

**Wednesday
1 February 2017**

**Volume 620
No. 103**



**HOUSE OF COMMONS
OFFICIAL REPORT**

**PARLIAMENTARY
DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

Wednesday 1 February 2017

House of Commons

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The House met at half-past Eleven o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

BUSINESS BEFORE QUESTIONS

MIDDLE LEVEL BILL

Motion made, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Hon. Members: Object.

Bill to be read a Second time on Wednesday 8 February.

Oral Answers to Questions

NORTHERN IRELAND

The Secretary of State was asked—

Leaving the EU: Common Travel Area

1. **Ian Blackford** (Ross, Skye and Lochaber) (SNP): What assessment he has made of the effect of the UK's decision to leave the EU on the future of the Common Travel Area between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. [908413]

3. **Carol Monaghan** (Glasgow North West) (SNP): What assessment he has made of the effect of the UK's decision to leave the EU on the future of the Common Travel Area between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. [908415]

James Brokenshire: Before I answer, I would remind the House that this is the final Northern Ireland questions before the Assembly election on 2 March. These are critical elections for the future of Northern Ireland, and I would urge the parties to conduct the campaign in a manner that allows for the speediest return to partnership government. Only power-sharing government will deliver the political stability that the vast majority of people in Northern Ireland want to see, and which remains the priority for this Government to secure.

As my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister made clear, maintaining the common travel area is one of the Government's 12 priorities in negotiating exit from the EU. It is the Government's intention to deliver a practical solution that allows the maintenance of the common travel area while protecting the integrity of the UK's immigration system.

Ian Blackford: Mòran taing, Mr Speaker—thank you, good morning.

Mr Speaker: Thank you very much indeed. All compliments gratefully accepted.

Ian Blackford: A hard border would be disastrous for communities that live along that border, especially in economic terms. What assurances can the Secretary of State offer that the common travel area will be top of the agenda in any Brexit negotiations? Will it be more important than restricting the freedom of movement elsewhere in the UK, for instance? Will Ministers assure us that the common travel area is part of any trade deal done with the European Union?

James Brokenshire: I have already indicated the priority that is given to securing the common travel area. This is a very strong commitment that this Government have given, and a point that I have underlined on many occasions. It is also a shared intent with ourselves, the Irish Government and the Northern Ireland Executive. It is therefore with that approach, and with that shared will, that we look to the negotiations ahead, getting the common travel area secured and seeing that frictionless border that is equally important to the politics and life of Northern Ireland.

Carol Monaghan: Will the common travel area be the UK's only area of free travel with the EU or will it be free trade and free travel?

James Brokenshire: As I have said, the priority, as set out in the 12 points that the Prime Minister made in her speech, was securing the common travel area. That has served us over so many years, dating back to the 1920s. We believe that it is really important that we seek to attain that, as well as getting frictionless trade in goods, which is also a key priority.

Kevin Foster (Torbay) (Con): I welcome the Government's determination to maintain the common travel area across our islands. Does the Secretary of State agree that the friendly relations it symbolises could only be strengthened by the Republic joining the Commonwealth as an associate member, as suggested by Senator Frank Feighan during his visit to the House yesterday?

James Brokenshire: Obviously that is a matter for the Irish Government, but the point that my hon. Friend makes about strong, friendly relationships between ourselves and the Irish Government is well made. It was with that intent, and with that theme, that the Prime Minister met the Taoiseach earlier this week and underlined the importance of continuing to work together to get the best outcome for Northern Ireland and for the island of Ireland.

Charlie Elphicke (Dover) (Con): Does my right hon. Friend agree that while this Government are committed to the free movement of people and goods across the whole of Ireland, it is also important that the European Union should do its bit to see Ireland right as well?

James Brokenshire: The European Union and member states recognise the significance of Northern Ireland, and the significance of the politics on the island of Ireland. Indeed, we have seen investment and political engagement from within the European Union. We will continue to underline that in the negotiations ahead,

and that is why I remain positive that we can secure a good deal for Northern Ireland within the UK but outside the EU.

11. [908423] **John Nicolson** (East Dunbartonshire) (SNP): Given Ireland's immigration criteria, and how different they are from the UK's, I do not quite understand how anyone can stop European Union citizens from travelling through Ireland and on to the UK. Can the right hon. Gentleman spell it out for us?

James Brokenshire: There is broad alignment of policy in relation to the Republic of Ireland and the UK. That has been part of the bedrock of the common travel area and its existence over many years. Indeed, it is an aspect of how we have sought to create new visa issues in relation to China that have allowed travel to Ireland and also to the United Kingdom, and how co-operation between ourselves and the Irish Government is very good.

15. [908427] **Alan Brown** (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (SNP): Post-Brexit, common travel area, no hard border: a Polish family moves to Ireland. Will they have free movement into Northern Ireland? If not, how does that square with Ireland being a member of the European Union?

James Brokenshire: As I have indicated to the House this morning, we are committed to securing the common travel area and, yes, we are also committed to dealing with issues of immigration, which were at the forefront of the campaign. The Home Office is working on the detail of a new immigration policy that I am sure will be a matter of debate in the House in future.

Sammy Wilson (East Antrim) (DUP): The Government have rightly sought to identify the issues that affect different regions and sectors of the economy and to build those into their negotiating position. Regardless of the common travel area, can the Secretary of State assure us that all parts of the United Kingdom will leave the EU on an equal basis and that no special arrangements, different conditions or special circumstances will be afforded to Northern Ireland that would weaken our position within the United Kingdom and treat us differently from other parts of it?

James Brokenshire: As a Government, we are very clear about the strengths of the Union and how that matters to us all. The approach that we take is based on getting the best possible deal for all parts of the United Kingdom. Yes, there will be some specific factors in Northern Ireland of which the hon. Gentleman is well aware—we have talked about the border and there are other issues as well—but our approach is with that intent and focus. Therefore concepts of special status are the wrong approach. It is rather about looking at special factors and special circumstances and dealing with them effectively.

