dr Phillip
 Lefroy, Jeremy
 Leigh, Sir Edward
 Leslie, Charlotte
 Letwin, rh Mr Oliver
 Lewis, Brandon
 Lewis, rh Dr Julian
 Liddell-Grainger, Mr Ian
 Lidington, rh Mr David
 Lilley, rh Mr Peter
 Lopresti, Jack
 Lord, Jonathan
 Loughton, Tim
 Lumley, Karen
 Mackinlay, Craig
 Mackintosh, David
 Main, Mrs Anne
 Mak, Mr Alan
 Malthouse, Kit
 Mann, Scott
 Mathias, Dr Tania
 May, rh Mrs Theresa
 Maynard, Paul
 McCartney, Jason
 McCartney, Karl
 McPartland, Stephen
 Menzies, Mark
 Mercer, Johnny
 Merriman, Huw
 Metcalfe, Stephen
 Miller, rh Mrs Maria
 Milling, Amanda
 Mills, Nigel
 Milton, rh Anne
 Mitchell, rh Mr Andrew
 Mordaunt, Penny
 Morgan, rh Nicky
 Morris, Anne Marie
 Morris, David
 Morris, James
 Morton, Wendy
 Mowat, David
 Mundell, rh David
 Murray, Mrs Sheryll

Murrison, Dr Andrew
 Neill, Robert
 Newton, Sarah
 Nokes, Caroline
 Nuttall, Mr David
 Offord, Dr Matthew
 Opperman, Guy
 Osborne, rh Mr George
 Parish, Neil
 Patel, rh Priti
 Paterson, rh Mr Owen
 Pawsey, Mark
 Penning, rh Mike
 Penrose, John
 Percy, Andrew
 Perry, Claire
 Phillips, Stephen
 Philp, Chris
 Pickles, rh Sir Eric
 Pincher, Christopher
 Poulter, Dr Daniel
 Pow, Rebecca
 Prentis, Victoria
 Prisk, Mr Mark
 Pritchard, Mark
 Pursglove, Tom
 Quin, Jeremy
 Quince, Will
 Raab, Mr Dominic
 Redwood, rh John
 Rees-Mogg, Mr Jacob
 Robertson, Mr Laurence
 Robinson, Mary
 Rosindell, Andrew
 Rudd, rh Amber
 Rutley, David
 Sandbach, Antoinette
 Scully, Paul
 Selous, Andrew
 Shapps, rh Grant
 Sharma, Alok
 Shelbrooke, Alec
 Simpson, rh Mr Keith
 Skidmore, Chris
 Smith, Chloe
 Smith, Henry
 Smith, Julian
 Smith, Royston
 Soames, rh Sir Nicholas
 Solloway, Amanda
 Soubry, rh Anna
 Spelman, rh Mrs Caroline
 Spencer, Mark
 Stephenson, Andrew
 Stevenson, John
 Stewart, Bob
 Stewart, Iain
 Stewart, Rory
 Streeter, Mr Gary
 Stride, Mel
 Stuart, Graham
 Swayne, rh Mr Desmond
 Swire, rh Mr Hugo
 Syms, Mr Robert
 Thomas, Derek
 Throup, Maggie
 Tolhurst, Kelly
 Tomlinson, Justin
 Tomlinson, Michael
 Tracey, Craig
 Tredinnick, David
 Truss, rh Elizabeth

Tugendhat, Tom
 Turner, Mr Andrew
 Tyrie, rh Mr Andrew
 Vaizey, Mr Edward
 Vara, Mr Shailesh
 Vickers, Martin
 Walker, Mr Charles
 Walker, Mr Robin
 Wallace, Mr Ben
 Warburton, David
 Warman, Matt
 Watkinson, Dame Angela
 Wharton, James
 Whately, Helen
 Wheeler, Heather

White, Chris
 Whittaker, Craig
 Whittingdale, rh Mr John
 Wiggin, Bill
 Williams, Craig
 Williamson, rh Gavin
 Wilson, Mr Rob
 Wollaston, Dr Sarah
 Wood, Mike
 Wragg, William
 Wright, rh Jeremy

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr David Evennett and
Jackie Doyle-Price

Question accordingly negatived.

Main Question put.

The House divided: Ayes 312, Noes 270.

Division No. 87]

[4.38 pm

AYES

Adams, Nigel
 Afriyie, Adam
 Aldous, Peter
 Allan, Lucy
 Allen, Heidi
 Amess, Sir David
 Andrew, Stuart
 Ansell, Caroline
 Argar, Edward
 Atkins, Victoria
 Bacon, Mr Richard
 Baker, Mr Steve
 Baldwin, Harriett
 Baron, Mr John
 Barwell, Gavin
 Bebb, Guto
 Bellingham, Mr Henry
 Benyon, Richard
 Beresford, Sir Paul
 Berry, Jake
 Berry, James
 Bingham, Andrew
 Blackman, Bob
 Blackwood, Nicola
 Blunt, Crispin
 Boles, Nick
 Bone, Mr Peter
 Borwick, Victoria
 Bottomley, Sir Peter
 Bradley, Karen
 Brady, Mr Graham
 Brazier, Mr Julian
 Bridgen, Andrew
 Brine, Steve
 Brokenshire, rh James
 Bruce, Fiona
 Buckland, Robert
 Burns, Conor
 Burns, rh Sir Simon
 Burrowes, Mr David
 Burt, rh Alistair
 Cairns, Alun
 Carmichael, Neil
 Cartledge, James
 Cash, Sir William
 Caulfield, Maria
 Chalk, Alex
 Chishti, Rehman
 Chope, Mr Christopher
 Churchill, Jo
 Clark, rh Greg
 Cleverly, James
 Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
 Coffey, Dr Thérèse
 Collins, Damian
 Colville, Oliver
 Costa, Alberto
 Cox, Mr Geoffrey
 Crabb, rh Stephen
 Crouch, Tracey
 Davies, Byron
 Davies, Chris
 Davies, David T. C.
 Davies, Glyn
 Davies, Dr James
 Davies, Mims
 Davies, Philip
 Dinenage, Caroline
 Djanogly, Mr Jonathan
 Donelan, Michelle
 Dorries, Nadine
 Double, Steve
 Dowden, Oliver
 Doyle-Price, Jackie
 Drax, Richard
 Drummond, Mrs Flick
 Duncan, rh Sir Alan
 Duncan Smith, rh Mr Iain
 Dunne, Mr Philip
 Ellis, Michael
 Ellison, Jane
 Ellwood, Mr Tobias
 Elphicke, Charlie
 Evans, Graham
 Evans, Mr Nigel
 Fabricant, Michael
 Fallon, rh Michael
 Fernandes, Suella
 Field, rh Mark
 Foster, Kevin
 Fox, rh Dr Liam
 Frazer, Lucy
 Freeman, George
 Freer, Mike
 Fuller, Richard
 Fysh, Marcus

Gale, Sir Roger
 Garnier, rh Sir Edward
 Garnier, Mark
 Gauke, Mr David
 Ghani, Nusrat
 Gibb, Mr Nick
 Gillan, rh Mrs Cheryl
 Glen, John
 Goldsmith, Zac
 Goodwill, Mr Robert
 Gove, rh Michael
 Graham, Richard
 Grant, Mrs Helen
 Gray, Mr James
 Grayling, rh Chris
 Green, Chris
 Green, rh Damian
 Greening, rh Justine
 Grieve, rh Mr Dominic
 Griffiths, Andrew
 Gummer, Ben
 Gyimah, Mr Sam
 Halfon, rh Robert
 Hall, Luke
 Hammond, Stephen
 Hancock, rh Matthew
 Hands, rh Greg
 Harper, rh Mr Mark
 Harrington, Richard
 Harris, Rebecca
 Hart, Simon
 Haselhurst, rh Sir Alan
 Hayes, rh Mr John
 Heald, Sir Oliver
 Heapey, James
 Heaton-Harris, Chris
 Heaton-Jones, Peter
 Henderson, Gordon
 Herbert, rh Nick
 Hinds, Damian
 Hoare, Simon
 Hollingbery, George
 Hollinrake, Kevin
 Hollobone, Mr Philip
 Holloway, Mr Adam
 Hopkins, Kris
 Howarth, Sir Gerald
 Howell, John
 Howlett, Ben
 Huddleston, Nigel
 Hunt, rh Mr Jeremy
 Hurd, Mr Nick
 Jackson, Mr Stewart
 James, Margot
 Javid, rh Sajid
 Jayawardena, Mr Ranil
 Jenkin, Mr Bernard
 Jenkyns, Andrea
 Jenrick, Robert
 Johnson, Boris
 Johnson, Gareth
 Johnson, Joseph
 Jones, Andrew
 Jones, rh Mr David
 Jones, Mr Marcus
 Kawczynski, Daniel
 Kennedy, Seema
 Kirby, Simon
 Knight, rh Sir Greg
 Knight, Julian
 Kwarteng, Kwasi
 Lancaster, Mark

Latham, Pauline
 Leadsom, Andrea
 Lee, Dr Phillip
 Lefroy, Jeremy
 Leigh, Sir Edward
 Leslie, Charlotte
 Letwin, rh Mr Oliver
 Lewis, Brandon
 Lewis, rh Dr Julian
 Liddell-Grainger, Mr Ian
 Lidington, rh Mr David
 Lilley, rh Mr Peter
 Lopresti, Jack
 Lord, Jonathan
 Loughton, Tim
 Lumley, Karen
 Mackinlay, Craig
 Mackintosh, David
 Main, Mrs Anne
 Mak, Mr Alan
 Malthouse, Kit
 Mann, Scott
 Mathias, Dr Tania
 May, rh Mrs Theresa
 Maynard, Paul
 McCartney, Jason
 McCartney, Karl
 McPartland, Stephen
 Menzies, Mark
 Mercer, Johnny
 Merriman, Huw
 Metcalfe, Stephen
 Miller, rh Mrs Maria
 Milling, Amanda
 Mills, Nigel
 Milton, rh Anne
 Mitchell, rh Mr Andrew
 Mordaunt, Penny
 Morgan, rh Nicky
 Morris, Anne Marie
 Morris, David
 Morris, James
 Morton, Wendy
 Mowat, David
 Mundell, rh David
 Murray, Mrs Sheryll
 Murrison, Dr Andrew
 Neill, Robert
 Newton, Sarah
 Nokes, Caroline
 Nuttall, Mr David
 Offord, Dr Matthew
 Opperman, Guy
 Osborne, rh Mr George
 Parish, Neil
 Patel, rh Priti
 Paterson, rh Mr Owen
 Pawsey, Mark
 Penning, rh Mike
 Penrose, John
 Percy, Andrew
 Perry, Claire
 Phillips, Stephen
 Philp, Chris
 Pickles, rh Sir Eric
 Pincher, Christopher
 Poulter, Dr Daniel
 Pow, Rebecca
 Prentis, Victoria
 Prisk, Mr Mark
 Pritchard, Mark
 Pursglove, Tom

Quin, Jeremy
 Quince, Will
 Raab, Mr Dominic
 Redwood, rh John
 Rees-Mogg, Mr Jacob
 Robertson, Mr Laurence
 Robinson, Mary
 Rosindell, Andrew
 Rudd, rh Amber
 Rutley, David
 Sandbach, Antoinette
 Scully, Paul
 Selous, Andrew
 Shapps, rh Grant
 Sharma, Alok
 Shelbrooke, Alec
 Simpson, rh Mr Keith
 Skidmore, Chris
 Smith, Chloe
 Smith, Henry
 Smith, Julian
 Smith, Royston
 Soames, rh Sir Nicholas
 Solloway, Amanda
 Soubry, rh Anna
 Spelman, rh Mrs Caroline
 Spencer, Mark
 Stephenson, Andrew
 Stevenson, John
 Stewart, Bob
 Stewart, Iain
 Stewart, Rory
 Streeter, Mr Gary
 Stride, Mel
 Stuart, Graham
 Swayne, rh Mr Desmond
 Swire, rh Mr Hugo
 Syms, Mr Robert

Thomas, Derek
 Throup, Maggie
 Tolhurst, Kelly
 Tomlinson, Justin
 Tomlinson, Michael
 Tracey, Craig
 Tredinnick, David
 Truss, rh Elizabeth
 Tugendhat, Tom
 Turner, Mr Andrew
 Tyrie, rh Mr Andrew
 Vaizey, Mr Edward
 Vara, Mr Shailesh
 Vickers, Martin
 Walker, Mr Charles
 Walker, Mr Robin
 Wallace, Mr Ben
 Warburton, David
 Warman, Matt
 Watkinson, Dame Angela
 Wharton, James
 Whately, Helen
 Wheeler, Heather
 White, Chris
 Whittaker, Craig
 Whittingdale, rh Mr John
 Wiggan, Bill
 Williams, Craig
 Williamson, rh Gavin
 Wilson, Mr Rob
 Wollaston, Dr Sarah
 Wood, Mike
 Wragg, William
 Wright, rh Jeremy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr David Evennett and
Stephen Barclay

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
 Abrahams, Debbie
 Ahmed-Sheikh, Ms Tasmina
 Alexander, Heidi
 Ali, Rushanara
 Allen, Mr Graham
 Anderson, Mr David
 Arkless, Richard
 Ashworth, Jonathan
 Austin, Ian
 Bailey, Mr Adrian
 Bardell, Hannah
 Barron, rh Kevin
 Beckett, rh Margaret
 Benn, rh Hilary
 Berger, Luciana
 Betts, Mr Clive
 Black, Mhairi
 Blackford, Ian
 Blackman, Kirsty
 Blackman-Woods, Dr Roberta
 Blomfield, Paul
 Bradshaw, rh Mr Ben
 Brake, rh Tom
 Brennan, Kevin
 Brock, Deidre
 Brown, Alan
 Brown, Lyn
 Bryant, Chris
 Buck, Ms Karen
 Burden, Richard

Burgon, Richard
 Burnham, rh Andy
 Butler, Dawn
 Byrne, rh Liam
 Cadbury, Ruth
 Cameron, Dr Lisa
 Campbell, rh Mr Alan
 Campbell, Mr Ronnie
 Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair
 Champion, Sarah
 Chapman, Douglas
 Cherry, Joanna
 Coaker, Vernon
 Coffey, Ann
 Cooper, Julie
 Cooper, rh Yvette
 Corbyn, Jeremy
 Cowan, Ronnie
 Cox, Jo
 Coyle, Neil
 Crausby, Mr David
 Crawley, Angela
 Creasy, Stella
 Cruddas, Jon
 Cummins, Judith
 Cunningham, Alex
 Cunningham, Mr Jim
 Dakin, Nic
 Danczuk, Simon
 David, Wayne
 Davies, Geraint

Day, Martyn
 De Piero, Gloria
 Docherty, Martin John
 Dodds, rh Mr Nigel
 Donaldson, rh Mr Jeffrey M.
 Donaldson, Stuart Blair
 Doughty, Stephen
 Dowd, Peter
 Dromey, Jack
 Dugher, Michael
 Durkan, Mark
 Eagle, Ms Angela
 Edwards, Jonathan
 Efford, Clive
 Elliott, Julie
 Ellman, Mrs Louise
 Esterson, Bill
 Evans, Chris
 Farrelly, Paul
 Fellows, Marion
 Ferrier, Margaret
 Fitzpatrick, Jim
 Ffello, Robert
 Fletcher, Colleen
 Flint, rh Caroline
 Flynn, Paul
 Fovargue, Yvonne
 Gapes, Mike
 Gardiner, Barry
 Gethins, Stephen
 Gibson, Patricia
 Glass, Pat
 Glindon, Mary
 Goodman, Helen
 Grady, Patrick
 Grant, Peter
 Gray, Neil
 Green, Kate
 Greenwood, Margaret
 Griffith, Nia
 Gwynne, Andrew
 Haigh, Louise
 Hamilton, Fabian
 Hanson, rh Mr David
 Harman, rh Ms Harriet
 Harris, Carolyn
 Hayes, Helen
 Hayman, Sue
 Healey, rh John
 Hendrick, Mr Mark
 Hendry, Drew
 Hepburn, Mr Stephen
 Hermon, Lady
 Hodgson, Mrs Sharon
 Hollern, Kate
 Hopkins, Kelvin
 Hosie, Stewart
 Howarth, rh Mr George
 Hunt, Tristram
 Huq, Dr Rupa
 Hussain, Imran
 Irranca-Davies, Huw
 Jarvis, Dan
 Jones, Gerald
 Jones, Graham
 Jones, Helen
 Jones, Susan Elan
 Kane, Mike
 Kaufman, rh Sir Gerald
 Keeley, Barbara
 Kendall, Liz
 Kerevan, George

Kerr, Calum
 Khan, rh Sadiq
 Kinnock, Stephen
 Kyle, Peter
 Lamb, rh Norman
 Lammy, rh Mr David
 Lavery, Ian
 Law, Chris
 Leslie, Chris
 Lewell-Buck, Mrs Emma
 Lewis, Clive
 Long Bailey, Rebecca
 Lucas, Ian C.
 MacNeil, Mr Angus Brendan
 Mactaggart, rh Fiona
 Madders, Justin
 Mahmood, Mr Khalid
 Mahmood, Shabana
 Malhotra, Seema
 Mann, John
 Marris, Rob
 Marsden, Mr Gordon
 Maskell, Rachael
 Matheson, Christian
 Mc Nally, John
 McCabe, Steve
 McCaig, Callum
 McCarthy, Kerry
 McDonagh, Siobhain
 McDonald, Andy
 McDonald, Stewart Malcolm
 McDonald, Stuart C.
 McDonnell, Dr Alasdair
 McDonnell, John
 McFadden, rh Mr Pat
 McGarry, Natalie
 McGinn, Conor
 McGovern, Alison
 McInnes, Liz
 McKinnell, Catherine
 McLaughlin, Anne
 Meale, Sir Alan
 Mearns, Ian
 Miliband, rh Edward
 Monaghan, Carol
 Monaghan, Dr Paul
 Moon, Mrs Madeleine
 Morden, Jessica
 Morris, Grahame M.
 Mullin, Roger
 Murray, Ian
 Nandy, Lisa
 Newlands, Gavin
 Nicolson, John
 O'Hara, Brendan
 Onn, Melanie
 Onwurah, Chi
 Osamor, Kate
 Oswald, Kirsten
 Paisley, Ian
 Paterson, Steven
 Pearce, Teresa
 Pennycook, Matthew
 Phillips, Jess
 Phillipson, Bridget
 Pound, Stephen
 Powell, Lucy
 Qureshi, Yasmin
 Rayner, Angela
 Reed, Mr Jamie
 Reed, Mr Steve
 Rees, Christina

Reynolds, Emma
 Reynolds, Jonathan
 Rimmer, Marie
 Ritchie, Ms Margaret
 Robertson, rh Angus
 Robinson, Gavin
 Robinson, Mr Geoffrey
 Rotheram, Steve
 Ryan, rh Joan
 Salmond, rh Alex
 Saville Roberts, Liz
 Shah, Naz
 Sharma, Mr Virendra
 Sheerman, Mr Barry
 Sheppard, Tommy
 Sherriff, Paula
 Shuker, Mr Gavin
 Siddiq, Tulip
 Simpson, David
 Skinner, Mr Dennis
 Slaughter, Andy
 Smeeth, Ruth
 Smith, rh Mr Andrew
 Smith, Angela
 Smith, Cat
 Smith, Jeff
 Smith, Nick
 Smith, Owen
 Spellar, rh Mr John
 Starmer, Keir
 Stephens, Chris
 Stevens, Jo
 Streeting, Wes
 Stringer, Graham

Stuart, rh Ms Gisela
 Tami, Mark
 Thewliss, Alison
 Thomas, Mr Gareth
 Thomas-Symonds, Nick
 Thompson, Owen
 Thornberry, Emily
 Timms, rh Stephen
 Trickett, Jon
 Turner, Karl
 Twigg, Derek
 Twigg, Stephen
 Umunna, Mr Chuka
 Vaz, rh Keith
 Vaz, Valerie
 Watson, Mr Tom
 Weir, Mike
 West, Catherine
 Whiteford, Dr Eilidh
 Whitehead, Dr Alan
 Whitford, Dr Philippa
 Williams, Hywel
 Wilson, Corri
 Wilson, Sammy
 Winnick, Mr David
 Winterton, rh Ms Rosie
 Wishart, Pete
 Woodcock, John
 Wright, Mr Iain
 Zeichner, Daniel

Tellers for the Noes:

**Vicky Foxcroft and
 Holly Lynch**

Question accordingly agreed to.