Dr Alasdair McDonnell (Belfast South) (SDLP): May I agree with the Secretary of State in that we are very impressed with the strength of the Union, too—that is, the European Union? Beyond the common travel area, there appears to be a significant gap between the wishful thinking and the reality of movement of goods. What

assessment has the Secretary of State made of the effect of exiting the customs union on the movement of goods and services between Northern Ireland and the Republic?

James Brokenshire: As the hon. Gentleman will have seen, the Prime Minister's speech underlined the clear desire of the Government in the negotiations ahead to get the best possible trading arrangements with the European Union and therefore we are reflecting on how we do that, whether that is some form of membership of a customs union or a bespoke customs agreement. He should be intent on our desire to get that deal and to see a frictionless border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

Danny Kinahan (South Antrim) (UUP): I welcome the comments of the Secretary of State on having an election that produces parties that want to work together, because that is exactly what we want. When it comes to the common travel area, have we looked at the legal implications, not just within other Departments but in how it is respected by Europe itself? Does it really exist there? Do they see it as a law that stands in place?

James Brokenshire: The hon. Gentleman may be interested to know that the ability for the Republic of Ireland and the United Kingdom to make arrangements in relation to the common travel area has been recognised in previous EU agreements. It is therefore that approach that we take in securing the future of the common travel area and underlining its importance to our European partners. I am positive that we can do that.

Inward Investment

2. **Jeff Smith** (Manchester, Withington) (Lab): What assessment he has made of the effect of the political situation on inward investment into Northern Ireland. [908414]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Kris Hopkins): The economy in Northern Ireland continues to grow. Since 2010, there are 54,000 more people in work and, over the year, the employment rate has increased and the claimant count has now fallen for the ninth consecutive month. The Government are committed to working with the Northern Ireland parties to bring about political stability. This is key to bringing further growth and investment to Northern Ireland.

Jeff Smith: Some 33.4% of all exports from Northern Ireland go south across the border and 54.7% go to the EU. Leaving the EU will affect Northern Ireland more than any other region in the UK. The previous answer was pretty vague, so what specific steps will the Secretary of State take to ensure that those exports are protected in order to protect inward investment?

Kris Hopkins: The specifics of the mechanism are for the negotiation, but what we should understand is that Northern Ireland produces high-quality goods, has a high-skilled employment base and it will be successful. We will facilitate that.

Mr Laurence Robertson (Tewkesbury) (Con): Does the Minister agree that news from Northern Ireland is seen, read and heard across the world? Is it not important,

therefore, that the institutions get up and running again straight after the forthcoming elections to give confidence to potential investors right across the world that Northern Ireland is, indeed, a great place to invest?

Kris Hopkins: My hon. Friend, who is very wise on Northern Ireland issues and makes a massive contribution, is right. We can do much from Westminster, but it is the parties in Northern Ireland that need to take responsibility, come together and guide the economic growth that is so needed in Northern Ireland.

Deidre Brock (Edinburgh North and Leith) (SNP): As the Secretary of State noted, there is an Assembly election that will be followed by negotiations on ministerial responsibilities, all in uncertain times. Can the Minister offer any assurances that austerity will not be the rock upon which peace founders? Will the funding for legacy issues be guaranteed in the new Assembly, and will funding for other policy imperatives be eased? Will he ensure that the Assembly can function properly in financial terms?

Kris Hopkins: The Government are committed to developing an economy that works for everybody in the United Kingdom. We are implementing an industrial strategy, which has a massive part to play in Northern Ireland. I welcome the consultation that has been launched, which includes Northern Ireland. The economy in Northern Ireland is strong. There is a desire between the UK Government and the Republic of Ireland to ensure that we have a constructive and positive relationship in the future.

7. [908419] **Robert Courts** (Witney) (Con): My hon. Friend will be aware that the main parties in Northern Ireland have endorsed the devolution of corporation tax powers to the Assembly, which would have a transformative effect on the economy of Northern Ireland. Does he agree that it would be a tragedy if the chance to do so were lost due to the lack of a functioning Executive and Assembly?

Kris Hopkins: The Government believe that reducing the rate of corporation tax to 12.5% in Northern Ireland could bring significant benefits for jobs, investment and growth. I hope that we can return to the wider progress we have proposed on this issue following the Assembly election and the formation of a new Executive.

Mr Nigel Dodds (Belfast North) (DUP): Does the Minister accept that, with unemployment in Northern Ireland at its lowest level since 2008 and Northern Ireland posting the highest increase in exports of any region of the United Kingdom last year, the Executive were making substantial progress in improving the economy of Northern Ireland over the previous two years?

Kris Hopkins: I recognise all those statistics. It is important that we constantly reiterate the positive position that Northern Ireland is in. Like me, Members of this House and the people of Northern Ireland want the Assembly to come back together and offer guidance and leadership to make sure that we grow the economy.

Mr Dodds: Those of us on the Democratic Unionist Benches certainly share that aspiration. We want to see devolution up and running, and we want to see jobs and investment. The Minister will understand our frustration

and the frustration—and, indeed, anger—of the people of Northern Ireland that the good progress we were making has been put in peril, as have jobs and investment, as a result of Sinn Féin's decision to collapse the Executive and cause an unnecessary election. Will he commit to work, over the coming weeks and months, with those of us who are in this House to improve the situation for people's jobs and investment into Northern Ireland?

Kris Hopkins: I am not going to get involved in the politics of Northern Ireland and why the Executive fell down. What is important is that the people of Northern Ireland want leadership from their politicians in Northern Ireland. What I can promise the right hon. Gentleman is that the Secretary of State and I will do everything to make sure that we have a strong Assembly that offers leadership in Northern Ireland.

Mr David Anderson (Blaydon) (Lab): May I start by asking the House to accept the Labour leader's heartfelt apologies for his mistaken statement last week, when he said that a member of the Police Service of Northern Ireland had been killed? I am sure the House will agree that we all want to see the officer make good progress. We wish him and his family well.

There is no doubt that political instability worries businesses, but a much bigger day-to-day threat is the burden placed on business by the crushing cost of energy in Northern Ireland. Electricity generators are charging customers 58% more than the EU average, while pulling in gross profits of €900 million a year. Will the Secretary of State meet the energy regulator urgently to impress on it the need to rein in these fat cat profiteers?

Kris Hopkins: We will do everything we can to ensure that there is a good economic link between the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. The common economic connector is an important part of that and we will work together to resolve that issue.

Article 50: Northern Ireland Assembly

4. **Stephen Gethins** (North East Fife) (SNP): What steps he is taking to ensure that the Northern Ireland Assembly will be consulted before the triggering of article 50. [908416]

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (James Brokenshire): We are determined that Northern Ireland's voice will be heard. All the devolved Administrations will be fully engaged in the process of preparing to leave the European Union. We will continue to consult the devolved Administrations, including through the Joint Ministerial Committee (EU Negotiations).

Stephen Gethins: Membership of the single market is obviously critical to Northern Ireland. Given the commitment to the common travel area, will the Minister tell us what blockages, apart from political ones, remain to Scotland and Northern Ireland remaining part of the single market?

James Brokenshire: The Prime Minister was robust in her stance on wanting the freest and best possible trading arrangements with the European Union to allow UK companies to operate with and trade in the EU. I hope that the hon. Gentleman supports that.

12. [908424] **Jo Churchill** (Bury St Edmunds) (Con): From his broad discussions with businesses, does my right hon. Friend agree that Northern Ireland remains a great place to do business and that we must all do all we can to ensure that that continues after we leave the EU?

James Brokenshire: I agree that Northern Ireland is a great place to do business. There are some amazing companies, entrepreneurs and businesses there. That is why we want to see Northern Ireland continue to grow and flourish and have an Executive in place at the earliest opportunity.

14. [908426] **Chris Law** (Dundee West) (SNP): In his statement on 17 January, the Secretary of State said:

“I will continue to have engagements across the community, with business, with the voluntary and community sector and more broadly, to ensure that we continue to listen to and reflect upon the views of people in Northern Ireland”.—[*Official Report*, 17 January 2017; Vol. 619, c. 782.]

What meetings has he had with communities in Northern Ireland since then and what meetings does he plan between now and the Assembly election?

James Brokenshire: We continue to have meetings with our community sector roundtable, and only last week I met representatives of the business community through my business advisory group. I am very clear about continuing to listen intently to views across Northern Ireland to help inform our approach as we look to the negotiations ahead with the EU.

Ian Paisley (North Antrim) (DUP): Sinn Féin’s decision unilaterally to collapse the Northern Ireland Executive means that they have excluded themselves from any discussions on article 50. Will the Secretary of State, along with the Brexit Secretary, continue to work closely with members of the Northern Ireland parties that attend this House, to ensure that our voice is heard deeply and fully in that important matter?

James Brokenshire: The Joint Ministerial Committee met earlier this week in plenary session, and I was pleased to see representatives of the Northern Ireland Executive. We want that to continue. Obviously, in the House, I will continue to listen to the views of right hon. and hon. Members to ensure that we carefully reflect Northern Ireland’s voice.

Stephen Pound (Ealing North) (Lab): Although the foul, mephitic fug of Brexit has cast the land into shadow, life must go on. Further to the Secretary of State’s comments, he will accept that the JMC is currently the main body for consultation with the devolved institutions. Yet this body has no authority, no Standing Orders and no fixed rules. Will the Secretary of State commit to formalising the role of the JMC, the crucial body during the negotiations in these dark days?

James Brokenshire: The Joint Ministerial Committee operates between each of the different nations of the UK and regulates those arrangements. We see it playing an important role, not only now, but in the future, with European negotiations being part of that, in seeking to ensure that the voice of the devolved Administrations is heard loud and clear and to get the best arrangements for all parts of the UK.

Security

5. **Tom Tugendhat** (Tonbridge and Malling) (Con): What recent discussions he has had with the Northern Ireland Executive on the security situation in Northern Ireland. [908417]

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (James Brokenshire): I know that the House will join me in condemning the despicable shooting of a police officer in north Belfast on Sunday 22 January. Our thoughts are with the injured officer, who remains in hospital, his family and colleagues.

My officials and I have regular discussions with the Justice Minister, the Chief Constable, and partners as we work to keep the people of Northern Ireland safe and secure.

Tom Tugendhat: My right hon. Friend will have the support of the whole House when he speaks so warmly of the police officer who was so brutally attacked only recently. I know the Secretary of State is working closely with the intelligence services, the military and the police to ensure security in the region. Will he please tell me a little more about what he is doing to take forward the security of an important part of the United Kingdom?

James Brokenshire: I commend the work of the Police Service of Northern Ireland, the Security Service and other agencies to keep Northern Ireland safe. The level of threat in Northern Ireland is severe, as that appalling incident underlines. I will continue to work with all partners to secure the safe Northern Ireland we want. I spoke to the Chief Constable on that issue only this morning. [*Interruption.*]

Mr Speaker: Order. May I gently remind the House—[*Interruption.*] Order. We are discussing the security situation in Northern Ireland—a matter of enormous importance and gravity. Perhaps we can respond accordingly.

9. [908421] **Vernon Coaker** (Gedling) (Lab): I join the Secretary of State in utterly condemning the disgraceful terrorist attack on a police officer in Northern Ireland. In that light, will the Secretary of State tell me and the House what response he will make to the Chief Constable’s comments in the *Belfast Telegraph* this morning, in which he talked about the need to ensure that more people from the community have the confidence to come forward and speak to the police and security services about these matters?

James Brokenshire: I agree entirely with a number of the points the hon. Gentleman has made. This was an utterly despicable act and an attack on the whole community, and should be seen as such. The Chief Constable has made those points about people feeling confident in coming forward. There is an ongoing investigation—it is very live—and we are looking through our approach to confronting paramilitarism to see that people have confidence to come forward to give evidence. That is clearly work that needs to continue.

10. [908422] **Rebecca Harris** (Castle Point) (Con): What assessment has my right hon. Friend made of the current security situation in Northern Ireland?