Kevin Brennan (Cardiff West) (Lab): On a point of order, Mr Speaker. Now that we have created different classes of MP, would it be convenient for the House to consider issuing different coloured passes to different types of MP so that it is easier for them to be recognised in Committees and Divisions? Perhaps we could have white passes for English Members, blue for the Scottish, red for the Welsh, and green for those from Northern Ireland.

Mr Speaker: The hon. Gentleman has made his point in his own way, and I feel sure that its thrust, or what Jack Straw used to call its gravamen, will be winging its way to Cardiff media outlets ere long. Meanwhile, his point is on the record and I will not respond.

Chris Bryant (Rhondda) (Lab) *rose*—

Mr Speaker: I fear that I shall have to respond to a point of order from Mr Chris Bryant.

Chris Bryant: On a point of order, Mr Speaker. The House has now decided on a double majority voting procedure that will require a new process after we have voted in the Lobby. Can you clarify whether you will be making a statement on Monday to inform us how that will operate?

Mr Speaker: The short answer is that I did not have it in mind to make any such statement on Monday. I am aware that there is a relative urgency about these matters, and before long there will be a practical requirement to address cases that will arise under the revised arrangements.

[Mr Speaker]

If such matters are to be addressed by me and others, and if there is an implication for the House as a whole, the necessary administration will need to be put in place.

It is not immediately obvious to me that the matter is so urgent that it requires a statement to the House on Monday. It may be that this issue is what we in the Speaker's office call UIMOM—urgent in mind of Member—and that is not necessarily the same as being urgent for the House on Monday. However, if on the basis of further and better advice I decide that the matter is urgent for Monday, I will do my duty—of that the shadow Leader of the House need be in no doubt.

Pete Wishart (Perth and North Perthshire) (SNP): Further to that point of order, Mr Speaker. This matter may be urgent because future business contains two pieces of legislation and matters for consideration that may be subject to the EVEL procedure. Will there be guidance for Members on how we approach the Divisions if certification is to be put in place? The House needs to know and be entirely clearly about how this will work.

Mr Speaker: Again, thinking on my feet I would say that such guidance as is necessary to facilitate Members in the House and ensure that what they are expected to do is intelligible to them, shall be provided. Whether it will be necessary for written guidance to be provided, or whether oral guidance from the Chair can be issued on the appropriate occasions, remains to be seen. I make that latter point not least because there was an obvious example of that at the start of today's proceedings on these matters. I provided oral guidance to the House because I thought it would be helpful to Members to have an idea in advance about the order of proceedings and the choreography of the occasion. Advice might be written or it might be oral, but I would not want the hon. Gentleman to be unguided when in need.

The Leader of the House of Commons (Chris Grayling): Further to that point of order, Mr Speaker. Clearly, no one would take final actions before the House had approved a motion, but it might be helpful simply to inform the House that extensive work has been done by the Clerks to prepare for the possibility of the House approving the Standing Orders today. It is undoubtedly

the case that they will be working in the coming days to ensure that Members are both briefed and ready for changes as they arise.

Mr Speaker: That is a very useful point to make, both because it informs the House and because it pays proper tribute to our Clerks. They will also do their duty. The Leader of the House is of course quite right. They anticipate scenarios and they do very good work in advance, applying, as Members will appreciate, what Hercule Poirot would have called their little grey cells, of which they have a very large number.

Business without Debate

DELEGATED LEGISLATION

Mr Speaker: With the leave of the House, we shall take motions 2 to 7 together.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith (Standing Order No. 118(6)),

CAPITAL GAINS TAX

That the draft Double Taxation Relief and International Tax Enforcement (Algeria) Order 2015, which was laid before this House on 20 July, be approved.

That the draft Double Taxation Relief and International Tax Enforcement (Bulgaria) Order 2015, which was laid before this House on 20 July, be approved.

That the draft International Tax Enforcement (Brazil) Order 2015, which was laid before this House on 20 July, be approved.

That the draft Double Taxation Relief and International Tax Enforcement (Croatia) Order 2015, which was laid before this House on 20 July, be approved.

That the draft Double Taxation Relief and International Tax Enforcement (Senegal) Order 2015, which was laid before this House on 20 July, be approved.

That the draft Double Taxation Relief and International Tax Enforcement (Sweden) Order 2015, which was laid before this House on 20 July, be approved.

EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING

That the draft English Apprenticeships (Consequential Amendments to Primary Legislation) Order 2015, which was laid before this House on 21 July, be approved.—(*Margot James.*)

Question agreed to.

Burma

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—(*Margot James.*)

4.57 pm

Valerie Vaz (Walsall South) (Lab): I am very pleased to see you in the Chair, Mr Speaker, as the parliamentarian who has done so much to further the cause of Burma and her people. I also thank the Minister for coming to the House to respond to the debate. He has had a busy day. He must be the first Minister to respond to both an urgent question and an Adjournment debate on the same day.

It has been two years since our visit to Burma and there are just 17 days to one of the most eagerly anticipated elections in Burma. I want to raise the growing concerns that the elections must be free and fair by international standards. They are being held against a background of increasing sectarian and racial tension. I hope the Minister will reassure us that he considers the elections to be free and fair, alongside the fact that we have trade agreements with the Burmese Government.

I want to deal with three main areas—the political prisoners who are still in jail, the disfranchisement of the Rohingya and breaches of election law—as well as human rights, which underpin them all. There is not universal suffrage as we know it. Some 25% of the current quasi-civilian Government are military and will not be taking part in the elections. We have already had some compromise. There has been no constitutional change, even though it was called for, to allow everyone of Burmese descent, or who was born in Burma, to stand in the presidential elections.

On political prisoners, the United Nations says journalists are being jailed again. Amnesty International has put the number of political prisoners at 91, but says the figure could be higher. Burma Campaign UK, which has people on the ground, says the figure has risen to 157, with 1,500 activists and peaceful protesters awaiting trial, some on charges linked to previous protests—for example, detained student leader Phyo Phyo Aung and more than 100 other peaceful student protesters are facing charges. Naw Ohn Hla, a peaceful human rights protester, was charged, six years after supporting farmers and others in land disputes, with causing a religious disturbance for saying a prayer at the Shwedagon pagoda. Mr Speaker, you will remember we rang the bell of peace at that pagoda. All she did was say a prayer.

5 pm

Motion lapsed (Standing Order No. 9(3)).

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—(*Margot James.*)

Valerie Vaz: Naw Ohn Hla has been found guilty and is now in jail.

Mr David Burrowes (Enfield, Southgate) (Con): I congratulate the hon. Lady on securing this important debate. Is it not important that promises of releasing prisoners of conscience be kept and that committees such as the Burma prisoners of conscience affairs committee and the human rights commission involve more than just posturing? They need to be independent, have teeth and do the job of releasing prisoners of conscience and actively promoting human rights.

Valerie Vaz: The hon. Gentleman is a well-known activist lawyer, so he knows it is not sufficient just to have people there on a committee; they have to actually do something. It is simple. The Burmese have to hear these cases and let them out, but, as I have said, some people are being charged with things that happened some time go—six years, in some cases. Htin Lin Oo, a writer who criticised groups that used religion to stir up discrimination, is in jail. Trade unionists are in jail. People in Burma are saying that the authorities are targeting activists and journalists by taking them off the streets instead of allowing their voices to be heard and using them in election monitoring.

I wish to raise the case of Philip Blackwood, a constituent of my hon. Friend the Member for Middlesbrough (Andy McDonald) and now an Amnesty International prisoner of conscience, as well as that of his two Burmese colleagues, Tun Thurein and Htut Ko Ko Lwin, who were given two and a half years' hard labour in March 2015 for "insulting Buddhism". Have the Government asked for Philip Blackwood's release, or just raised the case with the Burmese Government? There is also the case of another British citizen, Niranjan Rasalingam. Will the Minister respond to that? Has he raised the issue of the release of all these political prisoners or prisoners of conscience?

On the Rohingya, the Minister, one of the first Ministers to visit the camp, will know that 140,000 Rohingya people have fled their homes, are living in temporary camps and have therefore been disfranchised. They were not counted in the recent controversial census, and they have had their white cards removed, meaning they cannot vote, even though some of them have lived in Rakhine state for more than a century. Out of 6,200 candidates, only 11 are Muslim.

Fiona Bruce (Congleton) (Con): I commend the hon. Lady for securing this debate and her tireless campaigning for the people of Burma. Does she share my concern that more than 10% of the Burmese people will not be able to vote in the election, not only because the Rohingya have had their temporary citizenship cards revoked, but because internally displaced people, migrant workers and refugees cannot vote either?

Valerie Vaz: I thank the hon. Lady for her question. She was part of Mr Speaker's delegation to Burma and saw for herself the difficulties there. It is a cause of serious concern that we do not have universal suffrage. There are cases of people not being given the vote.

Cardinal Charles Bo, on his way to Rome for the synod on the family, was asked not to use the term "Rohingya", but he did. Pope Francis is one of the few world leaders who has used it and that is how they define themselves.

There have already been complaints under election law. Thant Zin Tun, who is standing for the National League for Democracy, has made a complaint against his opponent, Zaw Weit, a central committee member of the Union Solidarity and Development party. The complaint alleges that Zaw Weit delivered defamatory pamphlets handed out at events hosted by a group called Ma Ba Tha, whose members have warned the electorate that a vote for the NLD would leave Buddhism vulnerable, pointing out that the NLD opposed a

[Valerie Vaz]

controversial set of laws promulgated by Ma Ba Tha on restricting interfaith marriage, birth rates, polygamy and religious conversion. In another pamphlet, it wrote:

“If you vote for the party based only on the fact that the leader is the daughter of General Aung San, the country, race and religion will be under unimaginable harm.”

None of these cases has been investigated. There are other similar cases, all reported to the electoral commission, but this state of affairs is not surprising because the chair of the electoral commission is a member of the USDP.

The Minister will know that there is support from the British Government for the Burmese army. He has acknowledged that in replying to a written or oral question, but can he look again at the Government policy of supporting the Burmese army, and ensure that this Government’s own preventing sexual violence initiative is fully implemented in Burma?

I want to raise the sad case of two teachers, which has apparently not had much publicity around the world. Two volunteer teachers—their names are Tangbau Hkawn Nan Tsin and Maran Lu Ra—were raped and murdered in Shan state in January this year. I say their names in this House in their memory, so that people in Burma will know that we will not forget them and that they are not forgotten by this Parliament. It is alleged that they were raped and murdered by the Burmese army. There has been no response from the Government; no one is taking responsibility for these murders. The Kachin Women’s Association in Thailand has worked with the Kachin Baptist Convention for which the two teachers worked, and after taking some advice, wrote to the President three times—but has not received a response. It suggested a 17-member truth-seeking committee with legal experts to carry out its own investigation, but it cannot get access to get witness statements or even look at documents. Does that not make a mockery of the Burmese Government’s signing last year of the declaration of their commitment to ending sexual violence in conflict?

The human rights record of Burma will be reviewed by United Nations member states at the 23rd working group session in Geneva on 6 November 2015—two days before the election. The Burmese Government, however, have failed to ratify core international human rights treaties—any of them—since 2011. The case of Khin Kyaw, who faces up to six months in prison and revocation of her legal licence, should be considered. She acted for 58 protesters, and she filed a motion to hold police officials responsible for a violent crackdown. The motion was dismissed, but in the interim, Khin Kyaw was charged with disrupting the court.

We were stunned to hear that the elections were almost postponed because of the floods; in fact, the waters were receding, and this was turned around some eight hours later. Another issue is the signing of the limited ceasefire agreement, the national ceasefire agreement. This is nothing new; the eight groups who had signed it had already been involved, and there are still seven others who have not signed it. Is the Minister aware of whether there are independent election observers, and could there be a role here for the elders—people such as Mary Robinson—who could visit Burma during the election?

Many independent organisations—Christian Solidarity Worldwide, Amnesty International, even the United Nations and Human Rights Watch—are involved in what goes on in Burma. I do not know whether you saw the sign outside yesterday, Mr Speaker, of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi’s words, saying “If you have liberty, then make sure that we have ours”. That is why we get involved in other countries in places such as Burma—to uphold human rights. The British people who want to help Burma are not spies.

You will remember, Mr Speaker, that we visited the legal rights clinic and the school when we saw those children. We were followed and photographed until you had to send them away. We are probably on a file somewhere in Burma! There has been a great support from this House through your offices, ensuring that expertise from this Parliament has gone across to support the Burmese Parliament. We have seconded staff—they put their lives on hold—helping to train staff with research and development, tabling questions and even setting up Select Committee hearings. All that is why we must be involved in what happens in free and fair elections in Burma.

Cardinal Charles Bo said that Burma is at the crossroads of hope and despair. We all want to see the Burmese people fulfil their potential and their destiny. We have seen how religion can be used to divide people, and this is far removed from the Buddhist ideals of “Karuna”, universal compassion, and “Metta” or mercy. At a meeting of the ambassador’s residence, we met the leaders of all the religions, and they were very keen to ensure that Burma and all her diversity—in religion and otherwise—moves forward. All those ideals are embodied in those religions.

Let me mention a few more issues that I hope the Minister will be able to help and influence. Will he ensure that the growing issue of child soldiers is raised with the Burmese Government? Does he know whether the United Nations office, which was agreed on quite a few years ago, has now been established? It would provide a useful monitoring presence, ensuring, for instance, that access to humanitarian aid reaches places such as Rakhine state. What immediate steps will he take if the army steps in, as it has done previously in order to overturn an election result that it has not liked?

Imran Hussain (Bradford East) (Lab): As always, my hon. Friend is making an eloquent and purposeful contribution to a very important debate. Under the current constitution, 25% of the seats in the Burmese Parliament automatically go to the army, and the army dictates the composition of key offices such as the Foreign Office and the Home Office. Does my hon. Friend believe that there is any possibility of a free and fair election without a fundamental change in the constitution?

Valerie Vaz: We must wait for the election result and its outcome before we can move to some sort of change in the constitution. As I said earlier, however, we stand ready here—in the British Parliament, and in Britain generally—to help the Burmese Government, and whatever new Government there may be after the election, to ensure that there is proper constitutional change, and that every Member of the Burmese Parliament stands for election.

We urge Burma to step out from behind the faded, divisive politics of the past. I know that the whole House wants to let the Burmese people know that we support them in their journey towards peace, justice and prosperity. I hope that they grasp this opportunity.

5.11 pm

Paul Scully (Sutton and Cheam) (Con): I congratulate the hon. Member for Walsall South (Valerie Vaz) on securing the debate, and on speaking so eloquently and passionately about the human rights situation in Burma. She made some fantastic points, and I offer my support in regard to, in particular, the cases that she raised.

I do not feel that, at this stage, I can add anything to what the hon. Lady said about human rights, but I want to make a couple of brief points about the election on 8 November. As many Members will know—because I have spoken about the issue a few times—I am, I believe, the first Member of the British Parliament to be of Burmese heritage. I am greatly looking forward to going to Burma early next year, and, although I may be too optimistic, I hope very much to be able to engage with a number of Burmese parliamentarians. It would be good to know that both a British parliamentarian and a Burmese parliamentarian had been elected in a free and fair manner.

Although we shall all take an earnest interest in what goes on during the Burmese election, it is obviously not for us to influence the will of the people, who will decide in their own way. However, it is important for the candidates who are going about their business, and the authorities of the day, to ensure not only that the election is as free and fair as possible, but that it is seen to be so. It is also important for the Burmese people themselves to take an interest. We heard from the hon. Lady about a number of barriers to some potential voters in Burma, one of which is the registration system. Because of the difficulty of registering an interest in voting, a number of people have still not done so. We do not want significant disfranchisement on the day itself.

I say to the people of Burma—should *Hansard* be read that far away—that the campaign that I have observed so far has been vibrant and interesting. Although some people in Burma may worry about the fact that the election may not be free and fair, it is important for them to become involved if they want their voice to be heard. They must register their vote, and they must vote for their favoured candidate. As we see in this House, we do not always agree and we do not always get the results we want, but it is only by people registering their vote and making it count that their voice will be heard. I greatly look forward to seeing what I find post-election next February when I visit.

5.15 pm

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr Hugo Swire): I congratulate the hon. Member for Walsall South (Valerie Vaz) on securing this debate and I thank the other Members for their contributions.

We believe 2015 could be the most significant year in Burma's modern history. The elections on 8 November are a litmus test for the reform process that started in 2011 and the most important democratic opportunity Burma has had in more than 50 years. Successful, credible elections would represent a huge step in

consolidating an historic transition from dictatorship. They would bring an enormous amount of good will from the international community, and would be a true legacy for all those whose efforts have taken the country this far.

That is not to say that we should make any presumptions about them. We do still have serious concerns. As the hon. Member for Bradford East (Imran Hussain) reminded us, the constitution guarantees the military 25% of seats in Parliament and bars Daw Aung San Suu Kyi from standing for the presidency. There is a rising trend of Buddhist nationalist rhetoric, which the hon. Member for Walsall South referred to and which has been used for party political purposes. There is the disqualification of parliamentary candidates from Burma's Muslim minority and the disenfranchisement of the Rohingya community, despite our strong protests. There are the arrests of activists and candidates for engaging in peaceful protests and social media posts, for example Patrick Kum Jaa Lee and Chaw Sandi Tun, which raise particular concerns about freedom of expression. There are also reports of inaccuracies and omissions in the voters list, as well as problems relating to advance voting.

The British Government have worked very hard to make the election process as robust as possible. We have funded the International Foundation for Electoral Systems' work with Burma's election commission, we are providing £1.5 million to train 5,000 national election observers, and we are contributing towards a substantial EU election observation mission. My hon. Friend the Member for Sutton and Cheam (Paul Scully) and the hon. Lady asked about independent observers and particularly the role of elders such as Mary Robinson. We are supporting the EU observation mission and there are already various other international observers either there or scheduled to be there, not least from the Carter centre, which I believe is involving Mary Robinson as part of its observation mission.

As I have repeatedly made clear to the House, the elections will not be straightforward, and the vote itself will not be "perfect". Ultimately, it is for the people of Burma, and their political representatives, to decide whether the elections are credible. We will look to them, as well as local and international observers, in assessing the credibility of the vote.