James Brokenshire: My hon. Friend will wish to know that we have a severe level of threat in Northern Ireland from terrorism. The appalling attack we saw on a young, brave police officer just in the past fortnight underlines the nature of that threat and the fact that there are those in Northern Ireland who would wish to commit acts of violence against the police, members of our armed forces and prison officers. We must be vigilant against that threat.

Ms Margaret Ritchie (South Down) (SDLP) *rose—*

Mr Speaker: Does the hon. Member for South Down wish to contribute on this question?

Ms Ritchie: No, the next one.

Mr Speaker: Well, we might not get there. We will see.

Mark Durkan (Foyle) (SDLP): May I join in the condemnation of the deplorable attack on the police officer? May I also use this occasion to pay a quick tribute to my constituent and opponent, and now fellow former Deputy First Minister Martin McGuinness, for the calibre and tenure of his service in our democratic institutions? I wish him well in his personal battle.

Does the Secretary of State recognise that, in meeting Executive Ministers, he would be meeting Ministers who have taken a pledge to uphold the rule of law, based as it is on the fundamental principles of fairness, impartiality and democratic accountability, including support for policing and the courts? Will he meet that same benchmark and remove the comments he has previously made—

Mr Speaker: Order. Enough! We have got the gist.

James Brokenshire: I am very clear on upholding the rule of law and seeing that we support our agencies, which have that independence to pursue evidence where they see it. Indeed, there is a very live ongoing investigation to get to the bottom of that appalling act and hold those responsible to account—it was an appalling act against a brave PSNI officer who was doing his duty, upholding the law and protecting the community.

Mrs Theresa Villiers (Chipping Barnet) (Con): Is not the job faced by the police in Northern Ireland to keep people safe made harder by the tendencies of the Northern Ireland courts to let terrorists out on bail, sometimes only weeks after an original arrest?

James Brokenshire: There are important issues that need to be examined and addressed in relation to the criminal justice system. Bail is one part of that, as are sentencing and the time it takes for cases to proceed. We will continue to work with the Executive to see that progress can be made.

Lady Hermon (North Down) (Ind): In dealing with—
[*Interruption.*]

Mr Speaker: Order. The hon. Lady can scarcely be heard by anybody, let alone the Minister.

Lady Hermon: Thank you; that is very kind of you, Mr Speaker. I am very grateful indeed.

In dealing with the security situation in Northern Ireland, the Secretary of State will recognise how important it is that the Northern Ireland Office sends a very clear message that the rule of law prevails in Northern Ireland, so will he kindly take this opportunity to put on the record his full confidence in the independence and integrity of the Lord Chief Justice, Sir Declan Morgan, and indeed the Director of Public Prosecutions?

James Brokenshire: I am very happy to do so in very clear and unequivocal terms: it is essential that we uphold the rule of law without fear or favour, and I absolutely support the work of the police and all those who are responsible for taking that forward and seeing that those who are committing the acts that we are discussing this morning are held to account and brought to justice.

Mr David Anderson (Blaydon) (Lab): On Monday, I met a woman whose mother was killed 46 years ago and who asked me to ask the Secretary of State whether he understood that there can be no real peace unless we deal with the past. To that end and as a start, will the right hon. Gentleman commit to raise with the Irish Government the need to ensure the fullest possible public access to the papers relating to the Kingsmill murders and to deliver an effective route by which the families of those who lost loved ones at Ballymurphy can reach some form of closure?

James Brokenshire: I thank the hon. Gentleman, and his message about the raw pain and emotion that continue to be felt by so many of those who were affected by the troubles is one that I equally recognise. It is important that we can make progress in relation to the Stormont House legacy bodies. We will continue to make representations to the Irish Government on a range of issues, and I note the specific point that he raises with me this morning.

Prime Minister

The Prime Minister was asked—

Engagements

Q1. [908498] **Peter Heaton-Jones** (North Devon) (Con): If she will list her official engagements for Wednesday 1 February.

The Prime Minister (Mrs Theresa May): I am sure that the whole House will join me in offering our condolences to the families and friends of those who lost their lives and were injured in the gun attack in Quebec City on Sunday, and in paying tribute to our former colleague Tam Dalyell, who died last Friday. He was an outstanding parliamentarian, and I am sure that all our thoughts are with his friends and family.

This morning, I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall have further such meetings later today.

Peter Heaton-Jones: I associate myself with the remarks made by the Prime Minister and the tribute paid to the victims in Canada and to the family of Tam Dalyell.

North Devon is quite rightly concerned that the current review of health services across the county may result in the loss of some acute services at our hospital in Barnstaple. For some residents, the nearest alternative could be three hours away. Will my right hon. Friend assure me that she will listen carefully to those concerns, because I want to be able to say to North Devon that we are the party of the NHS?

The Prime Minister: I thank my hon. Friend for his question. I can reassure him that this Government are absolutely committed to ensuring the best possible healthcare for patients right across the country. I recognise that concerns have been expressed locally about the North Devon district hospital. I understand that there are no specific proposals at the moment, but I know that the input of local communities will remain crucial throughout the process, and I can assure him that of course it is this party in government that is putting the extra funding into the NHS and showing how we value it.

Jeremy Corbyn (Islington North) (Lab): I join the Prime Minister in offering condolences to all those who died in the horrific attack, fuelled by hate, in Quebec, and we should send our solidarity to everyone in Canada on this sad occasion.

May I also associate myself with the Prime Minister's tribute to the former Member for West Lothian, and later Linlithgow, Tam Dalyell? A Labour MP and former Father of the House, he doggedly fought to expose official wrongdoing and cover-ups, from the miners strike to Iraq. I am sure the Prime Minister would agree that Tam's scrutiny and contributions made this House a better place, and may I recommend to all Members his autobiography "The Importance of Being Awkward"? *[Interruption.]* And I am quite happy to offer my copy to the Secretary of State for Brexit to have a good read of it. I am sure that he has probably already read it.

At last week's Prime Minister Question Time, the Prime Minister told the House:

"I am not afraid to speak frankly to a President of the United States".—*[Official Report, 25 January 2017; Vol. 620, c. 288.]*

What happened?