The world is rightly watching these elections intently, but I also personally remain extremely concerned, as do many Members on both sides of the House, by the appalling situation of the Rohingya. I was determined to return to Rakhine during my third visit to Burma in July. As the monsoon rains began to fall, I saw how desperate the situation remains for so many. Indeed, I was struck that for some of those housed in what were after all supposed to be temporary camps the situation has appreciably worsened since my last visit in 2012. I sensed some of the desperation which led increased numbers to attempt the extremely dangerous journey from the Bay of Bengal earlier this year, and I saw yesterday's tragic report by Amnesty, and no one could fail to have been moved by the harrowing images in today's *Times*, which are a reminder of the risks of this happening again. We have pressed the Burmese Government repeatedly on the question of the basic needs of the Rohingya: security, humanitarian access, freedom of movement and a pathway to citizenship. I set out our concerns again in September in New York with Foreign Minister Wunna Maung Lwin.

[Mr Hugo Swire]

The hon. Lady asked about the United Nations monitoring mission in Rakhine. There will be another UN resolution in New York this autumn, and we will again support a strong resolution to extend the mandate of the UN special rapporteur on human rights in Burma. I also attended the UN Secretary General's partnership group on Burma, which was once again chaired by Ban Ki-moon.

We must of course remain conscious that tackling Rakhine will be one of the biggest, most complex and sensitive challenges facing Burma's next Government. We already provide significant practical assistance to all people in Rakhine state, including more than £18 million of aid since the violence of 2012, and that will remain a priority for us. The Minister of State, Department for International Development, my right hon. Friend the Member for New Forest West (Mr Swayne) has been closely involved in that, and I am pleased to see him in the Chamber this evening.

On the issue of human rights, we are clear that many serious issues remain to be addressed and that, in some areas, the human rights environment has deteriorated over the past 12 months. We welcome the release of thousands of political prisoners under the current Government, but we remain concerned by the continued arrest, detention and sentencing of political activists. We are also concerned by the estimate of a minimum 180 people remaining behind bars at the end of August 2015, with 450 more being detained under repressive laws and awaiting trial following arrests throughout 2014 and early 2015. I raised these issues with the Minister for the President's Office, Aung Min, when I was in Burma in July.

The hon. Lady raised the issue of Phil Blackwood in the context of human rights. Mr Blackwood travelled to Burma on a New Zealand passport, so this is rightly a New Zealand lead, and it is they who are discussing case handling directly with him. However, I met Mr Blackwood's cousin on Monday, along with the hon. Member for Middlesbrough (Andy McDonald), who is in his place. Our ambassador has raised the case directly with the President's office and I have committed to doing so again at the appropriate moment. That would also provide me with an opportunity to raise the case of the other gentleman the hon. Lady mentioned, Mr Niranjan Rasalingam.

During my visit in July, and again in New York in September, I pressed the Burmese Government on a

number of human rights issues in addition to the elections and to Rakhine. On the issue of preventing sexual violence—the hon. Lady recounted some harrowing stories in that context—I was delighted to launch the international protocol on preventing sexual violence in conflict when I was last in Rangoon. I made it clear at that time that real progress was critical.

The hon. Lady raised again the issue of our engagement with the military, which has been raised in several debates in the past few months and years. Our focus is to encourage it to take its rightful place as a modern military in a democratic system. We are not providing any combat support or training. Yes, we use our engagement to raise our real concerns about issues such as sexual violence and child soldiers. I raised the issue of child soldiers with both the northern commander and the commander-in-chief. If we want the military to play its part in the reform process, it would be a mistake to think that we can achieve that simply by isolating and criticising it. Aung San Suu Kyi, who has visited some of the courses we have run, is of the same mind.

We welcome the signature last week of the nationwide ceasefire agreement by the Government and eight of the ethnic armed groups. A huge amount of effort and compromise from all sides has gone into that. Further work will be needed to ensure that the remaining groups sign up to the agreement and begin the comprehensive political process to turn it into a lasting settlement. We remain very supportive of this work. It will continue right through to the other side of the election, and it will confront whoever wins the election.

We must not forget that, despite such reverses and the continuing open sore of Rakhine, Burma is in a very different place from where it was at the start of the reform process in 2011. I firmly believe that engagement remains the best way to encourage the forces of moderation. Although the reforms are neither perfect nor complete, they have improved the lives of millions of ordinary Burmese. It is clear, with the forthcoming elections, that Burma is at a crossroads. This is the time for us to hold our nerve and to hope that, through the elections, Burma can set itself on a path to a better future. I thank the hon. Lady for the opportunity to set out the Government's view once again. Let us all hope that the events of the coming weeks work out in favour of the Burmese people.

Question put and agreed to.

5.26 pm

House adjourned.

Westminster Hall

Thursday 22 October 2015

[MR ANDREW TURNER *in the Chair*]

BACKBENCH BUSINESS

Yemen

1.30 pm

Keith Vaz (Leicester East) (Lab): I beg to move,

That this House has considered the conflict in Yemen.

I am grateful to the Backbench Business Committee for granting this debate and I am also very grateful to you, Mr Turner, for presiding over our proceedings today.

When I spoke last spoke on Yemen in Westminster Hall, in February, I said that I had never personally feared for Yemen's future as I did then. Unfortunately, the crisis in the country is now even worse than could have been imagined a few months ago. I know that Members here today share my concern for this beautiful country, which is one step away from famine and a humanitarian crisis on an unprecedented scale. Today, the all-party group on Yemen released its first ever report on the crisis, and I am extremely grateful to all those organisations that have been involved in preparing that report. I will lay out nine recommendations made in the report, which I believe are necessary and realistic measures that the UK Government can take in an effort to stop the crisis worsening. First, though, I will express what Yemen means to me.

I was born in Aden in Yemen, and left with my mother and sisters in 1965. I look back incredibly fondly on my time there. Yemen is an easy country to fall in love with—the people were so kind to my family when we lived there. I am not alone among MPs in having been born in Yemen. The hon. Member for Portsmouth South (Mrs Drummond) was also born in Aden, and I am very pleased to see her here today. As an officer of the all-party group, she takes a strong interest in the future of the country, as does my sister, the hon. Member for Walsall South (Valerie Vaz).

I have returned repeatedly to Yemen, including as chair of the all-party group. When I was last in the country, we were required to sleep under guard in a fortified pod in the embassy grounds; it was the first time that I have slept in the camp-bed of an ambassador. Of course, our embassy in Yemen is now closed and it does not look as though it will open again.

On 20 January this year, Houthi rebels abandoned an agreed political process. They launched an attack on Sana'a, stormed the presidential palace and forced out President Hadi. A coalition of Gulf states and other countries in the region, led by Saudi Arabia, responded to President Hadi's request for intervention. The coalition began a campaign of air strikes against the Houthi rebels, to

“restore stability to Yemen by crippling the Houthis”
and to facilitate

“returning President...Hadi...back to power”.

The United States, the Arab League, Turkey, Canada, France and the United Kingdom approved of the campaign, following the Houthi rebels' disregard for the legitimate political process. More than six months on, however, I believe that it is in the interests of all parties to agree to an immediate ceasefire and to end the bombing campaign.

Put simply, Yemen is now in ruins. The damage to the cities of Sana'a and Aden and to civilian infrastructure across Yemen is so significant that in August the head of the International Committee of the Red Cross, Peter Maurer, said that after five months of war in Yemen, the destruction appeared similar to that in Syria after five years of conflict.

The figures on the current crisis are shocking. Aid organisations believe that more than 21 million Yemenis—80% of the population—are in need of food, water and medical aid. That makes Yemen the largest humanitarian crisis in the entire world. The Danish Refugee Council estimates that, as a direct result of the fighting, more than 4,628 people have died and 28,598 people have been injured. Of those killed, 573 were children. On average, 210 people have been killed every week since the end of March. By the end of today, another 30 people will have died. In addition, more than 1.4 million people in Yemen have been internally displaced, raising the risk of a refugee crisis. Before the conflict, there were already more than 600,000 refugees in the country from neighbouring Somalia and Ethiopia. The damage to Yemen's already limited infrastructure makes aid delivery difficult, and it will make post-conflict reconstruction an unimaginable struggle. As a result of the damage, at least 160 healthcare facilities have been closed down across Yemen. A lack of fuel has restricted the use of water pumps, which has left nearly 13 million Yemenis—50% of the population—struggling to find enough clean water to drink or to grow crops.

Despite this situation, Yemen has not received the same level of international, media or public attention as Syria has. The UK Government should ensure that the Yemen crisis is given a higher priority on the global agenda for the provision of emergency aid and the Department for International Development should continue to lead global efforts to provide emergency assistance to the population.

A critical factor in the crisis is the de facto blockade on imports. Saudi and Egyptian forces established a blockade to enforce an arms embargo on the Houthi rebels, as set out in UN Security Council resolution 2216, but the blanket inspection of all ships has brought deliveries of aid and commercial shipping to a grinding halt. Yemen relies on imports for 70% of its fuel requirements, 90% of its food and 100% of its medicine. The UK is in a position to work with the coalition to streamline this process, using a more targeted approach to get shipping flowing much more quickly.

Bob Stewart (Beckenham) (Con): It is a pleasure to have you in the Chair today, Mr Turner. May I ask the right hon. Gentleman a question? If aid reaches somewhere such as Aden, are there not distribution streams to get that aid to where it is required outside the city—up-country, as it used to be called?

Keith Vaz: The hon. Gentleman is absolutely right. It is not just about getting aid in, but making sure it gets to the people who need it, and we should work to ensure

[Keith Vaz]

that the distribution network is effective. There is a number of aid organisations already in Yemen, and we should take their advice on how that should be done. Facilitating the flow of emergency aid would be in the interests of the coalition, because it would help to avoid a famine and economic disaster that the states neighbouring Yemen do not want on their doorstep. The United Kingdom should support the newly announced United Nations verification and identification mission established to ensure that deliveries by sea do not include shipments of arms, but which also speeds up the inspection process. That and a move to targeted inspections would allow vital relief to reach Yemen's population.

As the hon. Member for Beckenham (Bob Stewart) suggested, the delivery of aid within Yemen has also been plagued with problems, as aid workers have faced incredible danger. Since the crisis began, six Yemeni Red Crescent volunteers have been killed while carrying out humanitarian work. Aid offices have been looted and attacked, due to the absence of the rule of law. Organisations such as Médecins Sans Frontières struggle to deliver aid across front lines, requiring consent from multiple groups on the ground to do so and facing significant delays and administrative burdens. The United Kingdom should work with both parties to ensure that processes are put into practice that will allow aid to be safely given to those who need it, and so that the distribution of aid throughout Yemen is predictable and unimpeded.

Emergency aid and a better flow of imports will be vital in the short term, but bringing both parties to the negotiating table should be the No. 1 priority of the international community. The UN's special envoy, Ismail Ahmed, has previously brought the two sides together to agree on temporary ceasefires, but those have been short-lived. Two such ceasefires agreed between 12 and 17 March and 10 and 17 July were broken within hours, with each side blaming the other.

Four factors are blocking a political solution. Neither side has achieved a decisive military victory. There is only limited international pressure on the parties to resolve the conflict. There is a lack of trust between the parties. UN Security Council resolution 2216 has been a stumbling block to negotiations, as it is used by both parties to justify non-participation in peace talks. If resolution 2216 continues to be an impediment to a diplomatic solution, the Security Council should consider a new resolution demanding an immediate ceasefire and the free flow of humanitarian supplies into and within Yemen.

We should not forget that in 2011 the then Foreign Secretary, William Hague, now Lord Hague, and Minister of State for International Development, the right hon. Member for Rutland and Melton (Sir Alan Duncan), led the international community in resolving Yemen's last political crisis. The former ambassador of Yemen, Abdullah al-Radhi, and the current ambassador, Dr Yassin Saeed Noman Ahmed, feel a strong bond with the UK, and the Yemeni Government value our friendship greatly. I agree with the vice chair of the all-party group, the hon. Member for Charnwood (Edward Argar), who unfortunately could not join us today, about the long-term settlement needing to be agreed by the Yemenis themselves.

We can bring them to the negotiating table, but both sides need to agree to long-term dialogue and restore the terms agreed in the national dialogue conference in January 2014 and the peace and national partnership agreement signed in September 2014.

Graham Stringer (Blackley and Broughton) (Lab): My right hon. Friend is painting a bleak and depressing picture about Yemen and proposing some measures that he believes may lead to a better situation. Does he share the view of many commentators that this is in fact a proxy war between Saudi Arabia and Iran and that the solution lies with talking to those two countries as much as to the warring factions in Yemen?

Keith Vaz: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. The regional problems are playing out in Yemen. There is a view that it is a proxy war and that the only way to deal with the situation is to get people to the negotiating table. That is particularly important as we have started a new relationship with Iran. The Iranians should come to the table and help us, if they can.

More than six months into the coalition's intervention, the conflict is at a critical moment. The Yemeni Foreign Minister, Riad Yassin, who earlier this year met the all-party group and the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, the hon. Member for Bournemouth East (Mr Ellwood), who I see in his place, initially described the intervention as a "short, sharp campaign". However, the aerial campaign has been unable to remove the Houthis and the coalition has now escalated its efforts to a ground offensive. The diplomatic and military capital required to continue the conflict has likely gone far beyond what either the Houthis or the coalition would have deemed acceptable when the civil war began. We now stand on the precipice of a dramatic escalation to a messy ground war, which will cause even more harm to the population. The international community therefore has a small window to show that a diplomatic solution would be preferable for all parties. If the conflict is allowed to escalate, there will not be a country left to save.

We are nearing the end. As an arms supplier to Saudi Arabia, the United Kingdom has a particular responsibility to take a visible role in bringing hostilities to an end. We need to act now. The UK has an opportunity to be an honest broker and to propose a scaling down of the conflict for humanitarian reasons, offering the coalition and Houthis a way out of further escalation and bloodshed. Amid the current fighting, 30 British citizens and 300 dependents of British citizens are still stranded in the country. The Yemeni diaspora, who are watching this debate and developments, will want to see that we are doing our best. I know that my hon. Friends the Members for Sheffield, Brightside and Hillsborough (Harry Harpham), for Liverpool, Wavertree (Luciana Berger) and for Liverpool, Riverside (Mrs Ellman) have also raised the matter.

There is also the issue of the escalation of Daesh. As it sees the conflict continue, Daesh will try its best to try to get into Yemen and destabilise it further. There is ample evidence that it is already involved there.

Yemen has faced challenges before, but this crisis is the worst in living memory. We often talk of pulling Yemen back from the brink, but I fear the country is far past that stage now. We need a ceasefire now. This is

not something we could do, but something we must do. Six months ago, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon stated:

“Yemen is collapsing before our eyes. We can’t stand by and watch.”

I fear that that is what we have done.

Here are my final questions to the Minister. Are we prepared to push all parties to the negotiating table and elevate the situation in Yemen to the highest diplomatic level? Are we prepared to put pressure on all parties to agree and commit to an immediate ceasefire? Are we prepared to work with international partners to go further in addressing the catastrophic humanitarian crisis and ensure millions of lives are not lost? Without a peaceful solution, and fast, the only future Yemen faces is economic collapse, anarchy, famine and mass refugee flows. We acted decisively before to save Yemen. Today I beg the House that we should do so once again.

1.46 pm

Fiona Bruce (Congleton) (Con): I congratulate the right hon. Member for Leicester East (Keith Vaz) on securing this debate. I am speaking as a member not of the all-party group on Yemen but of the International Development Committee, which in the next few weeks will commence an inquiry into concerns relating to the people of Yemen. I am delighted that this debate has been brought forward before we commence that inquiry. Indeed, we will no doubt want to look carefully at the all-party group’s report, which is being published today.

It is well said that when sorrows come, they come not singly but in battalions; in the case of the Yemeni civilians, that takes on too literal a meaning. This debate is crucial in highlighting the concerns that many in this House and more widely in this country have about the suffering of the people of Yemen and the dire plight of millions there.

As we have rightly raised awareness of the damage caused by the civil war in Syria, so it is equally important to do so in regard to the suffering of tens of millions of Yemenis who are seeing their country so sadly and swiftly destroyed, bit by bit. Four thousand civilians are dead, 1.4 million people are displaced and 1.8 million children are at risk of malnutrition. A staggering 84% of Yemen’s population is in need of humanitarian aid. Bombing and artillery have further damaged infrastructure, including electricity and water supplies, leaving 20.9 million people in need of water, sanitation and hygiene support.

On food, 6.8 million people are facing a food security crisis, with a further 6 million facing a food security emergency. There has been a 150% increase in hospital admissions for malnutrition, and as many as 1.6 million children under the age of five could be suffering from acute malnutrition. On health, half of the country’s governorates are unable to provide out-patient healthcare due to shortages of medical supplies, medical staff and fuel to run generators. That has coincided with a substantial increase in the number of patients suffering from critical injuries and illnesses. Some 15 million people—more than 60% of the population—are in need of basic healthcare assistance. On education, 3,500 schools have closed due to insecurity. The list goes on.

I pay tribute to the humanitarian workers. The right hon. Member for Leicester East mentioned some, and I add to them those from Save the Children, who continue to serve in dangerous conditions.

I hope the Minister will agree that we need to look at doing more on aid for the people of Yemen. Currently, as I understand it, some £72 million has been deployed by DFID in Yemen. That is a substantial sum and we can rightly be proud of all the UK aid provided across the world. When the International Development Committee travels to different countries, it is always stated that the intelligent and effective way in which UK aid is used is second to none. However, when we compare the £1.1 billion that the Government are now spending in various ways to help refugees from Syria and the surrounding areas, we see that the £72 million being provided for the people of Yemen needs to be reviewed.

Does the Foreign Office Minister agree? I understand he is not a Minister at the Department for International Development and may therefore need to take these questions back, but does he agree that, in the light of the dire plight and suffering of Yemen’s people, there is great merit to more being expended through DFID to help relieve the suffering of these poor people of whom we in this House are now aware? We cannot say we do not know of their suffering.

Mr Andrew Turner (in the Chair): May I clarify something to those who wish to speak? You need to stand when you wish to be chosen; I cannot guess who wants to speak.

1.51 pm

Kate Osamor (Edmonton) (Lab/Co-op): I apologise, Mr Turner. I am new to the House.

I first want to thank my right hon. Friend the Member for Leicester East (Keith Vaz) for securing this debate. The situation in Yemen is a tragedy that must be addressed by the international community and, more importantly, by the British Government. There is an urgent need to review the alleged war crimes, to seek accountability and to alleviate the desperate humanitarian situation. More than 21 million people, including 9.9 million children, are in humanitarian need, making Yemen the country with the greatest number of people in humanitarian need in the world. As was recently stated by the International Red Cross,

“Yemen after five months looks like Syria after five years.”

The atrocities in Yemen are the result of a complex civil war that has also turned into a battleground for the regional superpowers, Saudi Arabia and Iran. Evidence uncovered by Amnesty International suggests that both sides could be guilty of committing war crimes. Investigations into 21 airstrikes in Sa’da in the north of Yemen uncovered that some of these strikes appeared to be directly targeted at civilians. The strikes killed 241 civilians and injured more than 157. The number of known civilian casualties since the conflict escalated in March has risen to more than 8,000 people, including more than 2,000 people killed.

I want to use my speech to address the British Government’s role in this conflict. Britain has given tens of millions of pounds in aid this year to help alleviate the crisis, and yet, because of the British arms

[Kate Osamor]

trade with Saudi Arabia, the Government are complicit in these killings. That fact will remain until they change their stance on the arms trade.

In 2014, £83 million worth of arms were authorised for export to Saudi Arabia. The Government are providing weapons to a country that indiscriminately targets civilians and are supporting a regime that uses its membership of the UN Human Rights Council to block an independent inquiry into its conduct in Yemen. Instead, the council adopted a resolution tabled by Saudi Arabia on behalf of the Arab states involved in the conflict. It is in part thanks to our own nomination that Saudi Arabia is on the council. It is time to stop propping up a regime that abuses human rights inside and outside its borders. There is an urgent need for accountability.

I call on the Government to address their obligations as set out in the national arms export licensing criteria and articles 6 and 7 of the arms trade treaty and to send a clear and open message to Saudi Arabia that we do not condone its violence. The Government must condemn the violence and press for an independent inquiry into violations of humanitarian and human rights law by parties involved in the conflict.

Bob Stewart: I thank the hon. Lady for allowing me to intervene. Saudi Arabia is supporting the legitimate Government of President Hadi, who is trying to restore order in the country. That legitimate Government are supported by the UN Security Council; it is a little worrying if the hon. Lady is suggesting that we should stop Saudi Arabia from supporting a legitimate Government, giving the Houthis free rein.

Kate Osamor: I am not saying we should stop such support. I am saying we need to look at what has happened thus far and have an independent inquiry.

Lastly, the paradox of aid and arms that is central to British involvement in Yemen cannot be ignored and the Government must act to change this.

1.56 pm

Mrs Flick Drummond (Portsmouth South) (Con): May I say what a pleasure it is to serve under your chairmanship today, Mr Turner, and to have sat next to you yesterday in another debate in this very place? I thank the right hon. Member for Leicester East (Keith Vaz) for bringing this important debate to Westminster Hall today. Like him and his sister, the hon. Member for Walsall South (Valerie Vaz), I was born in Aden, so the cause is close to our hearts. I also thank the members of the charities that work tirelessly both here and in Yemen to raise awareness of this catastrophe. Without their persistence I do not think we would be holding this debate today. They work in great danger, and I am sure the whole House would recognise their invaluable contribution and mourn the humanitarian workers who have lost their lives recently.

The International Red Cross has stated:

“The humanitarian toll is devastating. All aspects of life in the country have been affected and no family has remained untouched. The situation is critical.”

Save the Children has said:

“A staggering 21.1 million people are now in need of humanitarian assistance, including 9.9 million children. The World Food Programme estimates that over half a million children are severely malnourished—one step away from famine.”

The long-term effects on children are going to be seen for generations.

The situation is becoming critical as the infrastructure is extensively damaged; my hon. Friend the Member for Congleton (Fiona Bruce) has mentioned this already. Vital infrastructure, critical for aid delivery and post-war reconstruction, has been severely damaged, including ports, airports, bridges and roads. With no ceasefire, the crisis seems to deepen: 23% of health facilities have been damaged and 160 healthcare facilities closed down. Médecins sans Frontières has said that in the past five months it has had more surgical interventions than in any other country where it works. Poverty before the conflict was at 50%; it is now at 80% and urgent humanitarian assistance is needed. There are limited water resources and a lack of fuel. Some 1.8 million children are out of school and many schools have been damaged.

The Yemen crisis should be given a higher priority on the global agenda and made a priority in the provision of emergency aid. Unfortunately, aid ships are finding it difficult to unload or they have been turned away or blocked completely. The blockade is one of the biggest issues. It is devastating, as Yemen relies on imports. Before the crisis, it relied on imports for 70% of fuel requirements, 90% of food supplies and 100% of medical supplies. In total, 90% of its goods were imported; only 15% of goods are now entering.

None of the aid agencies is able to operate effectively without the blockade being lifted. We understand that that would be difficult because of the worry of arms being smuggled in, but there must be more focused and targeted methods of checking ships. The UK and international partners must continue to ask Saudi Arabia and the coalition to end the blockade and ensure that there is no further delay in the UN verification and inspection mechanism. Saudi Arabia must allow ships, including its own, to dock and provide much-needed food and goods.

It is absolutely right that Saudi Arabia is backing President Hadi, the head of the legitimate Government, against the Houthis, but negotiations are not currently going anywhere. Without a political solution there can be no end to the humanitarian catastrophe. The fighting has not been decisive, so neither side will give significant concessions. Unlike the situation in Syria, Yemen has not been the subject of major public attention and large amounts of aid have not been donated. The international community—including Britain, with our close relationship with Saudi Arabia—needs to put more pressure on both sides to sustain a ceasefire.

UN Security Council resolution 2216, passed in April, is a stumbling block to a peaceful resolution, as it sets out conditions for the Houthis alone. There should be a new resolution that demands an immediate ceasefire, an end to the conflict, and an end to the prevention of the bringing in and distribution of humanitarian supplies. The UN special envoy has been working on a solution and the Houthis have indicated that they are willing to agree to a ceasefire. We now need to put pressure on the Saudi Government to come

forward with meaningful negotiations and work with the UN special envoy so that we can protect the country from further catastrophe.

We heard today from a Minister from Yemen. His words about the next generation were very apt. When he talked to them recently, they said: “What future? There is no hope.” Do they wait in their homes for death through indiscriminate bombing, or do they go out and fight? Who do they fight for? Yemen is a failing state, attracting not only al-Qaeda but now Daesh. The seeds of sectarianism are spreading. People are no longer sharing mosques, preferring to pray outside instead. The community used to be integrated, but now it is split.

In October, the Minister acknowledged:

“Yemen is at risk of suffering a prolonged conflict and descending into famine.”

As I said, it has already descended into famine. We must put pressure on all parties, particularly our friends in Saudi Arabia, to come to the table immediately, hold a ceasefire and come to an understanding so that aid agencies can get into Yemen and start to save lives immediately.

2.2 pm

Stephen Gethins (North East Fife) (SNP): It is a pleasure to speak under your chairmanship for the first time, Mr Turner.

I congratulate the right hon. Member for Leicester East (Keith Vaz) on securing this debate on such a crucial issue. As he said, and as other Members have pointed out, the situation in Yemen is currently the worst it has been in living memory, with 80% of Yemenis needing humanitarian assistance and one in eight children under five at risk of malnutrition. As we have seen around the House today, there are historical links between the United Kingdom and Yemen, which are reflected among Members and historically by people such as Sir William Luce. Among a large number of charities working in Yemen in the most extraordinarily difficult circumstances are UNICEF, Saferworld, Save the Children and Beyond Borders Scotland.

Many of the issues I was going to touch on have been discussed, so I would like instead to raise three issues that the Minister might want to address in his response or subsequently. First, the Omanis have not joined the coalition, so have been able to help diplomatic efforts to find a solution to the conflict. Perhaps there is a lesson there for other conflicts. What are the UK Government doing to help the Omani Government in their efforts, and more generally to try to find a diplomatic solution?

Secondly, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees has called for an independent and impartial mechanism to investigate any human rights violations that may have taken place. Does the Minister support that? What measures will the United Kingdom take to back that call?

Finally, the hon. Member for Edmonton (Kate Osamor) mentioned arms sales. The UK is obliged, under its own laws, the EU common position on arms exports and the UN arms trade treaty, to ensure that arms sales will not violate international humanitarian law. Organisations such as Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International

and Oxfam are concerned that weapons are being used in such violation. Will the Minister comment on those allegations?

2.5 pm

Bob Stewart (Beckenham) (Con): I congratulate my friend, the right hon. Member for Leicester East (Keith Vaz), on securing this debate, and on his chairmanship of the all-party group on Yemen, which has produced an outstanding report, although I have not had the chance to read it properly as I have only just received a copy.

I hope Members do not mind, but, since I am, I think, the oldest Member present—looking around, I can see I am probably the oldest person in the room—I would like to give the historical perspective on Aden, because it is very important to British people. The south-eastern end of the Arabian peninsula was once crucial to the functioning of the British empire. A small settlement at Aden was occupied by Royal Marines in 1839 and became a bunkering port for passing ships. After the opening of the Suez canal in 1869, it became a vital staging post for ships going to and from India and the far east. When coal turned to oil as the main fuel for ships, the importance of Aden was reinforced, particularly as it was so close to the middle eastern oilfields. Unsurprisingly, BP built a large facility there.

As time passed, Aden and its hinterland became a formal part of the empire called the Aden Protectorate, but government of the interior in particular needed the consent and involvement of local tribes, which was no easy matter. By the 1950s, some tribes were in open rebellion against British authority, which led to a protracted insurrection. By 1967, the United Kingdom had had enough: Aden was given independence and our armed forces withdrew. It was renamed the People’s Republic of South Yemen—I am looking to the right hon. Member for Leicester East to confirm that that is correct.

Keith Vaz *indicated assent.*

Bob Stewart: The Yemen Arab Republic was to its north. In 1990, north and south joined to become Yemen.

My interest in Yemen comes from the fact that as a child I lived in Aden between 1954 and 1957. My father was a company commander with the 1st battalion the Aden Protectorate Levies, a branch of the RAF Regiment—I am wearing the RAF Regiment tie today as I am a member of the RAF Regiment officers’ dinner club. I am not the only Member who has close ties to Aden. The right hon. Member for Leicester East and his sister, the hon. Member for Walsall South (Valerie Vaz), and, of course, my hon. Friend the Member for Portsmouth South (Mrs Drummond) were all born there. But I am too old to have been born in Aden; I was born in 1949, before we went there.

We would all like to revisit the place of our childhood, but that currently seems impossible. Since 1990, Yemen has gone from bad to worse. It is now such a dangerous place that it would be utterly foolhardy for British subjects to go there without protection. The situation is so bad that Sana’a, Yemen’s inland capital, has had to be abandoned and the country’s Administration, such

[Bob Stewart]

as it is, must take place, when it can, from Aden. Yemen is now the poorest country in the middle east and an incredibly fragile state.

I do not propose to dwell long over Yemen's recent history before 2011, because it is incredibly complicated, difficult and perhaps less prescient than what has happened since. Suffice it to say that in November 2011, after some 30 years in charge of what was essentially a military republic, President Ali Abdullah Saleh was forced to hand over to his deputy, Vice President Mansur Hadi, which was apparently meant to avert immediate civil war. There was some international hope that Yemen might be on the road to some form of recovery, but that hope has come to nought. Too many of those with power in Yemen are plundering what oil revenues it has left, sending untaxed income abroad and deliberately resisting reforms that might restrict their ability to loot their country. We will argue about this, but the World Food Programme estimates that some 46% of the 10 million people living in Yemen do not have enough to eat. You don't see fat people like me in Aden.

It is difficult to simplify what has become a truly impossible situation, but Yemen has essentially become a cockpit in which the branches of Islam are fighting tooth and nail. The Government of Yemen, under Sunni President Hadi, is now backed by Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Egypt, Morocco, Sudan and the Gulf states, which are all quite strong allies of both the United States and the United Kingdom. The rebels, mainly from the northern Shi'a Houthi grouping and ex-Premier Ali Abdullah Saleh loyalists, are backed by Iran. It was the rebel Houthi group that forced the Government to flee from Sana'a to Aden in February. Yemen's security forces have split loyalties, with some units backing President Hadi and others backing the Houthis and President Hadi's predecessor Ali Abdullah Saleh, who has remained politically influential. President Hadi, who, as we discussed in a pre-meeting is actually living in Saudi Arabia, is also supported in the predominantly Sunni south of the country by militia known as Popular Resistance Committees and local tribesmen.

To complicate the situation further, so-called al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula or AQAP, perhaps the most dangerous of all al-Qaeda factions, now has a firm foothold in Yemen. As a result, the United States has carried out several drone assaults against it. Both the Yemeni Government and the rebels are equally opposed by al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula. AQAP has been pretty active, carrying out a series of indiscriminate attacks against both the Government and the Houthis—goodness me, what a situation. It is Kafkaesque in scale.

Just to make the situation even more enigmatic, the so-called Islamic State, which the right hon. Member for Leicester East, myself and others prefer to call Daesh because it is such a rude word in Arabic, has appeared on the scene, jostling to be more influential in the country. Daesh claims to have carried out a number of suicide attacks in Sana'a this year. After Houthi rebel forces attacked the Government's southern de facto capital Aden in late March, a coalition led by Saudi Arabia responded to a request by President Hadi to intervene and launched air strikes on Houthi targets. As I mentioned, Saudi Arabia is collaborating with the five Gulf Arab states, Jordan, Egypt, Morocco and

Sudan, with Somalia providing airspace. Some of these air strikes have clearly gone badly wrong and have killed innocent people, which is utterly tragic.

The world's foremost international authority, the United Nations, is the obvious catalyst for action. In April 2015, the Security Council passed resolution 2216, as mentioned by the right hon. Gentleman, calling for an immediate stoppage of fighting and for the Houthi rebels to withdraw from territory that they had taken. The resolution was passed unanimously. Four permanent members of the Security Council sanctioned it. Russia did not, abstaining and allowing it to go through. But what has actually happened since that decision by the world forum where everyone is supposed to go for top authority? Damn all. There has been no effect whatsoever on what is happening on the ground. Other agencies of the United Nations have tried to send experts into Yemen to report on human rights violations, but a draft Dutch resolution supporting just that has recently been withdrawn as it would have failed, and, astonishingly, Saudi Arabia, has been elected as the chair of the United Nations Human Rights Council.

It would be marvellous if our debate could result in agreement on a way to gain some form of peace and security for the poor, wretched people of Yemen. However, the United Nations has been effectively ignored, the great powers do not want to get involved and the situation on the ground is getting increasingly complex and worse. Innocents are dying all the time. As matters stand in Yemen, I cannot think of an effective and decent way ahead with any chance of success. I hate the idea that we are impotent and apparently unable to do anything with all our power. In the end, I suppose that history will have to take care of it. One way or other, one of the factions will prevail, but who knows who that will be at the moment?

To date, Yemen has been an utter failure of international politics. We should do all that we can to try to correct that. In that respect, I am delighted that the all-party parliamentary group on Yemen has produced a report highlighting the crisis. If nothing else, this debate highlights the fact that Yemen is still a matter of real concern. We must not forget that.

Mr Andrew Turner (in the Chair): Order. We have 40 minutes left. I call Ms Tasmina Ahmed-Sheikh.

2.19 pm

Ms Tasmina Ahmed-Sheikh (Ochil and South Perthshire) (SNP): I am pleased to be speaking in this debate under your chairmanship, Mr Turner. It is the first time I have had the opportunity to appear before you. The privilege is indeed mine.

I pay tribute to the right hon. Member for Leicester East (Keith Vaz) for raising the very important topic of what is happening in Yemen, and for making us aware of his strong family connections there, which were demonstrated by the passion with which he delivered his argument. His speech was engaging, informative and very instructive. Before summarising some of the points made in the speeches we have heard this afternoon, I should mention the interventions made by the hon. Member for Beckenham (Bob Stewart), who also gave a speech, and the hon. Member for Blackley and Broughton (Graham Stringer).

The right hon. Member for Leicester East spoke of the need for an immediate ceasefire, describing the situation in Yemen as the largest humanitarian crisis in the world. He said that it must be given a higher priority and that we should be putting a process in place to ensure that aid, including emergency aid, is swiftly given, and that there is a better flow of imports, including some of the aid items that are required. He spoke of the importance of bringing the parties to the table again, given the dramatic escalation, and of the international community having a very small window to show what they can do. He also mentioned the escalation in the conflict now due to the involvement of Daesh—I am grateful to him for referring to them as that, which is exactly what they are.

We then heard from the hon. Member for Congleton (Fiona Bruce), who is a member of the International Development Committee. She spoke about the children, and it brings things home to think about the 1.8 million children who are at risk of malnutrition and the 20.9 million people who are in need of fresh water, sanitation and hygiene support. She spoke of the shortage of fuel and medical supplies and the medical staff needed to deliver the aid, and she said that 60% of the population need very basic healthcare. She also paid tribute to the humanitarian workers who continue to serve in the most difficult circumstances, and asked the Minister to address the fact that more needs to be done and whether he agreed that more should be expended through DFID to help these people.

We were then privileged to hear from the hon. Member for Edmonton (Kate Osamor), who, like me, is a new Member. She spoke passionately about the need to review the war crimes that have allegedly taken place and about the 21 million people in humanitarian need—in fact, Yemen is the country with the greatest number of people in humanitarian need in the whole world. She used her speech to raise many issues that are clearly close to her heart, such as whether the UK Government are complicit in killings due to the part they play in the arms trade. She mentioned that it was perhaps time to stop propping up the regime, asked that the Government condemn all violence, and finally spoke of the paradox of aid and arms that cannot be ignored.

We then heard from the hon. Member for Portsmouth South (Mrs Drummond), who was also born in Yemen—

Bob Stewart: It produces very beautiful women.

Ms Ahmed-Sheikh: I choose to ignore that remark. She spoke of the long-term effect on children that would be seen for generations, which should be of tremendous concern to all of us. She said that poverty was at 50% before the conflict and it is now at 80%, and that the crisis in Yemen must be given a higher priority. She said that 90% of its goods were being imported previously and now only 15% are, which again demonstrates the difficulties that aid agencies are encountering. She expressed concern that negotiations are not going anywhere and about the lack of a political solution. She spoke of the Minister from Yemen who, I think, said, “What future? There is no hope.” She said that it was a failing state, attracting first al-Qaeda and now Daesh.

Alison Thewliss (Glasgow Central) (SNP): Given the situation that has been outlined by many speakers this afternoon and the great difficulty of aid arriving in

Yemen, does my hon. Friend share my concern that the Home Office in this country wants to send one of my constituents back to that situation?

Ms Ahmed-Sheikh: That should be a matter of grave concern, not least after hearing much of the evidence we have heard today from people with real experience. Those who were born in Yemen are well aware of what is happening in the conflict. The very last thing we should be doing is sending people back when we know the situation in the destination country and what they will face when they get there. I hope that the Minister has listened to my hon. Friend and may address, hopefully in his closing remarks, the concerns of her constituent.

We then heard from my hon. Friend the Member for North East Fife (Stephen Gethins), who reflected on the historical links the UK has with Yemen and also, rightly, paid tribute to the charities working there in extraordinarily difficult circumstances. They include Unicef, Saferworld, Save the Children and Beyond Borders Scotland. Summing up, he succinctly posed three sharp questions, given the points that had already been made. He asked what the UK Government are going to do to help the Yemeni Government. He then asked whether the Minister supports the UN High Commissioner’s call for an investigation into any human rights violations. Finally, he said that arms deals should not violate international law and mentioned allegations made in that respect, before asking whether the Minister was able to offer any comment.

We heard last from the hon. Member for Beckenham (Bob Stewart), who gave us a historical tour, speaking about the opening of the Suez canal and the Aden protectorate and its eventual independence. That subject is very close to my heart, and I am grateful to him for bringing that up—the topic of independence is always key to what we talk about. He spoke of Sana’a and how the situation was so bad that it had to be abandoned by the Government in Yemen, which is now the poorest country in the middle east. He talked us through the presidencies to date and detailed all those involved in the conflict. Finally, he spoke in very strong terms about so-called Islamic State, which he referred to as Daesh, as did the right hon. Member for Leicester East. We have been campaigning very strongly for that, and I hope that he will continue joining me and my colleagues in the SNP, and indeed many across the House, in asking the Government to please refer to Daesh as that in the House.