The Prime Minister: First, let me say that I was not aware of Tam Dalyell's book "The Importance of Being Awkward", but given the number of resignations that the right hon. Gentleman has had from his Front Bench, I suspect that some of his colleagues have indeed read it.

I am pleased to say to the right hon. Gentleman that when I visited the United States, I was able to build on the relationship that we have with our most important ally and get some very significant commitments from President Trump. Crucial among those was a 100% commitment to NATO—NATO which keeps us safe and keeps Europe safe too.

Jeremy Corbyn: Downing Street has not denied that the Prime Minister was told by the White House that the Executive order on travel to the US was imminent, so let us be clear: was the Prime Minister told about the ban during her visit, and did she try to persuade President Trump otherwise?

The Prime Minister: On the policy that President Trump has introduced, this Government are clear that it is wrong. We would not do it. In six years as Home Secretary, I never introduced such a policy. We believe it is divisive and wrong. If the right hon. Gentleman is asking me whether I had advance notice of the ban on refugees, the answer is no. If he is asking me if I had advance notice that the Executive order could affect British citizens, the answer is no. If he is asking if I had advance notice of the travel restrictions, the answer is, we all did, because President Trump said in his election campaign that he was going to do this. The question is how to respond. The job of Government is not to chase the headlines; the job of Government is not to take to the streets in protest; the job of Government is to protect the interests of British citizens, and that is exactly what we did.

Jeremy Corbyn: On the day after the Executive order was made to ban refugees and visitors from seven predominantly Muslim countries, why did the Prime Minister three times refuse to condemn the ban?

The Prime Minister: I have made it very clear that we believe that this policy is divisive and wrong, and that it is not a policy that we would introduce. I have also made it very clear when asked about this that this Government have a very different approach to these issues. On refugees, this Government have a proud record of the support that we have given to them, and long may it continue.

Jeremy Corbyn: The Prime Minister said:

"The United States is responsible for the United States' policy on refugees."

But surely it is the responsibility of all of us to defend the 1951 refugee convention, which commits this country, the United States and 142 other states to accept refugees without regard to their

"race, religion or country of origin."

President Trump has breached that convention. Why did she not speak out?

The Prime Minister: First, I have made absolutely clear what the Government's view on this policy is. Secondly, as I have just said, this Government and this country have a proud record on how we welcome refugees. In recent years, we have introduced a very particular scheme to ensure that particularly vulnerable refugees in Syria can be brought to this country, and something like 10,000 Syrian refugees have come to this country since the conflict began. We are also the second biggest bilateral donor, helping and supporting refugees in the region. That is what we are doing. I have said that the US policy is wrong. We will take a different view, and we will continue to welcome refugees to this country.

Jeremy Corbyn: I also wrote to the Prime Minister on this issue and received her reply this morning. I hold in my hand her piece of paper. She makes no mention of the refugee convention and does not condemn US action in that respect.

Last week, I asked the Prime Minister to assure the House that she would not offer up our national health service as a "bargaining chip" in any US trade deal. She gave no answer. She also refused to rule it out when

asked in the US, so let me ask her a third time: will she rule out opening up our national health service to private US healthcare companies—yes or no?

The Prime Minister: I could give a detailed answer to the right hon. Gentleman's question, but a simple and straightforward reply is what is required: the NHS is not for sale and it never will be.

Jeremy Corbyn: I hope that that includes not having US healthcare companies coming in to run any part of our national health service.

President Trump has torn up international agreements on refugees. He has threatened to dump international agreements on climate change. He has praised the use of torture. He has incited hatred against Muslims. He has directly attacked women's rights. Just what more does he have to do before the Prime Minister will listen to the 1.8 million people who have already called for his state visit invitation to be withdrawn?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman's foreign policy is to object to and insult the democratically elected Head of State of our most important ally. Let us see what he would have achieved in the last week. Would he have been able to protect British citizens from the impact of the Executive order? No. Would he have been able to lay the foundations of a trade deal? No. Would he have got a 100% commitment to NATO? No. That is what Labour has to offer this country—less protection for British citizens, less prosperity, less safety. He can lead a protest; I am leading a country.

Q2. [908499] **Stuart Andrew** (Pudsey) (Con): Today it is inconceivable that somebody would be prosecuted based on who and what they are. Will my right hon. Friend join me in welcoming the posthumous pardon of some 49,000 men thanks to the Government's Turing Bill which was enacted yesterday? Will she also encourage those who are still alive to come forward so that their injustices can be overturned?

The Prime Minister: I am very happy to join my hon. Friend in welcoming an extremely important change in the law. We committed to it in our manifesto and have now delivered on it. Passing Turing's law has been a long-standing commitment for the Government. It is momentous and takes action to right the wrongs of the past. Like my hon. Friend, I certainly encourage those still alive to apply to the Home Office to have their offences disregarded.

Angus Robertson (Moray) (SNP): We on the SNP Benches associate ourselves with all the comments thus far about the tragic deaths in Quebec City and about the passing of Tam Dalyell. Respect for him was held across the political parties and he served with great distinction for more than 40 years.

The Prime Minister had a successful international visit this last week—to Ireland. She spoke publicly about her commitment—this is important—not to have a hard border on these islands, to the continuation of free movement of peoples on these islands and to protect and enhance trade. Given that people will be watching this not just in Britain but in Ireland, will she take this opportunity to explain how she will deliver those sensible, important outcomes?

The Prime Minister: Those are absolutely the outcomes that we want to see. I was very pleased to meet the Taoiseach and to discuss with him the joint intent that both his Government and mine have to ensure that we do not see a return to the borders of the past in Northern Ireland. We focus on the land border that is between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. Of course, the issue of movements from Ireland affects other places as well; it affects ports in Wales and Stranraer. Therefore, it is an important issue for us and we have agreed the work that we are going to do together to deliver what I believe will be as frictionless a border as possible. Also, one of the objectives that I set out in my plan for our negotiating objectives is to retain the common travel area.