This has been an interesting and impassioned debate that brings home the urgent need to be doing much more in Yemen. All the speakers said that time seems to be running out fast, so we should not waste time in trying to come to solution on how to move forward. My view is that we need an urgent round table meeting, led by the United Nations, to deal with the civilian casualties and the humanitarian situation and to consider how the international community can more fully uphold its absolute responsibility to address the war’s toll on civilians in Yemen. Finally, on a more long-term basis, all efforts must be made at the forthcoming talks in Geneva at the end of this month under the sponsorship of the United Nations, urging the parties to try to make the peace negotiations a success. There is clearly no time left, and the children and those involved need our help as soon as we can offer it.

2.27 pm

Catherine West (Hornsey and Wood Green) (Lab): May I say what a pleasure it is to be here for my first debate with you in the Chair, Mr Turner? I thank my right hon. Friend the Member for Leicester East (Keith Vaz) for securing the debate and bringing the situation in Yemen to our attention. Many of us across the House have spoken on this issue in the past, including the hon. Member for Portsmouth South (Mrs Drummond) and my hon. Friends the Members for Walsall South (Valerie Vaz) and for Liverpool, Wavertree (Luciana Berger). It is an important issue.

My own research has brought to light what Mr Adam Baron of the European Council on Foreign Relations said—that in the end, all Yemenis will be the victims of such a protracted war and

“The truth...is that no one is winning this war. And while all parties involved in Yemen seem far from reaching their goals, there is one clear loser: the Yemeni people.”

That sentiment has been strongly reflected in our debate this afternoon, focusing on the humanitarian aspects of the situation and joining with the UN special envoy to Yemen, Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed, who said in March this year that Yemen was being brought to the edge of civil war. I believe that even since March, the situation has deteriorated.

We know from various groups that are active in Yemen—where they can get into Yemen, if the ports are not blocked—that there are big problems of food poverty and a real risk of massive malnutrition. There are problems with access to clean water and the availability of crucial medicines, but that is not all; we are also aware of the lack of the rule of law, which of course leads to risks in particular of violence against women, as well as of other crimes going undetected. I wish to mention in particular the assault on Taiz, where the number of people in critical need of safe drinking water surpassed 3.3 million in September to October, according to World Health Organisation reports. UNICEF has said:

“If there isn’t the humanitarian support to the country, in six months or a year’s time, you will get a major humanitarian crisis”.

That point has been covered very well during the debate, so I will now press the Minister for his response on some important matters.

First, will the Minister comment on the point raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Edmonton (Kate Osamor) about the need for an independent assessment of the situation, in particular in relation to the coalition and the bombing campaign? Will he assure hon. Members that we are doing everything possible both to call for a ceasefire and to support everyone involved to get round the table and seek that ceasefire? Secondly—I know this is a concern for all citizens—will he give an assurance that armaments produced in the UK are not being used in the conflict to bring harm to civilians, women and children in Yemen?

Through treaties, UN declarations and work across the globe, we have come miles in the past 20 years on the issue of child soldiers. We know that once children are involved in conflict, it leads to conflict for generations. Will the Minister give us an assurance that he and his Department are doing all they can, with others, to stop the use of child soldiers in Yemen?

Will the Minister update us on other conversations that may be happening and that he is able to make public today? What pressure is he bringing to bear on the various parties involved in the conflict? We know that, because of our history with regard to Yemen—that has been eloquently described in today’s debate—Britain has a lot of influence. How is that influence being used for a positive solution, which many people are pushing us for? The Prime Minister said that he lent his “firm political support” to airstrikes earlier this year. Does that remain the case? Do the Government feel that this action is still effective or that it is worsening the situation? There are no real winners in this situation, so will he tell us what support we are providing, as a nation, in relation to this conflict?

Keith Vaz: I congratulate my hon. Friend on making her maiden Front-Bench speech. It would be good to have her support on British citizens who are still in Yemen and cannot come out, for whatever reason. Other Governments—the Indian Government, for example—have sent in aircraft to take their citizens out, but at the moment British citizens have to go to Somalia and on occasion through Djibouti to get back to the UK. Does she agree that if British citizens want to return, it is important that they are helped to do so as quickly as possible?

Catherine West: I do indeed. I also support the point made by other Members about resolving asylum cases in the UK; it seems perverse that we could be returning people to the Yemen in the current climate. Will the Minister cover those issues in his remarks?

To sum up, we are asking that the Government work much more energetically towards immediate negotiations without preconditions, following our support on paper for UN Security Council resolution 2216. Secondly, we ask for clarification on how much support the Government are able to give the UN special envoy—their support seems a little cool at the moment. Thirdly, will the Minister give us evidence of his activity and achievements, as well as those of his Department, in behind-the-scenes discussions? We need much more of a push on that. There needs to be an end to the recruitment and fielding of child soldiers, given the long-term implications of using children as soldiers in conflicts. I conclude by reminding Members that at this point we must not think too much about our strategic situation—although that does sometimes get lost—but about those people to whom we have a duty as human beings. We know that no one is winning this war, so we must reach out, unlock the humanitarian aid waiting at the ports, and do as much as we can to end this terrible conflict.

2.35 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr Tobias Ellwood): This has been a constructive and profitable debate for the House. I join others in congratulating the right hon. Member for Leicester East (Keith Vaz) who, not just today but in previous debates has shown, quite rightly, a determination to test the Government on what we are doing and to express his concern about the devastation taking place, from a humanitarian perspective, and about what more the international community should be doing to look for peace in the Yemen. He mentioned the all-party group on Yemen, which I congratulate on its work.

As with previous debates of this nature, I shall do my best to answer as many questions as possible. I have more papers here than time will allow me to go through, but, as previously, I will write to hon. Members with details. My team and I will go through *Hansard* so that I can provide detailed answers to the questions that have been asked.

The right hon. Gentleman went through the history of the important relationship Britain has had with Yemen, explaining the context for that strong relationship, and why there is therefore an expectation that we should do more. The relationship goes back to 1839, when Aden became a protectorate. There was the regional influence of the Ottoman empire in the north, followed by the Yemen Arab Republic, and, as my hon. Friend the Member for Beckenham (Bob Stewart) mentioned, the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen in the south. All that history is linked with the opening of the Suez canal. Britain has a hugely important long-term relationship with this neck of the woods. It was a stepping stone on the way to India, and the port of Aden was used as a calling station when the Suez canal opened. We know the area well and there is an expectation that Britain should play its part in leading the international community in working towards solutions.

The right hon. Member for Leicester East spoke of the huge suffering caused by the advance of the Houthi, who have signed a number of documents, not least the critical national partnership for peace, signed in September 2014. They then decided to ignore that document, leading to them pushing from the north-west of the country, all the way through the capital towards the port of Aden, causing humanitarian suffering on the huge scale we have heard about today.

The right hon. Gentleman mentioned Iran's role. I met the Iranian deputy Foreign Minister yesterday, when I raised this very subject, including the importance of Iranian restraint, and support for a ceasefire and for the work of the UN envoy, Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed, which a number of hon. Members mentioned. All countries need to work for stabilisation and for the implementation of humanitarian support to prevent a catastrophe on a scale that would dwarf what we are seeing in Syria at the moment, as hon. Members have said.

The right hon. Member for Leicester East mentioned in an intervention the importance of support for Britons who may still be in Yemen. We obviously stand ready to support anybody who is willing to get out of the country; we have been saying that for four years. Anybody who is still there is likely to be of dual nationality and is probably determined to stay. We absolutely stand ready to support any British national who chooses to remain in the country.

My hon. Friend the Member for Congleton (Fiona Bruce), who is a member of the International Development Committee, brings a huge amount of experience to the debate. She highlighted the food security crisis and issues of malnutrition in the country, as well as the number of schools that have been closed, which is another important aspect. The problem is that when eventually the guns fall silent, we are then denying the country the educated people who are needed to be the next generation of doctors, engineers, civil servants and so on to take the country forward. That is a tragic situation.

My hon. Friend also underlined the importance of DFID funding. Stephen O'Brien, who is the United Nations under-secretary-general for humanitarian affairs and emergency relief co-ordinator, and a former Member of this House, said at a meeting I chaired at the United Nations that it is not a question of a lack of funding coming forward; countries are very willing to provide donations. It is restrictions on certain places that are denying humanitarian aid from getting into the country. I have stressed to not only the deputy Foreign Minister of Iran but also to Saudi Arabia, Oman, the United Arab Emirates and President Hadi, to whom I speak on an almost weekly basis, that Hodeidah, the red sea port on the west of the country, needs to be opened as soon as possible. It is simply not logistically possible to get aid through the port of Aden up to the rest of the country if we are going to keep these people alive. As hon. Members have said, we are one step away from famine.

Stephen Gethins: I am glad the Minister mentioned Mr O'Brien, the under-secretary-general for humanitarian affairs. Mr O'Brien has also said that airstrikes and shelling have been

"in clear contravention of international humanitarian law".

Does the Minister share that view?

Mr Ellwood: I have not seen that particular quote. I spoke to Mr O'Brien at length, and I know there are many reports on that. I will, of course, refer to it. The hon. Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Catherine West), who I very much welcome to her place, also raised that issue. If there is any evidence, it needs to come forward.

The conduct of war is always a difficult thing. As a former soldier—there are others here who have served—I know that in operational environments, we need to ensure that the rules of engagement are adhered to as much as possible. If there are human rights violations, they must absolutely be looked into, but I am not aware of any such evidence at the moment. We need to be careful about hearsay. If NGOs have evidence, they must bring it forward.

The hon. Member for Edmonton (Kate Osamor) does not seem to be in her place, so I will address other Members. My hon. Friend the Member for Portsmouth South (Mrs Drummond) brings a huge amount of value and knowledge to the debate. She spoke of the damage to ports. Unfortunately, the cranes in Hodeidah have also been destroyed, so even when the city is liberated, there will be a delay in getting support.

Yemen is also hugely reliant. It is a very poor country and does not have the wealth of oil, gas and hydrocarbons that other Gulf nations do. We have called for and continue to call for a ceasefire. That was discussed at the meeting I chaired in New York. We are seeking to bring parties together in the next few weeks and get them back around the table. We have got to this point in the past but have never managed to secure the actual ceasefire document itself, but Britain is certainly calling for that important document to be signed.

I think I have answered the point from the hon. Member for North East Fife (Stephen Gethins) on human rights violations. He also mentioned history and

[Mr Ellwood]

gave the example of Sir William Luce, one of the many governors of Aden, who played a significant role in running that particular protectorate.

The description that my hon. Friend the Member for Beckenham (Bob Stewart) gave of Britain's involvement in the region was a tour de force. He is another person who, by birth—

Bob Stewart: Not by birth—I was made in Germany.

Mr Ellwood: Not by birth—firmly stated. My hon. Friend referred to the role of the Royal Marines and the military. He also touched on something that others have elaborated on: the expansion of Daesh or ISIL in these pockets. Extremism in any form looks for vacuums of governance, and that is what we are seeing in Yemen. Unfortunately, al-Qaeda has been established in Yemen for an awfully long time. The plans for the *Charlie Hebdo* attack, for example, originated in Yemen. It is a hotbed of extremism.

Bob Stewart: It would interest me, and perhaps everyone else, if the Minister were able to answer this question: is Daesh actually at war with AQ in the Arabian Peninsula? That would be a good thing.

Mr Ellwood: The relationship between the two is very complex indeed. There are places where they team up together, where there are local ceasefires and where they have a localised objective and work together, but in principle, they are competitors. I do not want to wander down this avenue too much, but al-Qaeda is seeking to exert change in western understanding of and influence in the middle east, whereas Daesh is trying to create a caliphate and its own space within the middle east. They have different philosophies completely but are both very active in Yemen; that is the trouble.

My hon. Friend the Member for Beckenham also spoke about the Houthis, and I hope he does not mind my correcting him—he called them Shi'as. It is important to distinguish between the Zaydis and the Twelvers—the Iranian Shi'as. They are different forms of Islam.

Bob Stewart: I accept the reprimand. I did know it, but—

Mr Andrew Turner (in the Chair): Order. If Colonel Stewart stands up, the Minister can then decide whether he wants to listen to him. If not, he will sit down again.

Bob Stewart: Sorry, Mr Turner.

Mr Ellwood: I always want to listen to my hon. Friend; he speaks volumes.

It is a delight to see the hon. Member for Ochil and South Perthshire (Ms Ahmed-Sheikh) in her place. She has a lot of knowledge of middle eastern matters. She spoke of the Daesh threat, which I have covered, and what more work DFID can do in this area. I will pass that on to the Minister of State, Department for International Development, my right hon. Friend the Member for New Forest West (Mr Swayne). She also touched on the conduct of war and the importance of watching out for alleged war crimes.

I will cover another basic issue that was raised: the sale of arms to Saudi Arabia. Nations have a right to defend themselves. They also have a right to join in coalitions and, if invited, to participate and to protect another country. President Hadi has made that request. The coalition has been formed. Had that not happened, the Houthis would have flushed out any legitimate Government support, all the way down to the port of Aden. We must keep a careful watch on the conduct of war, but we have the right to sell arms. We have one of the most robust arms sales policies and one of the most transparent export programmes in the world.

Catherine West: Can the Minister rule out that any British-manufactured arms have been used in this conflict by coalition partners?

Mr Ellwood: I can confirm that they probably have been used. We sell arms to Saudi Arabia. They are using weapons systems that we sell. The more pertinent question is: are they being used responsibly? That is the more important question. We need to ensure they are used in a responsible manner.

Catherine West: Is that therefore a breach of our arms export guidelines in this conflict?

Mr Ellwood: No, it is not. I will make it very clear: the coalition that has been formed is legitimate. The legal basis for military intervention follows President Hadi's request to the United Nations Security Council and, indeed, the Gulf Co-operation Council, in support of UN Security Council resolution 2216, for "all means and measures to protect Yemen and deter Houthi aggression".

Therefore, the concept and principle of using warfare in such a manner is legitimate; the real issue, widely put by everyone, is about making sure that any arms are used according to the Geneva conventions. That is what we need to ensure and to find out. If there is evidence to suggest otherwise, we will look at things. As we have discussed in the main Chamber in the case of Israel, we review export licences if evidence is given to us to suggest that equipment has not been used as agreed.

Keith Vaz: I thank the Minister for the way in which he has engaged with the all-party group. He has been very willing to meet us and to discuss these matters.

May I take him back to something he said earlier? The crucial point of the APG report is the need for a ceasefire. The Minister has said that the Government are working on that at the UN, but when can it come before the Security Council? I know that Ministers have been urging a ceasefire in private, but we need a public statement and a resolution before the UN. When can that happen?

Mr Ellwood: I am happy to call for that publicly, but all our efforts are being conducted through the UN envoy. The same applies in Libya, where we are working with Bernardino Leon, the UN envoy there. We have staff working with Ismail Cheikh; I speak to him to offer our support; and individuals have been seconded to his office to assist him. He has conducted a number of meetings, bringing the Houthis together with representatives of President Hadi, to map out the

details. Those meetings will reconvene in the very near future—that is where the ceasefire will be mapped out.

Keith Vaz *rose*—

Stephen Gethins *rose*—

Mr Ellwood: I will give way first to the right hon. Gentleman.

Keith Vaz: I will be quick. So the Minister is being clear today, and the British Government's position is clear to everyone: we want a ceasefire now.

Mr Ellwood: Absolutely. We do want a ceasefire now. I am sorry if there was any confusion about that. I made that clear in the discussions in New York as well. Until we have the ceasefire, we will not be able to get the humanitarian logistics into the country without the people involved being harmed or under threat. I am happy to underline that, but that is all being led by the UN envoy. The only way that a ceasefire will come about is not through a UN Security Council resolution, as has been said, although that would be an indication of where we want to go, but through the parties themselves signing up to it.

Stephen Gethins: A number of excellent points have been made, but on facilitating the ceasefire, my hon. Friend the Member for Ochil and South Perthshire (Ms Ahmed-Sheikh) and I asked about any help from or co-operation with the Government of Oman, who are playing a role in bringing together the parties at the moment. Will the Minister comment on that?

Mr Ellwood: Yes, indeed. Given Oman's important relationships within the middle east—the hon. Gentleman must be aware of how Oman fits in with Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and so on—it is playing a pivotal role, with perhaps more going on behind the scenes than public perception would suggest. Oman is very much involved in what is happening.

I will now turn to some of the questions asked by the Labour spokesperson. I am not sure whether she is standing in for someone today—nevertheless, she is very welcome. Going back to the conduct of the war, she called for an independent assessment and for a ceasefire, which I can confirm.

The hon. Lady touched on a difficult subject that we debated in the Westminster Hall Chamber only last week, which was child soldiers. The use of child soldiers is absolutely appalling—the whole House can condemn that. UN figures suggest that more than 80% of the use of child soldiers in Yemen is by the Houthis, but we condemn such use by anyone at all. We have taken various measures and led on measures at the UN to prevent that from happening. She also talked about the British influence and what we can do in Yemen. I have articulated several things, but we can concur on support for the UN envoy.

The UK remains a key partner of Yemen, in particular since the start of its political transition back in 2011. The existing situation is of grave concern to us all, so I welcome the opportunity today to debate the matter.

Alison Thewliss: Will the Minister give way?

Mr Ellwood: I will not, because the hon. Lady has not been present for the full debate—

Alison Thewliss: I have.

Mr Ellwood: Then I stand corrected—but she did not contribute. I will give way.

Alison Thewliss: I was not sure that I would have the time to speak in the debate, so I had not prepared anything, and that was why I did not speak.

Given the situation described in the APG report, will the Minister share that report with his colleagues in the Home Office, because the approach that the Foreign and Commonwealth Office is taking is in complete contrast with that of decision makers in the Home Office? They want to send people who have been in this country since 2009 back to a war zone, which is not acceptable. If it is not acceptable for Glaswegians to go to Yemen, it is not acceptable for our adopted Glaswegians who have been here since 2009 either.

Mr Ellwood: I will certainly share the report with the Home Office. There are already robust processes in place, but I will certainly pass it on to the Home Office and we will ask that Department to reply directly to the APG.

Before the end of 2014, Yemen had been making steady progress on the initiative brokered by the Gulf Co-operation Council in 2011. That initiative had committed all parties to a national dialogue conference, a new constitution and national elections. The national dialogue conference agreed a vision for Yemen which formed the basis for the new constitution, of which we saw the first draft in January. Regrettably, as hon. Members know, since September last year the Houthis, with support from forces loyal to former President Saleh, have taken matters into their own hands, staging a takeover of the legitimate Government of President Hadi and of key state institutions, putting the whole transition into jeopardy.

The Houthi and Saleh groups' use of military means to achieve their political aims is not only unacceptable, but a clear violation of the 1994 constitution and the principles of the Gulf Co-operation Council initiative. What is more, those groups have forced Yemen's legitimate Government out of the country, repeatedly attacked Saudi Arabia's borders throughout the year and seized territory and heavy weapons throughout Yemen. They are holding thousands of political activists in prison and they have prevented access to humanitarian aid, showing a blatant disregard for the safety of civilians.

With conflict risks becoming prolonged, we are already witnessing catastrophic human consequences, as we have heard in the debate today. Suffering has reached unprecedented levels, with more than 21 million Yemenis or 80% of the population in urgent need of humanitarian assistance. In fact, UNICEF warned recently that in al-Hudaydah governorate alone, 96,000 children are starving and at risk of death. Without immediate and decisive action to end the conflict and the humanitarian crisis, Yemen may face a famine by the end of the year.