Angus Robertson: We on the SNP Benches very much welcome what the Prime Minister has just said on all those issues. Of course, we also welcome the intensifying of negotiations between the UK Government and the devolved Administrations ahead of triggering article 50. The Prime Minister has very helpfully explained that it is perfectly possible for parts of these islands to be in the single market, without hard borders, with free movement of people, while at the same time protecting and enhancing trade with one another. That is very, very welcome, so will she give a commitment to work with the Irish Government and a commitment to work with the Scottish Government to deliver all those things—or will we just have to get on with it ourselves?

The Prime Minister: First, the right hon. Gentleman is right that following the meeting of the Joint Ministerial Committee plenary on Monday morning, we agreed to intensify discussion on issues related to the bringing back of powers from Brussels and where those powers should lie within the UK—to intensify that in the run-up to the triggering of article 50 and beyond the triggering of article 50.

On the other question, the right hon. Gentleman really should listen to the answers that are given, because he is trying to imply something that is not there. [HON. MEMBERS: "Oh!"] Yes. We are very clear that we want to see a frictionless border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, but I am also clear that one of the objectives of our negotiation is to see as frictionless a border as possible between the UK and the rest of the European Union. Of course, if he is so worried about having a frictionless border between Scotland and countries in the EU, he should not want to take Scotland out of the EU by wanting to see it independent. [Interruption.]

Mr Speaker: Order. We should not have to allow for the reaction from the SNP Benches to every answer before we proceed to the next question.

Q4. [908501] **Mrs Maria Miller** (Basingstoke) (Con): EU nationals provide a vital and expert service in my local hospital in Basingstoke and, along with thousands of others, they face an uncertain future. I know that this is something that the Prime Minister wants to give priority to and to sort out. Will we be hearing more about it in the forthcoming White Paper?

The Prime Minister: My right hon. Friend makes an important point about EU nationals. I would like to confirm my intention and expectation that we will be

able to offer that reassurance to EU nationals living in the UK, but I also want to see reassurance offered to UK nationals living in the EU. I hope and will be working to try to ensure that this is an issue we can deal with at a very early stage in the negotiations. It was one of the objectives I set out in the plan. It will be referenced in the White Paper and I can inform my right hon. Friend and the House that that White Paper will be published tomorrow.

Q3. [908500] Jonathan Reynolds (Stalybridge and Hyde) (Lab/Co-op): Prime Minister, your responses today have been deeply unsatisfactory. The President of the United States has advocated torture, misogyny, racial discrimination, sexual assault and isolationism. The leaders of Canada and Germany were able to respond robustly, but your response was to jump on a plane as soon as possible to hold his hand. Does this country not deserve a leader who is willing to stand up for British values?

Mr Speaker: Order. I have issued no response and the hon. Gentleman not only should not breach parliamentary protocol but should not tempt me.

The Prime Minister: I will tell you what standing up for British values is. I and this Government introduced the first Modern Slavery Act in this country. I have ensured that stop and search has reduced, because I do not believe that anyone on the streets of this country should be stopped and searched because of the colour of their skin, and I ensured justice for the families of Hillsborough.

Q5. [908502] Mrs Theresa Villiers (Chipping Barnet) (Con): In light of the fact that most of the countries covered by the Trump ban have a total bar on the admission of Israeli citizens, should the protestors not be calling for that ban to be lifted as well?

The Prime Minister: I thank my right hon. Friend for pointing that out. It is absolutely right that the House should be aware of the discrimination around the world and of that ban, particularly for those who are Israeli citizens. We are consistent: we do not agree with that approach and it is not one that we will take. I wait for the day when the right hon. Member for Islington North (Jeremy Corbyn) stands up and condemns it too.

Q6. [908503] Chris Elmore (Ogmore) (Lab/Co-op): My constituent Dianah Kendall suffered a bleed on the brain in 2012 and has struggled to work since, but was due to retire in September. Government changes to her state pension retirement age mean that she will now not retire until 2022. This injustice has short-changed 2.6 million WASPI women and brings shame on this Government. Will the Prime Minister think again and support Dianah and the millions of women who deserve fairness in retirement?

The Prime Minister: On the issue of those who are known as the WASPI campaign, I refer the hon. Gentleman to the fact that, as I am sure he knows, we committed more than £1 billion to lessen the impact on those worst affected, so no one will see their pension age change by more than 18 months. There is a wider point: we need to be realistic when considering pension ages about the

fact that people are living longer. If we want to carry on having an affordable and sustainable pension system, we need to equalise the state pension age for men and women faster and to bring forward the rise.

Q10. [908507] Will Quince (Colchester) (Con): I welcome the £450 million announced in the autumn statement to fund a trial of the digital railway. Given the new fleet of trains on order and the economic growth opportunity for our region, does the Prime Minister agree that the great eastern main line has the most compelling case for that pilot?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend is absolutely right about the importance of transport links for economic growth. I understand that digital signalling could increase capacity on commuter trains by up to 40%, hence the investment of £450 million for trials over the coming years to which he rightly refers. I know that the Department for Transport is considering where those trials should take place, but we certainly recognise that the great eastern main line is one area that could benefit from those improvements.

Q7. [908504] John Nicolson (East Dunbartonshire) (SNP): A few moments ago, the Prime Minister tried to claim credit for passing Stonewall's Turing Bill. She did not; the Turing Bill pardons all gay men found guilty of crimes no longer on the statute book. When will the Prime Minister follow the Scottish Government and automatically pardon the living as well as the dead?

The Prime Minister: It was during my time as Home Secretary that the legislation was introduced that gives those who are alive the opportunity to apply to the Home Office to have those offences that are no longer on the statute book expunged from their record—

John Nicolson: They are not doing it.

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman says that they are not doing it. In this Chamber today my hon. Friend the Member for Pudsey (Stuart Andrew) and I have both encouraged people to come forward and make that application, and that is a message that we should all put out.