[MRS CHERYL GILLAN *in the Chair*]

The UN Security Council has been clear in its condemnation of the actions by Houthi and pro-Saleh forces, but it is the responsibility of all parties to the

[Mr Ellwood]

conflict to ensure access for humanitarian aid. That is why we continue to call on the Yemeni authorities to grant access to all Yemeni ports for commercial and humanitarian shipping. We welcome the agreement to establish a UN verification inspection mechanism, as mentioned by a couple of hon. Members, but we urge its speedy implementation to remove clearance procedures for humanitarian shipments. Many ships are stuck out in the Red sea, unable to get into port.

The risk that groups such as al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula and ISIL in Yemen will benefit from the continuing instability is another disastrous potential consequence of the conflict. That threat was most recently demonstrated by ISIL in Yemen with its co-ordinated multiple attacks in Aden on 6 October, which claimed the lives of 15 people and injured many more. The British Government condemn such attacks unequivocally. Countering the terrorist threat remains our top priority.

To be clear, I therefore very much welcome the crucial role of the Saudi-led coalition in reversing the military advance of the Houthis and the forces loyal to former President Saleh. That has helped to create the conditions for the legitimate Yemeni Government to return to the country under Vice-President Bahah.

I will write to hon. Members if I have not covered any other points. The area remains one of critical concern and includes huge suffering for the Yemeni people caught up in those horrific events. The position of the British Government is clear: a ceasefire and an inclusive political solution is the only way in which to achieve long-term peace and stability. The UK stands with the international community in supporting fully UN efforts to achieve dialogue and to deal with the dire humanitarian situation.

Motion lapsed (Standing Order No. 10(6)).

Fire Safety: School Buildings

3 pm

Sir David Amess (Southend West) (Con): I beg to move,

That this House has considered fire safety measures in school buildings.

I am grateful for the opportunity to raise this subject. I promise not to start to beat my hon. Friend the Minister up immediately, but as with so many of these debates, it is about such a simple straightforward issue that I am puzzled as to why it has not been dealt with over the last couple of decades.

At the heart of it all, the House either does or does not think that having sprinkler systems will help to save people's lives. That, to me, is the issue. I would have thought, looking at all the evidence, that the House has clearly come to the conclusion that it would be good common sense for all schools to have sprinkler systems fitted.

I have the highest regard for the Minister, but I simply do not understand this situation. Given that the Government have the power to give money for new schools to be built, surely it should not take Einstein to come up with a plan whereby people cannot tender for such a contract unless a sprinkler system will be part of the new build project. This is quite a simple matter. I have correspondence from our noble Friend Lord Nash on the issue, and it is wonderful that all sorts of consultations will take place, but I have to say to this Minister that I will not shut up until I get the straightforward answer that, in the future, contracts will be awarded only to builders who insist that sprinkler systems will be installed.

I have the great pleasure of being the chairman of the all-party fire safety rescue group; I was also the chairman in the previous Parliament. I am looking at my hon. Friend the Member for South Basildon and East Thurrock (Stephen Metcalfe) for a reason that will become obvious. When I had the privilege of becoming the Member of Parliament for Basildon, there were three particular incidents that made me admire the wonderful work that our fire service does. On two occasions, our local fire service was attending incidents in which small children died. The emotional effect that that has on our firefighters is beyond most of us to understand. One of the incidents was, sadly, in Long Riding, which I think is still in the area represented by my hon. Friend. A gentleman who ran a Chinese takeaway restaurant came in to find that his wife, who had mental health problems, had smothered their five children. That has nothing to do with fire, but it was the fire service that attended.

In the second tragic case, in what used to be Barstable school, a number of children got locked in a shed in the grounds. They must have been playing with matches and, as a result, a fire took place and they lost their lives. That was a funeral I will never forget attending at St Martin's church, as my hon. Friend is only too well aware.

Then this was the irony of all ironies. I cannot remember which election it was that I was canvassing in; it must have been the 1987 one. I was canvassing in Nethermayne, the rural part of the constituency, and I knocked on a door. A rather dishevelled gentleman came to the door. He seemed to be not entirely with it; I will put it like

that. We went to the property next door. Unbeknown to me, he was carrying a bowl of paraffin and the next minute—we were standing talking to the neighbour—he went up in flames. That was the first funeral that I attended after that election. I went into a state of shock and I saw how our firefighters dealt with the situation. Unfortunately, in those days I used to drag along one or two of my children to canvass with me. I never did that again. I know that this is not the Minister's brief, but all of us have great regard for the work that our firefighters do and I have first-hand experience of the way they deal with the tragedy of children being killed.

I thank the Fire Sector Federation, the Chief Fire Officers' Association, Zurich Municipal insurance and the National Fire Sprinkler Network for providing me with the evidence and information on school fires that I have drawn on for my contribution to the debate.

I remind the House that yesterday was National Burn Awareness Day. When I first became a Member of Parliament, we never had these specific days. We never wore ribbons, but that changed once the AIDS movement adopted the red ribbon and now every day of the week is a national day. If I had had the opportunity at Prime Minister's questions, National Burn Awareness Day was the thing that I would have raised. Unfortunately, it got no media coverage, which is a great shame. It was for that reason that the all-party group put in for this debate.

I praise the work of the Children's Burns Trust. I know that next February there will be a National Sprinkler Awareness Day, which I hope we will be able to get more of a profile for than we seem to have done thus far. I would like to assure the Children's Burns Trust that although their day yesterday went by without great attention, many Members will continue to raise these issues, on which we feel very strongly.

I, along with many members of the group here today, am very frustrated that this issue, which is very simple—I cannot see a cost to the Government—has not been dealt with. I cannot yet blame the present Government, or can I? No, I will not; it is a little too soon. However, I just do not understand why the issue was not dealt with under the coalition Government, which obviously my party was a supporter of and led, or the previous Labour Government. I am sure that this Minister will have the answer as to why we have not taken action.

Many members of the all-party group were very surprised to hear that since 2010 there has been a decline in the number of new schools and academies being installed with automatic sprinkler systems. That is crazy. How on earth could there be a decline? But there has been. The reason why we were so surprised was that in 2007, when our noble Friend Lord Howard of Lympne was serving as an MP, he raised a similar issue. In his constituency, on 13 September 2006, Lympne primary school tragically suffered a fire. It started as a consequence of an electrical fault above the staffroom at the start of the day. The chief fire officer responsible for leading the efforts of the fire services to extinguish the fire said at the time:

“If the school had been fitted with a properly designed and installed sprinkler system the fire may have been controlled if not extinguished in its early stages”.

Instead, the school was completely destroyed—thankfully, no lives were lost—as a consequence of no such system being in place.

Why, over all these years, have successive Governments failed to put in place even a framework or a strategy—whatever the buzzword is that the civil servants in the Department for Education use? Why have we done nothing to make sure that such a tragedy never happens again? My hon. Friend the Minister may respond that the tragedy in 2006 was an isolated incident, and some may ask why we should waste valuable public money on infrequent events. Well, how can we put a price on one life? That is the simple point I wish to make. There is evidence to suggest that this was not an isolated incident, and our children's safety and security should be ensured, irrespective of the cost.

Refurbishing or rebuilding schools following a severe fire can be very expensive. The most recent statistics I have, provided by Zurich Municipal, show that £58 million was spent on school rebuilds following fires in 2009. The last year for which the Department for Communities and Local Government has cost figures is 2004—11 years ago, which is crazy—when there were 1,229 fires, which were estimated to have cost about £52 million. Why we do not have more up-to-date figures, I do not understand.

I am an Essex Member—we look over the River Thames at Kent—but I am going to praise Kent County Council. Following the fire at Lympne primary school, it was a welcome relief when the council confirmed that the rebuild would include the installation of a fire sprinkler system. However, why must we be reactive? We, as legislators, should attempt to pre-empt such incidents. Now that the Government, which I support, have a majority, they cannot blame things that go wrong on the Liberal party. I want them to do something positive and good with their majority. I want us to be proactive, rather than reactive.

Although there were no fatalities as a result of the fire at Lympne, and there have been no fatalities across England as a result of school fires, we cannot just sit back on our laurels and be complacent—a tragedy could happen. It is within the Government's gift to make sure we never have a tragic incident, by insisting that, when contracts are signed, and schools are built, a sprinkler system is installed.

The issue is not party political. My goodness, we have representatives here from the Scottish National party, the Conservatives and the Labour party—with only eight Members, it is probably a bit difficult for the Liberals to service all our proceedings, but I know they very much agree with the point I am making.

What is frustrating is that, since 2007, when the former Member for Folkestone and Hythe brought this issue to the attention of the House, the situation has got worse. From April 2007 to May 2010, an estimated 70% of the schools and academies built had automatic fire sprinklers installed—there was room for improvement, but we were basically on the right track. However, since May 2010, the figure has plummeted to 35%—it has been halved. That is absolutely unacceptable. Some 65% of new builds are without fire sprinkler systems. That is incredibly disappointing, given the commitment that successive Governments have made to improve the situation.

In a recent statement, the Secretary of State for Education, for whom I genuinely have the highest regard, said that, in line with departmental guidance, the relevant specification does not make the fitting of sprinklers

[*Sir David Amess*]

mandatory, but it does suggest instances where their installation could be beneficial. Well, I say to the Government: “Let’s make it mandatory!” It is no good us complacently saying that it is not mandatory at the moment—let us do something about this. A proposal to make the fitting of sprinklers mandatory could be taken through the House immediately, and all political parties would agree with it. My right hon. Friend’s statement was some way from the cross-party commitment we had in 2007.

I referred earlier to the cost benefit of mandatory installation, which cannot be ignored—as a Conservative, I am sympathetic about the challenges the Exchequer faces. However, when it comes to fire safety, the costs are not merely financial, and we must look at the long-term implications of the mandatory installation of fire sprinklers across the country. Of course, schools are not only attended by our children, but rented out to all sorts of organisations to increase revenue.

I contacted the local authority that serves my constituency to find out how many schools there have sprinkler systems installed. It sent me an email saying that schools in Southend do not have to itemise whether they have sprinkler systems—it therefore has no information about the issue. Well, I say, “Come on, local authority!” There are not that many schools in Southend; someone could phone them up and ask the chairmen of the governing bodies whether they have a sprinkler system. To me, the local authority’s response is absolutely pathetic. If local authorities throughout the country are giving other Members similar responses, shame on them. The chief executive of my authority should say, “We can do far better than that.”

The House of Commons Library, which is fantastic—I regard it as the fountain of all truth—told me that such information is not collected centrally and that local authorities are not obliged to collect it, although I do not know why that is. Well, authorities might not be obliged to do that, but I think they should. I praise Kent County Council for collecting data after the fire at Lympne primary school. Between 2001 and 2003, there were 125 recorded fires in Kent. By 2011 to 2013, the figure had plummeted to 41—a fall of approximately 66%. There were only seven school building fires in 2013. That is seven too many, but at least there was a fall. Kent is therefore doing much better than other areas. Those figures show that, through local co-operation and a sensible policy, the number of fires can be significantly reduced.

I call on the Government to recognise the benefits of taking an approach like that of Kent County Council and the Kent and Medway Towns fire authority. I and the other members of the all-party group would also like to have a meeting with my hon. Friend the Minister to discuss the issue in more detail.

In his letter, Lord Nash told me that a consultation on the Government’s version of “Building Bulletin 100”, entitled “Design for fire safety in schools”, will begin towards the end of the year. Well, we can have all the consultations in the world, but it is just like the rubbish about obesity that has been going on this week, with Jamie Oliver turning up at the House of Commons—it is as if obesity has just been invented. Ten years ago, when I was on the Health Committee, I had the idea of

having an inquiry into obesity. If all our recommendations had been followed then, we would not have to have all this business about a sugar tax, a fat tax and all the rest of it now. The longer I am a Member of Parliament, the less I hear anything original. My frustration is that hon. Members make good suggestions, but nothing whatever is done about them. If Parliament is worth anything, it is up to hon. Members to hold the Executive to account, so that good ideas are acted on.

In March 2007, a commitment was made by the then Minister, the former Member for South Dorset, Jim Knight—now Lord Knight of Weymouth—that all new schools and academies that were built would be expected to have automatic sprinklers installed, except for a few low-risk schools. I do not quite know how we define low-risk schools, but that was a great commitment and of course the Government had three years to run at that time. Figures show that only 35% of new schools are fitted with sprinklers. I hope that the present Government will use the impetus of a fresh election victory to do something about that.

We have the power to ensure that fewer fires occur in schools across the country; that would mean fewer people in harm’s way, fewer costs for refurbishment or rebuilding, and fewer worries for the Government. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will respond positively to the point on which I have managed to speak for 20 minutes. It is a simple one: the contracts for all new-build projects for schools should be required to include the fitting of a sprinkler system.

3.21 pm

Caroline Ansell (Eastbourne) (Con): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Southend West (Sir David Amess) on his impassioned argument. The sprinkler campaign has a doughty champion in him.

It is ironic that I am to speak about fire today, when the top news headline in my constituency is about the Eastbourne pier fire. Many hon. Members may have seen some of the coverage—indeed, it was so dramatic and gripping that it went across the globe. Even the Prime Minister and Chancellor came down to talk to people in the town, such was the shock and trauma of seeing that beautiful and iconic building consumed in flames. It was a powerful visual example of how hungry, dangerous and destructive fire can be. On that occasion it was only the heroic efforts of the Royal National Lifeboat Institution, working in conjunction with the fire service, attacking the fire from the sea, that saved much of the pier. Had there been sprinklers, the story might have been different, and we might have saved the building, which is conspicuous by its absence now, its position marked only by a boardwalk.

Last week the main headline in town was an arson attack on a primary school. Again, it is fortunate that there was no loss of life. It happened in the dead of night, and the following morning the community, children, parents and teachers woke to find that the school had been consumed, with 50% of the school buildings destroyed. The school has had a quite challenging journey and very recently came through a successful Ofsted inspection. Its entire focus has been on improving and enhancing the quality of the learning and outcomes for the young children there. Now the head teacher’s everyday life in school is taken up with meetings with insurance brokers,

risk assessors, insurance adjusters and building contractors. The teachers, although they are hugely ingenious and massively resourceful, will be sorely pressed to do full justice to the children's learning. Some are back on the school campus; others have been shipped out to another local primary school, which has opened its doors so that learning can continue. The point I want to make is that there has been massive disruption, which was not limited to the occasion of the fire. It will continue for months to come.

I am not new to schools, having qualified as a head teacher a few years ago, but I am new to the sprinkler debate, for want of a better term. I am very aware of demands on school budgets and on county councils for everything they have to provide. I am just beginning to understand some of the wider issues to do with the installation of sprinklers and the other measures. My hon. Friend the Member for Southend West will be horrified to learn that of my county's 190 schools, five have sprinkler systems. However, in the past five years there have been just three incidents—all very random and none causing destruction of property or life. It is a shame that safety seems to be driven only by casualties or fatalities, but, sadly, that seems to be the case.

I am still finding my form in the debate, but I have asked the county council for a full report on the state of play in school fire safety, and I have a question for my hon. Friend the Minister. I want to understand why sprinkler provision in schools is mandatory in Scotland and Wales, but not in England.

3.26 pm

Margaret Ferrier (Rutherglen and Hamilton West) (SNP): It is an honour to serve under your chairmanship, Mrs Gillan. I am grateful for the opportunity to speak today on the important issue of fire safety in schools. I thank the hon. Member for Southend West (Sir David Amess) for securing the debate. As he said, yesterday was national burn awareness day and it is fitting that that should be followed by this debate.

Hon. Members may not be aware of the 2004 overhaul of fire safety laws for public buildings in Scotland. It followed the tragedy at Rosepark nursing home in Lanarkshire, where 14 elderly residents died when a fire broke out in a linen cupboard. A fatal accident inquiry found that the deaths could have been avoided, and that the lack of sprinklers could have been a contributory factor. A key finding of the inquiry was that although a fitted sprinkler system would not have extinguished the fire, it would probably have rendered conditions in all areas tenable for at least an hour. It is regrettable that such a tragic incident should ever occur, but it is impossible to say how many lives have been saved by the robust building regulation legislation that has followed. In 2010 the regulations were amended to include schools in the statutory list of buildings that must be fitted with automatic fire suppression systems. The extension of the legislation in Scotland is incredibly welcome.

One need only think of the Glasgow School of Art for another example of the sheer destructive power of fire. Large portions of the iconic buildings were gutted by a major fire in May last year. News of the fire spread fast, much like the fire itself, and in very little time tens of thousands of people were glued to live coverage of flames engulfing the building, which had quickly become

an inferno. It was a shocking reminder of the raw, elemental power of fire. Fortunately, and remarkably, the incident claimed no casualties, although there was extensive and irreversible damage. Unable to contain the fast-spreading flames, staff sounded an evacuation of the building. An intended fire-suppression system for the building had not yet been completed. It is clear that that would significantly have slowed the progress of that fast-spreading blaze.

In Scotland and Wales, sprinklers in schools are now standard; yet only 1,400 of the 30,000 schools in Britain are fitted with them—less than 5%. Most of the 1,400 are schools in Scotland and Wales. It is a pretty shocking disparity, but I am here today to urge action rather than to criticise. Something that is the norm in the devolved Administrations can become a target in England and a benchmark to strive for. The approach at the moment often seems to be to look at cost versus benefit, but what price can be placed on the lives and safety of children? As a mother, I know parents want peace of mind when they send their children to school in the morning. The safety of children should be paramount and we should not wait for a major accident involving loss of life before the Government will act.

The proactive approach taken in Scotland and Wales should be emulated in England. The current situation whereby 65% of new schools are not fitted with sprinklers is not acceptable to me, and I am sure that it is not acceptable to the parents who send their children to those schools every morning. If there were greater public awareness of the fact that only one in three new schools built in England possesses automatic fire suppression systems, I think that there would be an outcry from parents. The current situation is something of a safety lottery, and it falls below what any reasonable Government should strive for. Although there has not been significant loss of life in a school fire in Britain, chief fire officers have identified some near misses. We simply cannot adopt a wait-and-see attitude.

Cost cannot be a prohibitive factor either. In fact, in the long term, fitting sprinklers can save money. In the unfortunate event of a fire, sprinklers can significantly impede the progress of flames, so rebuilding is likely not to take as long as it would otherwise and the extra costs incurred for temporary measures will not be as great. Commercial insurers recognise the value of sprinkler systems in schools and provide lower insurance premiums to schools that have them. It is estimated that the cost of installing automatic sprinkler protection can be recouped in 10 to 12 years, so over the lifetime of a school building, the fitting of a fire suppression system can be cost-effective. Short-term cuts should not cloud our long-term thinking: fire suppression should be viewed as an asset to schools, because it can protect lives in addition to bringing down running costs.

I would like the Minister to take on board and respond to the points I have made. I would like to know what regulation, if any, Her Majesty's Government are currently considering for fire suppression systems in schools. I echo the sentiments that others have expressed during this debate and I ask that a Minister from the Department for Education attend a meeting of the all-party group on fire safety rescue. Finally, I would like to ask the Minister whether the Department will consider keeping records of new schools built with and without automatic fire suppression protection.

Mrs Cheryl Gillan (in the Chair): It might be convenient for Members to know that there is a possibility that several Divisions will be called in the main Chamber at 4 o'clock. I thought that our two Front Benchers, who are now going to wind up the debate, might like to bear that in mind.

3.32 pm

Nic Dakin (Scunthorpe) (Lab): Thank you, Mrs Gillan. I am sure that we will both bear that in mind. It is a real pleasure to serve under your chairmanship.

The redoubtable hon. Member for Southend West (Sir David Amess) said that he would not shut up on the subject that we are debating, and that he was puzzled that the solutions to the problem, which are so simple, have not been seized by Government. He is nothing if not consistent. In February 2014, he remarked in a debate on the subject that

“since the programme of introducing sprinklers into new school buildings, there has been a marked reduction in school fire losses—something I am sure we all welcome and wish to continue. Recently, however, there has been a decrease in the number of new schools built with sprinkler protection”—

a point he made again very well—

“and that is not good enough.”

He used similar language today. He continued:

“It gives the impression that protecting our children’s education from fire damage is no longer a top priority. I am absolutely certain that the Government whom I support”—

he reminded us today of his support for the Government—

“would not want to give that impression. Alternatives are being sought, because sprinklers are no longer considered to be mandatory, and developers are avoiding them to save money in the short term. That, however,”

he said, with precision and aplomb,

“is foolish in the longer term, and playing with our children’s future is simply not acceptable.”—[*Official Report, Westminster Hall*, 6 February 2014; Vol. 575, c. 170WH.]

He has done an excellent job of reminding us of all those points.

The hon. Gentleman was ably supported by the hon. Member for Eastbourne (Caroline Ansell), who spoke of the desperate energy, power and awfulness of a fire, and gave several examples from her constituency. She reminded us, with reference to the fire in her constituency, of the disruption that a fire causes to young people’s learning, and how it forces a head teacher to focus on things such as dealing with insurance agents and contractors while somehow maintaining the continuity of learning. The hon. Member for Rutherglen and Hamilton West (Margaret Ferrier), who speaks on behalf of the Scottish National party, captured that well when she said that “fitting sprinklers can save money”, and that to do so in the first place can be, essentially, a stitch in time to save nine.

The hon. Member for Rutherglen and Hamilton West pointed out that we should not have a “safety lottery”. Sadly, as the hon. Member for Southend West has pointed out, we are closer to being in that situation than we have been in the past. In 2007, cross-party agreement in favour of installing sprinklers in schools was strong, and there was a significant increase in the number of sprinkler systems installed in schools through Building Schools for the Future. The hon. Gentleman is right to say that there was a 70% achievement level; that might

not be good enough, but it is better than what has happened since 2010. That is why it is important to focus on what can be done to get the show back on the road.

Regarding the blaze at Shinewater primary school in Eastbourne, which has been mentioned, the chairman of East Sussex fire authority said:

“Sprinklers can significantly help reduce death and injury from fire, reduce risk for firefighters, protect property and heritage and reduce the effects of arson. The greatest impact of installing fire sprinklers is likely to occur in schools, residential care homes, premises housing highly vulnerable residents and certain large commercial properties.”

That is a fire professional’s view, and it concurs with the views of hon. Members who have spoken in the debate. Sadly, every week in the United Kingdom, 20 schools are damaged or destroyed by fire, often as a result of fires that are started deliberately. The number of major school fires has been rising, and that creates significant cost. All the research demonstrates that fitting sprinklers can virtually eliminate fire deaths and injuries. As someone who, at one point in my past, was involved in planning to build a new college, I know that the cost of sprinkler systems can make anyone in that position take a deep breath, so it is important to look at the longer-term benefit.

For that reason, I hope that the Minister, in responding to this effective debate, will focus on the questions that have been asked and give us some assurance that lessons will be learned. Will he review the lessons to be learned from what has happened since 2010? There seems to have been an improvement in performance between 2007 and 2010, but it did not continue after 2010. If a review is not already in place, will he look to establish one so that we can learn from those lessons? Will he ensure that proper consideration is given to installing sprinklers in new build schools? We note that that is mandatory in Scotland and Wales, and the arguments on that matter have been strongly made. Proper and full consideration, which involves the local fire authorities, needs to be given to that. Will the Minister ensure that local authorities collect information on which schools in their area have sprinkler systems, so that that intelligence can help to drive policy? On that note, and noting your earlier encouragement, Mrs Gillan, I will sit down.

3.39 pm

The Minister for Schools (Mr Nick Gibb): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mrs Gillan. I congratulate my hon.—and redoubtable, it appears—Friend the Member for Southend West (Sir David Amess) on securing this important debate, and pay tribute to his passion for the subject and his long-standing commitment to these issues through the all-party parliamentary group on fire safety and rescue, in the Chamber and outside, more generally. I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne (Caroline Ansell) for her passionate contribution to the debate based on some real and tragic experiences that she has encountered in her constituency. I also pay tribute to the hon. Member for Rutherglen and Hamilton West (Margaret Ferrier) for her powerful exposition of the case for sprinklers in schools.

My hon. Friend the Member for Southend West was right to start the debate by paying tribute to our firefighters and to praise the work of the Children’s Burns Trust.

He is also right to highlight the importance of the highest standards of fire safety in schools. Keeping pupils safe is the most fundamental responsibility of the education system. It is therefore vital that, where possible, we prevent fires from starting and spreading, and ensure that schools are able to evacuate pupils swiftly when necessary. Fire safety is also important to avoid the disruption and distress caused by fires, and to protect the significant investment, over many years, in the school estate—a point that my hon. Friend also made. Implementing measures to minimise the damage caused by fires to school buildings is therefore an important priority.

The context to the debate is a very welcome reduction in the number of fires in schools over the past 15 years. In 2001, there were 1,300 fires in schools. By 2014, the number had fallen by more than half to just 600. The tireless work of campaigners including my hon. Friend the Member for Southend West, alongside preventive efforts from schools and fire services, has no doubt made a significant contribution to the improvement. Indeed, there have been no fatal casualties caused by fire in schools from 2000 to 2014, which is the most recent year for which we have data. Securing further reductions in the number of fires, and in their impact when they do occur, remains a priority for the Department for Education.

Newly constructed school buildings, as well as extensions and major refurbishments of existing blocks, must comply with part B (Fire safety) of the Building Regulations 2010. The Department applies the regulations to schools in more detail through “Building Bulletin 100”, which sets rigorous standards to ensure that works make sufficient provision for the health and safety of their occupants. The design must include adequate means of escape, firefighting equipment, automatic detection systems and fire signage provisions. The construction materials used must be fire-resistant. Suitable fire doors to contain the spread of any fire must be used throughout the building. A written fire safety management plan is required to be produced as part of the documents to be provided to the school before the occupation of the school building.

The Department plans to consult on a revised “Building Bulletin 100” in 2016, which will incorporate revisions to relevant regulations. In addition, all school buildings, including those already built, must comply with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, which requires all schools to be maintained to ensure adequate fire resistance and resistance to the spread of flames. There should be adequate fire precautions in place to allow the safe escape of occupants in case of fire. The order also requires them to conduct regular termly drills, so that pupils and staff can evacuate the school quickly in the case of fire. The school’s fire safety systems require regular maintenance and testing, with the activities recorded in the school fire safety logbook by the responsible person in the school.

Schools are required to implement measures to ensure that pupils or staff with sensory or mobility impairments are kept safe. “Building Bulletin 102” sets the relevant standards in those circumstances. People with visual and hearing impairments, for instance, need a choice of visual, audible, or voice announcement systems. Suitable additional visual alarms should be provided in areas where a person may be alone, such as toilets. When a

disabled person cannot make their own way out of the building, it is the responsibility of management to ensure their safe escape, and personal emergency egress plans—PEEPs—will need to be developed in consultation with them. Escape plans should be posted throughout the building.

My hon. Friend the Member for Southend West made a compelling argument for the inclusion of sprinkler systems in all new buildings. He knows that these are not required under the current building regulations or the Department’s building bulletin standards, which set out measures for the purposes of health and safety, not for the protection of property. The value of sprinklers is in limiting the damage to buildings caused by fires. They are less useful in protecting the occupants of buildings, because they are no substitute for well-functioning alarms, sufficient evacuation routes and effective emergency procedures. Sprinklers are activated only by intense, direct heat. The sprinkler must reach 68°C before being activated—I believe that happens by wax melting in the mechanism—by which point the temperature of other parts of the room will be significantly higher. They are therefore not an immediate fire suppression system, and they are not activated by smoke, which is the most significant cause of injury and deaths from fires. The building regulations and building bulletin therefore include provision for the use of sprinklers and other fire suppression systems where the risk justifies their use, rather than a blanket requirement that they must be included in all new schools.

The number of deliberate cases of arson in schools has fallen from 746 in 2004 to five in 2012-13 and one in 2013-14. There has been a significant drop in the numbers of fires started deliberately in schools but, as my hon. Friends the Members for Southend West and for Eastbourne would say, one is one too many.

In circumstances where there is a significantly higher risk of fire—perhaps because of local problems with arson, for example—a local authority may reach the view that it is appropriate to include sprinkler systems in a new or refurbished school building for a maintained school. In such circumstances, the Department is prepared to include sprinklers in the specification for a school built under the priority schools building programme, but would expect the local authority to meet the additional cost of installing them. If, following a risk assessment, an academy being rebuilt through the priority schools building programme were deemed to require sprinklers, the Department would meet that cost.

This approach represents a careful balancing of the risk of fire damage to school buildings with the significant cost of installing sprinklers. Including sprinklers in new school buildings would add between 2% and 6% to the cost of works. This year alone, we are spending £2 billion on new school buildings, so that would therefore represent an extra cost of between £40 million and £120 million. If we were to go even further, adding sprinklers to a major school refurbishment project would typically add about 10% to the cost.

The Department’s assessment is that the additional spending would significantly outweigh any relatively modest saving from preventing some damage to school buildings. That is especially the case as we continue to prioritise work to prevent school fires. We therefore hope that the overall number of fires declines even further in future years. I am, however, very happy to

[Mr Nick Gibb]

arrange a meeting with my hon. Friend the Member for Southend West and other members of the all-party parliamentary group, either with me or with Lord Nash, the Minister with direct responsibility for this policy area, so that we can further discuss the details of the case my hon. Friend is making for installing sprinklers in all schools.

I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Southend West for raising this important issue today. I hope that he is fully assured that the Government continue to prioritise work on fire prevention, even if I am not in a position to go as far as he would hope in committing the Department to install fire sprinklers in new buildings. I am confident that our other work—to promote prevention, to enforce rigorous building standards, and to require schools to have effective evacuation plans—will continue to keep pupils safe and minimise the damage and disruption caused by fire.

3.49 pm

Sir David Amess: I thank all colleagues for their contributions to this debate. I welcome the contribution of my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne (Caroline Ansell), and I completely empathise with her about Eastbourne pier. Southend pier has had three fires. It is still standing, but the fires have set us back. I know how local residents feel, and she is right to bring the tragedy of this recent fire to the House's attention. The statistic she shared of there being only three or five sprinklers is shocking.

I welcome the contribution of the hon. Member for Rutherglen and Hamilton West (Margaret Ferrier) on behalf of the Scottish National party. Scotland was robbed in the rugby match on Sunday. She is right to draw on the excellent achievement of schools in Scotland compared with the rest of the country. She highlighted the savings that have been made. We must not be churlish about the arrival of these 56 Scottish nationalist Members; we can learn some good things from them. She has brought some excellent points to the House's attention today.

I welcome the support of the hon. Member for Scunthorpe (Nic Dakin). I know that the hon. Member for West Ham (Lyn Brown) agrees with him on the points he has shared with us. I listened carefully to the Minister, and I accept all his points on the reduction in the number of fires in our schools—I particularly accept his points about arson—but I repeat that no contract should be awarded for new build projects unless sprinklers are fitted. He says that the Department reckons there would be a 10% increase in costs, but I simply do not accept that. No doubt we will debate those and other matters in our meeting.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House has considered fire safety measures in school buildings.

3.52 pm

Sitting adjourned.

Written Statements

Thursday 22 October 2015

TREASURY

Tax Policy

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Mr David Gauke): At the start of the last Parliament, the coalition set out its ambition to improve the tax policy making process through high levels of consultation and legislative scrutiny. That approach was welcomed by tax professionals, and more than 150 formal and informal consultations on tax changes took place over the past five years. The commitment to publish the majority of Finance Bill clauses in draft was also met.

This approach will continue into this Parliament. Following summer Budget 2015, the Government have engaged with interested parties, seeking their views on more than 20 areas of tax policy for legislation in Finance Bill 2016. The next stage of consultation aims to ensure that the legislation works as intended.

Draft clauses to be included in Finance Bill 2016 will be published on Wednesday 9 December 2015, together with responses to policy consultations, explanatory notes, tax information and impact notes and other accompanying documents. The consultation on the draft legislation will be open until Wednesday 3 February 2016.

[HCWS265]

DEFENCE

Defence Equipment and Major Projects

The Minister for Defence Procurement (Mr Philip Dunne): I am pleased to place in the Library of the House the annual publication of the defence equipment plan. Building on the progress outlined in the previous three equipment plans, we again have a stable and realistic programme of work that sets out a strong foundation on which to shape the future construct of the Armed Forces in the forthcoming Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR).

We continue to plan for the future with confidence. The summer budget announcement outlined the Government's commitment to grow the defence budget by 0.5% above inflation. This will enable us to fulfil the commitment to grow the equipment budget by 1% above inflation year on year and to invest more than £160 billion on defence equipment and support over the next 10 years. The equipment plan sets out our plan, pre-SDSR, to spend £166 billion on capabilities the Armed Forces need over the 10 year planning period out to 2024-25.

The equipment plan is being published in parallel with the NAO's independent assessment into both the equipment plan and also 17 of the MOD's largest projects known as the major projects report. I welcome the NAO's view that there are indications that the equipment plan will remain affordable for the rest of the Parliament if financial stability is maintained. Supporting this, the major project report saw a fall in the reported cost of the projects for the second consecutive

year. There are still improvements to be made in the ways that defence procures and supports equipment, which the Defence Equipment and Support transformation programme and the establishment of the single source regulations office are seeking to address, but it is reassuring that the NAO acknowledge the continued progress we have been making.

Throughout annual budget cycle 2015 the focus was on ensuring the continued stability of the equipment plan, and ensuring that the levels of capability and financial risk were balanced. The equipment plan demonstrates that we achieved this, giving a stable baseline as we enter the spending review and SDSR.

[HCWS264]

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

Agriculture and Fisheries Council

The Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Elizabeth Truss): The next Agriculture and Fisheries Council will be on 22 October in Luxembourg. My hon. Friend, the Minister of State for Farming, Food and Marine Environment (George Eustice), will represent the UK.

As the provisional agenda stands, the following items will be discussed:

There will be a proposal for a Council regulation fixing the 2016 fishing opportunities for certain fish stocks and groups of fish stocks in the Baltic Sea, as well as an exchange of views on the EU-Norway 2016 consultations.

An exchange of views on climate friendly agriculture will also take place.

There are currently five confirmed Any Other Business items:

The use of plant protection products in sustainable agriculture (requested by the Netherlands);

report on the necessity, if any, of provisions for milk-based products destined for infants and sports products (requested by France);

GMO-free agriculture in Europe (requested by Slovenia);

antimicrobial resistance (requested by Germany);

information presented by the Visegrad Group countries (Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia) plus Bulgaria, Austria, Romania and Slovenia, on agricultural markets development, particularly with regards to the dairy sector, and best practices in land management including soil protection and management (requested by Czech Republic).

[HCWS261]

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE

Foreign Affairs Council and General Affairs Council

The Minister for Europe (Mr David Lidington): My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs attended the Foreign Affairs Council on 12 October. The Foreign Affairs Council

was chaired by the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Federica Mogherini. The General Affairs Council was chaired by the Luxembourg presidency. The meetings were held in Luxembourg.

Foreign Affairs Council

A provisional report of the meeting and Conclusions adopted can be found at:

<http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetinas/fac/2015/10/12/>.

The Foreign Affairs Council (FAC) met to discuss Libya, Syria, Migration and EU/Africa, Caribbean, Pacific (ACP) Post-Cotonou. Ms Mogherini also updated on violence in the middle east and condemned the Ankara terrorist attacks in her opening remarks. Ms Mogherini noted the upcoming ASEM (Asia-Europe meeting) conference in November and said that the Foreign Affairs Council would discuss Belarus at the November Council.

Libya

Ms Mogherini welcomed the agreement to establish a Government of National Accord (GNA) in Libya, and made it clear that the EU should encourage all parties to sign up to the agreement and be ready to support it. The FAC subsequently agreed supportive and positive Council conclusions: details of the support package, which would focus on capacity and institution building as well as the restoration of basic services, particularly health, would be finalised in partnership with the GNA to ensure their buy in and ownership. The Foreign Secretary made it clear that the important but fragile agreement needed the EU's full support. The Foreign Secretary also highlighted that the UK and UN would be co-hosting in London a planning meeting on international support to a GNA.

Syria

Ministers discussed many aspects of the situation in Syria, including the political process, the recent Russian intervention and the migration crisis. Ms Mogherini said in her opening remarks that the EU had a role to play in support of the UN political process, and later noted that EU member states needed to ensure unity by continuing to co-ordinate closely. The Foreign Secretary argued that the attacks by Russia on the Syrian opposition and civilians was unacceptable and would set back the prospect of a political solution. All member states agreed that support for the UN-led political process must continue, with the Foreign Secretary making clear that any process must involve a transition away from Assad, who could not be part of Syria's future.

Migration

Over lunch the Council discussed the external aspects of migration, covering the Eastern Mediterranean, Western Balkans and the Central Mediterranean routes. There was broad support for increasing work on the upstream aspects of migration and for Turkey as a strategic partner.

EU / ACP relations post-Cotonou

Ms Mogherini and Johannes Hahn (Commissioner for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations) presented the joint consultation paper on EU/ACP relations post- Cotonou. Detailed discussion would formally begin at the Foreign Affairs Council (Development) on Monday 26 October. Ms Mogherini

underlined that the post-Cotonou agenda also covered a range of non-development issues: Foreign Ministers would therefore return to the subject next year.

Ministers agreed without discussion a number of measures:

The Council approved the High Representative's report on the twenty-first and twenty- second operation ALTHEA six-monthly review.

The Council adopted conclusions on Libya.

The Council adopted conclusions on Syria.

The Council adopted conclusions on migration.

The Council adopted conclusions on Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The Council adopted conclusions on South Sudan.

The Council authorised the European Commission and the High Representative to open negotiations on a new, legally binding and overarching agreement with Armenia and adopted a corresponding negotiating mandate.

The Council amended the agreement establishing the association between the EU and

Chile.

The Council decided to extend until the end of April 2016 the validity of an existing Council decision in support of the practical implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1540 (2004) on non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery.

The Council decided to continue the EU's support for the activities of the preparatory Commission of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organisation (CTBTO).

The Council amended the restrictive measures in view of the situation in Syria.

The Council amended the statements of reasons for persons and groups subject to restrictive measures with a view to combating terrorism.

The Council approved a recast version of decision 2011/411/CFSP, which established the European Defence Agency, to improve the clarity of the legal text.

General Affairs Council

A provisional report of the meeting and conclusions adopted can be found at:

<http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetinas/aac/2015/10/13/>

The General Affairs Council (GAC) on 13 October focused on preparation of the European Council on 15 October 2015, and the 2016 Commission work programme. Under Any Other Business, the GAC considered the inter-institutional agreement on better regulation and meeting in the margins of the Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council.

Preparation of the October European Council

The GAC prepared the agenda for the 15 October European Council, which the Prime Minister attended. The October European Council discussed migration, reviewed progress on economic and monetary union, and received an update on the UK's renegotiation, including the state of play of technical talks and intentions for the process ahead. The European Council also considered external relations issues, including Libya, Syria, and Turkey.