Q11. [908508] James Duddridge (Rochford and Southend East) (Con): At the White House, my right hon. Friend gained some assurances from President Trump about his commitment to NATO, an achievement that was welcomed by the Governments of the Czech Republic, Latvia and Lithuania. Does my right hon. Friend agree that the way to engage with President Trump and to win such agreements is not by insulting our close ally but by bringing him close, rather than doing as the Leader of the Opposition demands? If we reject our closest ally, would that not leave Britain and our European partners less safe and less secure?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. We should never forget that America is our most important ally. Our relationship is long standing and American men and women served and died alongside UK men and women in two world wars to protect our security and the security of Europe. If we were not able

to have that relationship and to see that commitment to NATO, in particular, we would leave this country and Europe less safe.

Q8. [908505] **Deidre Brock** (Edinburgh North and Leith) (SNP): Many were surprised that immediately after those cosy images with Donald Trump were taken the Prime Minister chose to meet the Turkish President, who has been running an increasingly repressive regime since the failed coup last summer. Will she confirm whether she raised any human rights concerns with President Erdogan, or, as we turn our face from Europe, will it be the policy of post-Brexit Britain to put arms deals before human rights abuses?

The Prime Minister: First, the hon. Lady should recognise that Turkey is an important country in relation both to our security and the issue of migration into Turkey and potentially into Europe. She will also recognise that Turkey has, and continues to host, 3 million refugees from Syria, and I commended the Turkish Government on the welcome they have given them. I suggest that she should just have looked at the press conference I gave after my discussions with President Erdogan and Prime Minister Yildirim, in which I made it clear that we had condemned the coup but expected the Turkish Government to support their democratic institutions, international human rights and the rule of law.

Q12. [908509] **Alec Shelbrooke** (Elmet and Rothwell) (Con): I wholeheartedly congratulate my right hon. Friend on securing 100% for NATO from the new US Administration. Will she outline what she is doing to persuade our other NATO allies of the importance of achieving what was agreed at the NATO Wales summit on their obligations?

The Prime Minister: First, I thank my hon. Friend for the work that he does on the NATO Parliamentary Assembly. I know he is fully engaged with that. He is right that commitments were made at the NATO summit in Wales in 2014, when all our NATO allies committed to spending 2% of their GDP on defence within a decade. We have seen progress, but I agree with President Trump that many allies need to go further. I can assure my hon. Friend that I and other Ministers across Government raise the issue regularly with our allies and partners and will continue to do so.

Q9. [908506] **Ruth Cadbury** (Brentford and Isleworth) (Lab): Last week, air pollution in London was worse than in Beijing. Will the Prime Minister therefore assure me and my constituents in Osterley, Brentford and Chiswick that the hugely expensive proposal to double the capacity of the M4 as it arrives in London will be shelved forthwith?

The Prime Minister: I can assure the hon. Lady that this Government take the issue of air quality very seriously. A lot of work has been done. Since 2011 more than £2 billion has been committed to enable, for example, bus operators to upgrade their fleets, and to ensure that changes are made to reduce pollution from vehicles such as refuse trucks and fire engines. We do recognise, however, that more needs to be done. We have seen a reduction in nitrous oxide from some 17% in recent

years, but we will bring forward proposals to ensure that we can maintain the air quality that we all want to see.

Richard Benyon (Newbury) (Con): Will my right hon. Friend show her support for “Brighter Berkshire”, the campaign as part of the 2017 year of mental health? Will she give her continued commitment to ensuring that we have parity between mental health and physical health in this country?

The Prime Minister: I am very happy to endorse the campaign to which my hon. Friend refers. It is important that we continue to raise awareness of the issues around mental health. The fact the Government have committed to the parity of esteem between mental and physical health is important. There is more for us to do on mental health, and I have already set out some steps that we want to take. I commend all those, however, who are working to raise the issue of mental health and provide support to those with mental health problems.

Q13. [908510] **Mr Stephen Hepburn** (Jarrow) (Lab): The Association of Directors of Adult Social Services has said that £4.6 billion has been cut from social care budgets since 2010. Does the Prime Minister take any responsibility for the pain and the distress that the Tories have inflicted on poor, vulnerable old people being denied their rightful care? Yes or no?

The Prime Minister: The Government have taken a number of steps to increase the funding available for local authorities to provide for social care. It is also important that we ensure that best practice is developed and put into place across the country. In some parts of the country the record on social care and the interaction with hospitals is better than in others, but the longer-term issue is for us to ensure that we have a sustainable system for delivering social care for people in this country. The Labour party ducked that issue for 13 years. We are addressing it.

Andrea Jenkyns (Morley and Outwood) (Con): Will my right hon. Friend join me in congratulating Morley Academy on its recently awarded World Class Schools quality mark and say how such awards drive pupil excellence?

The Prime Minister: I am happy to join my hon. Friend in congratulating the whole team at Morley Academy on receiving the award, which I think shows the work that the GORSE Academies Trust is doing to drive up excellence and improve outcomes for pupils. We are determined to drive up standards in schools to ensure that more children have good school places—a good school place for every child—so that they can all reach the sort of level we see at Morley Academy.

Q14. [908512] **Mr David Winnick** (Walsall North) (Lab): How will the thousands of people who lost their jobs at British Home Stores feel about the fact that it may take years before the case of Philip Green, the totally discredited and disgraced businessperson, results in his knighthood being taken away or otherwise? Is it not remarkable? People lose their jobs and suffer all the consequences, but this man keeps his billions and his knighthood.

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman raises an important issue. Many Members of this House have expressed concern about what happened at BHS and the attitude and approach taken by Philip Green. Whether a knighthood should be taken away from someone is a matter for the relevant committee—I have forgotten the name—which will be examining the case; I understand that it is waiting for the investigations to be completed. This is a matter for an independent committee and it is up to the committee how it looks into it.

Mr Peter Bone (Wellingborough) (Con): Tonight, there will be an historic vote in this place, a vote that I thought I would not see in my political lifetime: the British Parliament voting to withdraw from the European Union under the excellent leadership of the Prime Minister. Is my right hon. Friend surprised that Opposition Members who demand time to discuss the matter and debate it—namely, the Liberal Democrats—did not even bother to turn up last night? The Government Benches were packed, the Scottish National party Benches were packed, the Democratic Unionist party Members were here, and there were some Labour Members. Is that not surprising?