On migration, I strongly supported the emphasis in the draft Council conclusions on a comprehensive approach to the issue. I also suggested we step up our engagement with Turkey.

2016 Commission work programme

The GAC took note of the Commission's letter of intent for their 2016 work programme and the presidency's draft response on behalf of member states. I welcomed the overall content of the letter of intent, and emphasised the need for continued ambition on completing the single market.

Inter-institutional agreement on better regulation (IIA)

The Luxembourg presidency updated the GAC on the IIA negotiations. Tripartite political talks between the presidency (representing the Council), the European Parliament and the Commission will continue in the coming months. I emphasised the important role of national parliaments in EU decision-making.

Meeting in the margins of the Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council

Denmark expressed concern about a recent meeting of Ministers from eurozone countries held in the margins of the Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council (EPSCO) on 5 October. I had signed a joint letter from non-eurozone member states to the president of the General Affairs Council expressing concern at the planned meeting. During the GAC, I repeated our concern that the meeting had gone ahead and emphasised the need for any further such discussion to include all member states. This position was supported by all non-eurozone members and some eurozone members.

[HCWS268]

HOME DEPARTMENT**Proposed Council Decisions on EU Signature of Council of Europe Conventions**

The Minister for Security (Mr John Hayes): Further to the explanatory memorandum I deposited on 29 June, the Government have decided not to opt in to two Council decisions relating to signature of the new additional protocol to the Council of Europe convention on the prevention of terrorism and the 2005 convention.

The additional protocol contributes to the implementation of UN Security Council resolution (UNSCR) 2178 on "threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts" on tackling foreign fighters, which was unanimously adopted by the Security Council of the United Nations on 24 November 2014. It seeks to set a minimum standard for criminalisation of recruitment to, and receipt of training for, terrorism and the act of travelling abroad for the purpose of terrorism.

The UK participated fully in the development of the additional protocol and has legislation in place which is compliant with the requirements of the additional protocol and the convention. While we consider there to be value in signing the additional protocol, I remain of the view that this is a matter for member states and do not agree with the European Commission's assertion of exclusive EU competence.

Security is a matter for National Governments and National Parliaments. While co-operation across borders is important—indeed, often necessary—it is for the UK to judge what is best done in our national interest. Not

opting in to these proposals will ensure that the UK cannot be caught by any exercise of EU competence in this area, in line with the previous Government's decision not to opt back in to the EU framework decision 2002/475/JHA on combating terrorism, as amended, under the Protocol 36 decision.

[HCWS266]

Scientific Procedures on Living Animals

The Minister for Security (Mr John Hayes): My right hon. Friend the Minister of State, Home Office (Lord Bates) has today made the following written ministerial statement:

My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary is today laying before the House "Statistics of Scientific Procedures on Living Animals Great Britain 2014" (HC 511).

The adoption of the EU directive 2010/63/EU has brought about changes to how the data on the use of animals in science is categorised, and provides consistency across EU member states in the data to be published by the Commission in due course. There has been little change to the numbers or types of procedures that are required to be counted. However, the codification of the procedures has changed in line with the EU requirements for reporting.

Overall, the annual statistical report shows a decrease (6%) in the total number of procedures (3.87 million) performed during 2014 compared with 2013. Of the total number of procedures 1.94 million (50%) are related to the creation/breeding of genetically altered animals that were not used in further procedures and the remaining 1.93 million (50%) were experimental procedures. Given the changes to methodology the precise size of the reduction cannot be quantified.

Mice, fish and rats were the most commonly used species in 2014 accounting for 86% of experimental procedures carried out.

Specially protected species, horses, cats, dogs and non-human primates accounted for 0.8% (16,000) of experimental procedures (0.4% of all procedures) in 2014, the same proportion as in 2013.

I particularly welcome the new requirement for the reporting of the actual severity experienced by animals in the course of procedures. The publication of actual severity increases transparency about the real harms of animal use and will help to drive improvements in welfare standards through targeted refinement initiatives.

The severity of breeding procedures is considered separately from experimental procedures. Of the returns for severity for the 1.94 million breeding procedures, the majority (94%) of animals bred and not used in further procedures were classed as either sub-threshold or mild, 46% and 48% respectively. Only 4% were classed as moderate and 2% as severe. Of the returns for the 1.93 million experimental procedures, those classified as sub-threshold or mild were 9% and 51% respectively, 25% were classified as moderate and 8% as severe. A further 7% were classified as non-recovery.

The latest statistical report and supplementary information, including those for previous years, can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/statistics-of-scientific-procedures-on-living-animals>.

I am pleased to inform the House that I have also today placed in the Library the annual report of the Home Office Animals in Science Regulation Unit (ASRU) for the year 2014. The annual report can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/animals-in-science-regulation-unit-annual-report-2014>

and describes how the Home Office has delivered its responsibilities under the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 to regulate the use of animals, implement the regulations as part of the

delivery of the transposed directive, and engaged with stakeholders. The report also provides details of inspection and cases of non-compliance and the outcomes of those cases concluded in 2014.

The UK is a strong advocate for the life sciences. I am firmly committed to the properly regulated use of animals that continues to play an important role in improving the lives of humans and animals and the safety and sustainability of the environment. This Government seek to maintain the UK's world-leading position by building on our strengths in the life sciences and innovation. To do this we must ensure the 3Rs (replacement, reduction and refinement) are at the heart of what we do.

I am pleased to, therefore, announce that from 1 November 2015, a policy ban on the testing of finished household products, and a qualified ban on the testing of ingredients primarily intended for use in household products, will come into effect. Testing of ingredients will only be exempt from the ban if there is a regulatory requirement for the testing, in which case testing can take place but retrospective notification will be required. In very exceptional circumstances, testing not required by regulations may be allowed but only after a full and detailed application has been considered and specific approval granted.

I am also publishing two advice notes to support how we administer and enforce the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986. The first advice note reaffirms my expectation that all project licence proposals will have fully considered all practicable opportunities to either rehome or set animals free after being used in research. However, the welfare of the animals must always be the primary consideration. Secondly, I am publishing advice on the reuse of animals under the Act. This advice note has the 3Rs at its core and aims to strike a balance between reduction and refinement considerations, taking account of the legal constraints on keeping animals alive and reusing them in further procedures.

The UK has a proud tradition of high-quality science coupled with high standards of animal welfare. Both these documents, together with the other announcements I have made in this statement today, aim to support these important considerations.

[HCWS263]

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Foreign Affairs Council for Development

The Secretary of State for International Development (Justine Greening): On 26 October, I will attend the Foreign Affairs Council for Development in Luxembourg. The meeting will be chaired by the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Federica Mogherini. This is the first Council meeting since the new agenda for Sustainable Development 2030, which the UK played a strong leadership role in shaping, was adopted by world leaders at the post-2015 summit in September. As Secretary of State for International Development, I look forward to participating in the meeting to share the UK experience, including on humanitarian issues and improving the lives of girls and women, and to work with other member states and the Commission to deliver the new global goals by 2030. The UK's continued focus on international development is very much in the national interest.

Agenda for Sustainable Development 2030

I will strongly welcome and underline the UK's continued commitment to championing and implementing the global goals. Building on the Prime Minister's co-chairing of the UN high level panel, the UK played a key role in creating a set of goals that are universal and inclusive, underpinned by a commitment to leave no one behind.

The new global goals address the key elements of the "golden thread", including peace, governance and justice and also an unprecedented ambitious goal on women and girls empowerment. The UK will continue to invest 0.7% of GNI on ODA and I will lobby others to meet their aid obligations. I will push the EU to come up with a comprehensive and ambitious plan for implementation.

Migration and refugees

Ministers will discuss preparations of the EU Africa Valletta summit in November. It is the UK's view that Valetta needs to demonstrate Europe's leadership, commitment and ability to respond quickly to the serious problems posed by migrants crossing the Mediterranean. I believe Valetta needs a substantive discussion on tackling the root causes of migration, which are a mutual challenge faced by Europe and Africa—a lack of growth, jobs, opportunity in African countries—and the concrete actions needed to turn the situation around. The UK has been taking a leading role in ensuring that Valetta will address the underlying causes of migration and displacement. I will continue to press the Commission and other member states to ensure that we approach Valetta with a positive and bold agenda.

World Humanitarian summit

Ministers will discuss next year's World Humanitarian summit. I will strongly welcome the summit, underlining the need to be ambitious and deliver genuinely transformative change. The UK's key priorities are: (1) a focus on the protection of civilians and International Humanitarian Law, (2) building resilience to natural disasters, (3) a new approach to smart finance, (4) a strong focus on women and girls throughout the summit. The summit must deliver significant reforms to the way in which we address humanitarian crises, in particular those associated with long-term conflict. I am particularly concerned to ensure that we leave Istanbul with a better approach to supporting long-term refugees: they must be able to access livelihoods and education if they are to have hope for the future. The UK is committed to longer term financing for protracted crises, such as our work in Syria.

Girls and women

On girls and women, as successfully with the global goals, the UK has been a key actor in shaping and developing the new gender action plan (2016-2020) (GAP). I have continuously pushed for girls and women to be prioritised in the new Commission. Moreover the UK's important role in the GAP taskforce has ensured the document demonstrates a significant shift in the Commissions commitment to girls and women. The publication of the new EU GAP provides a landmark opportunity for the EU to take significant steps forward in delivering tangible results for women and girls across the world. The Council will endorse the new GAP at the FAC-DEV. I will press for its full implementation, ensuring that the Commission and EEAS are held accountable when and where the GAP is not implemented.

Post-Cotonou

The Commission and European External Action Service (EEAS) have launched an online public consultation on the future of EU-ACP (Africa, Caribbean, and Pacific) relations once the Cotonou agreement expires in 2020. This is an important opportunity for the EU to modernise its relationship with the ACP, so that it is relevant, forward-looking and consistent with agenda 2030. I will

call for the Commission to keep all options open, base policy decisions on the evidence of Cotonou's impact and actively seek a broad range of views during the consultation period, including with individual states and regional bodies that are inside and outside the ACP grouping.

Council conclusions and other agenda items

Council conclusions on the gender action plan and policy coherence for development will be approved. In addition, three AOB topics have been tabled: (1) Burkina Faso, (2) a joint letter from the Netherlands, France and Germany calling for a European initiative to support African Youth and (3) Capacity Building for Security and Development.

[HCWS262]

We have also made smaller changes to the code. The majority of these either codify what is already happening in practice or require small adjustments to existing policy or practice.

A statutory instrument will be laid by 26 October which will bring the revised code into force on 16 November.

Copies of the new Victims' code are available in the Vote Office and the Printed Paper Office. The Government response to the consultation has been deposited in the Libraries of both Houses. More information on the Victims' code and relevant consultation documents can be found on the Ministry of Justice website at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/revising-the-victims-code>.

[HCWS267]

JUSTICE

Code of Practice for Victims of Crime

The Minister for Policing, Crime and Criminal Justice (Mike Penning): Today the Government published a new code of practice for victims of crime (the Victims' code). The Victims' code sets out how victims must be treated by the criminal justice system.

The coalition Government updated the Victims' code to give victims clear entitlements. This Government are committed to making sure that victims are recognised and treated in a respectful and sensitive manner. We are working to implement directive 2012/29/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 October 2012 (the directive) by 16 November. The Victims' code is the primary means through which we are implementing the directive.

We consulted from 16 July to 16 August on some technical changes to the code required to comply with the directive's minimum standards. In some respects we already go much further, such as enhanced entitlements for victims of the most serious crimes; a victim's right to make a personal statement and to ask to read it in court; and special measures to help vulnerable witnesses to give their best evidence in and out of court. We intend to do even more. We have committed to introduce measures to increase further the rights of victims of crime and we will publish more detail in due course.

We received 1,875 responses to the consultation, which we have carefully considered. As a result, we are proceeding as planned with the three main changes on which we consulted.

The first main change broadens the definition of a victim under the code, so that victims of all criminal offences are entitled to receive support and information, not just victims of the more serious criminal offences that are notifiable under the National Crime Recording Standards.

The second main change means that victims are entitled to receive support and information services from relevant investigative and prosecutorial organisations, not just the police and Crown Prosecution Service.

The third main change makes sure that a victim who reports a crime receives a written acknowledgment which states the basic elements of the criminal offence.

Smoking in Prisons

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Justice (Andrew Selous): When I wrote to the Justice Select Committee on 29 September 2015 to announce our approach to smoking in prisons, I committed to inform Parliament through a written ministerial statement after recess. This statement confirms the announcement in my letter to the Justice Select Committee and does not add any detail.

It is the intention of the Ministry of Justice to implement a full smoke-free policy in all prisons in Wales from January 2016 and at four early adopter sites in England (HMPs Exeter, Channings Wood, Dartmoor and Erlestoke) from March.

Since the introduction of smoking legislation in 2007, our desire has been to move towards smoke-free prisons but, given the high prevalence of smoking and the unique environment of prisons, implementation of smoke-free prisons is a challenge.

National policy currently allows prisoners to smoke in their cells but not in communal areas. The National Offender Management Service (NOMS) has continued to keep this issue under review and introduced measures to reduce the risk of exposure to second-hand smoke while ensuring order and control is maintained. This requires a careful and phased approach as we move towards fulfilling our long-standing goal of smoke-free prisons.

Our steps to date include the recent and highly successful roll-out of electronic cigarettes to all prisons. These are available in every prison shop and offer a comparable alternative to traditional tobacco products in cost terms. From next month, prisoners in open prisons will not be able to smoke indoors and will only be able to smoke in designated outdoor areas. Plans are also under way to provide voluntary smoke-free areas in all prisons from early next year.

However, we need to do more. Two recent academic studies commissioned by NOMS have identified that high levels of second-hand smoke in some communal areas are still prevalent in some prisons. These were published on gov.uk on 29 September 2015.

The findings of these studies have reinforced our commitment to move towards smoke-free prisons as soon as possible in a safe and controlled way.

In developing our plans for smoke-free prisons, we have learnt from a number of other jurisdictions who have already successfully implemented a smoke-free policy across their prison estate. Canada has been smoke free since 2008, New Zealand since 2011, and parts of Australia since 2013. Broadmoor secure hospital also went smoke free in 2007. We have used the lessons from their experiences to inform our strategy, including a long, phased implementation period, in order to move to smoke free safely.

Following these preparations, we are now ready to move forward with these plans in a controlled and careful way. In partnership with the Welsh Government we will begin to implement a smoke-free policy in all prisons in Wales (HMPs Cardiff, Parc, Swansea and Usk/Prescoed) from January 2016, and at four prisons in England (HMPs Exeter, Channings Wood, Dartmoor and Erlestoke) from March 2016. From now until the smoke-free implementation date these prisons will be encouraging and supporting prisoners to stop smoking through a range of smoking cessation support and advice, including nicotine replacement therapy. We will continue to take a sensible and considered approach, using the experience of the first prisons to go smoke free to inform the speed at which we move to smoke free across our remaining prisons.

We have no plans to move to smoke-free prisons overnight and will only do so in a phased way that takes into account operational resilience and readiness of each prison. The operational safety and security of our prisons will always be our top priority.

[HCWS260]

WORK AND PENSIONS

Benefit Sanctions Policy: Response to Work and Pensions Committee Report

The Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (Mr Iain Duncan Smith): I have today provided the Government's response to the Work and Pensions Select Committee report on benefit sanctions.

I am very grateful for the Committee's work which has set out many helpful recommendations.

We have been building a labour market system in which each claimant, closely assisted by a work coach, agrees the steps they need to take to secure a job, receives support to help them do so, and understands the requirements placed on them in return for their benefits. Last week's labour market statistics showed the UK's employment rate had reached 73.6%, the highest since records began; evidence that the system is working.

Accepted by Labour, coalition and Conservative Governments, sanctions are a necessary part of that system and we keep them under regular review, making improvements where necessary. In response to the Select Committee I am announcing that we will be introducing a number of changes.

Prompted by the yellow card approach recommended by the Work and Pensions Select Committee, we will trial from early next year a system of warning before a sanction is imposed. At present people are notified of a sanction and it is imposed immediately afterwards. In some cases, claimants go on to challenge the decision and the sanction may be overturned. We will trial arrangements whereby claimants are given a warning of our intention to sanction and a 14-day period to provide evidence of good reason before the decision to sanction is made. During this time, claimants will have another opportunity to provide further evidence to explain their non-compliance. We will then review this information before deciding whether a sanction remains appropriate. We expect that this will strike the right balance between enforcing the claimant commitment and fairness.

We will reintroduce automated JSA sanctions notifications. In 2001 under the last Labour Government, the process for issuing notifications was changed, replacing automated letters with arrangements whereby staff had to manually trigger a notification. Recent analysis assessed historic compliance with these arrangements when notifying of decisions of JSA sanctions as above 93%. The Department has introduced new checks to move compliance towards 100%, and will revert to the arrangements before 2001 of issuing letters automatically. The Department will write to claimants it has identified who may not have had a decision letter to explain the position. Further information for anyone who may have been affected will be available on gov.uk.

We will consider extending the definition of "at risk" groups we use for hardship purposes to include those with mental health conditions and those who are homeless. This will mean that they can seek access to hardship from day one of a sanction being applied. We have recently accelerated the process for considering hardship claims so they are now paid within three days. Subject to further work on feasibility we will accept the Committee's recommendation to have a decision maker set up an appointment to discuss hardship where a claimant is either vulnerable or has dependent children, a step which would help decisions to be made even more quickly.

The Government see sanctions as playing an important part in the labour market system, encouraging people to comply with conditions which will help them move into work. We want the sanctions system to be clear, fair and effective in promoting positive behaviours and we will continue to keep it under review so that it meets those aims.

[HCWS259]

Petition

Thursday 22 October 2015

PRESENTED PETITION

Petition presented to the House but not read on the Floor

Inquiry into treatment of W.A.I.T.R. personnel in Nigeria

The petition of Geoffrey Moffat,

Declares that the petitioner carried out two tours of duty as a field officer in Nigeria between 1957 and 1961 with the quasi-government organisation W.A.I.T.R (West African Institute for Trypanosomiasis Research); further that the petitioner believes he was treated unjustly and that he should have not been recruited in the manner he was; further that on arrival in Nigeria, he was denied the usual formal induction process; further that later, the petitioner had his terms of service deceitfully changed; further that the petitioner believes that information was withheld from him by the Colonial Office following termination of his services; further that such information would have enabled him to put forward a formal redress

of grievance to W.A.I.T.R; further that since 1961, the petitioner has continuously complained to the Colonial Office and its successor, DFID, about his shameful treatment; further that in 2011, the petitioner submitted a 12 page analysis supporting his allegation to DFID but believes that it was not put in front of the Minister for political consideration; further that the petitioner notes that he had received a very poor (mainly wartime) education and following short R.A.F service had intended to undertake extended higher education; further that the petitioner gave up the opportunity for education to take up long term employment with W.A.I.T.R because qualifications were not required; and further that this meant that the petitioner was extremely disadvantaged when his employment was terminated without any provision for readjustment.

The petitioner therefore requests that the House of Commons urges the Government to set up an independent inquiry into treatment of W.A.I.T.R personnel in Nigeria, particularly in relation to the petitioner's own service and further requests that in doing so, considers the case of John Hare (author of "Last Man In") who received compensation after similar treatment.

And the petitioner remains, etc.

[P001551]

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