The Prime Minister: Throughout my political career I have fought Liberal Democrats, and nothing that they do ever surprises me, but I join my hon. Friend in commending the Bill before the House. This House has a very simple decision to take. We gave the right of judgment on this matter to the British people, and they made their choice: they want to leave the EU. The question every Member must ask themselves as they go through the Lobby tonight is: do they trust the people?

Mr Speaker: Well, the right hon. Gentleman is here now, so let us hear the fellow—Tim Farron.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Tim Farron (Westmorland and Lonsdale) (LD): Who would have guessed it, Mr Speaker? We are here now, asking the questions—[*Interruption*]*—*asking the questions about the future of our country and Brexit that a strong Leader of the Opposition should be asking—

Hon. Members: Where were you?

Mr Speaker: Order. [*Interruption.*] Mr Knight, I am very worried about you. You recently suffered from a bad leg. With all that shouting, you will be suffering from a bad head. Calm yourself man!

Tim Farron: The Prime Minister will return at some point with a deal with Europe that our people will have to live with for decades to come, especially our young people, 73% of whom voted to remain. Nobody knows what that deal will look like, but someone will get to agree it. Should it be her Government, should it be this Parliament, or should it be—as I believe it should—the British people?

The Prime Minister: I have already said that there will be a vote on the deal in this Parliament. [*Interruption.*]

Mr Speaker: Mr Shelbrooke, calm yourself. You are in a state of excessive excitement, even by your standards.

Nigel Adams (Selby and Ainsty) (Con): It is quite difficult to follow that, Mr Speaker, but back in the real world—[*Laughter.*]

In December 2015, my constituency suffered terrible flooding, especially in the town of Tadcaster. The damage became worse when the bridge collapsed, separating the town. Thankfully, the bridge will be reopened, hopefully this week. Will the Prime Minister join me in thanking all those who were involved in the restoration of the bridge and, most importantly, the residents of Tadcaster, who have had a terrible year?

The Prime Minister: I am happy to join my hon. Friend in commending and thanking not only all those who worked so hard to restore the bridge at Tadcaster, but the people of Tadcaster, who have had to put up with disruption and inconvenience for such a long time. I am sure that those people will all welcome the return of the bridge, and we commend all those who have ensured that that has happened.

John Woodcock (Barrow and Furness) (Lab/Co-op): The news revealed yesterday that Toshiba is reviewing its investment in the Moorside nuclear power plant, which puts a huge question mark over not only 21,000 jobs in Cumbria but the future of our nation's energy security. What will the Prime Minister do personally to ensure that the deal stays on track?

The Prime Minister: I assure the hon. Gentleman that both the Business Secretary and I have involvement in a number of deals and possible deals around the nuclear industry. We are keen to ensure that those jobs are brought to the United Kingdom and that such deals are kept on track. I assure him of the Government's commitment.

Jo Churchill (Bury St Edmunds) (Con): This week the Danish drug firm Novo Nordisk invested £115 million in the UK to further research into type 2 diabetes. Will the Prime Minister join me in welcoming that investment as well as the academics and scientists involved, many of whom are from the EU and around the world and will appreciate the assurance she gave earlier? Will she also work with me to ensure that any innovations and new treatments get to patients as quickly as possible?

The Prime Minister: As my hon. Friend will probably understand, I recognise this issue particularly personally, although I am a type 1 diabetic rather than type 2. Any investment in diabetes research is to be welcomed, and when new solutions and support for diabetics are found, it is important that they get to people as quickly as possible. A significant number of people in this country suffer from type 2 diabetes, and the figures show that there is a great risk that the number will increase significantly in the coming years. We need to do all that we can not only to prevent people from becoming type 2 diabetics in the first place, but to support those who have that condition so that people suffer from fewer complications and are able to manage their lives.

Ms Tasmina Ahmed-Sheikh (Ochil and South Perthshire) (SNP): Today is World Hijab Day. Will the Prime Minister join me in recognising the right of Muslim women to wear the hijab if they wish, without fear, and indeed the right of all women everywhere to wear what they want,

when they want? Will she also commit to standing up for the right to refuge for men, women and children wherever they may be, regardless of their religion?

The Prime Minister: On the hon. Lady's second point, it is absolutely the case that this country welcomes refugees to the United Kingdom, and we do so regardless of their religion—there is no question of discriminating on religion.

I am absolutely in line with the hon. Lady on her point about wearing the hijab. I believe that what a woman wears is a woman's choice.

Sir Julian Brazier (Canterbury) (Con): Russian armed forces regularly carry out large-scale exercises, including with nuclear-capable equipment, on the borders of eastern Europe. Does my right hon. Friend agree that the American commitment to NATO is absolutely pivotal to protect the countries of eastern Europe from going the same way as eastern Ukraine?

The Prime Minister: I absolutely agree with my hon. Friend. The 100% commitment to NATO that President Trump has given is crucial to ensuring that we can provide for the security of this country and others in Europe, especially those in eastern Europe on the border with Russia. I noted that my hon. Friend the Member for Rochford and Southend East (James Duddridge)

referred to the fact that the Governments of the Czech Republic, Latvia and Lithuania had welcomed that 100% commitment. I am pleased to say that we are playing our part, as about 800 troops will be going to Poland and Estonia this year as a sign of NATO's strength and our belief in keeping those countries free and democratic.

Naz Shah (Bradford West) (Lab): In 2015, my constituent Samia Shahid was lured to her death in Pakistan, where she was brutally raped and murdered. Will the Prime Minister join me in reiterating the commitment of this House and this country that we will not tolerate violence against women, and encourage the Pakistani Government to continue in their efforts to get justice for our British girl, Samia Shahid?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Lady raises a very tragic case, and our deepest sympathies are with Samia's husband following her tragic death last year. We do not interfere in the legal processes of another country, but I understand from the Foreign Office that the Pakistani police have arrested two people and charged them with murder. The Foreign Office has provided assistance to Samia's husband and will continue to do so. I am sure it will keep the hon. Lady informed, and I understand that the Home Secretary will meet the hon. Lady soon to discuss this issue.

Vehicle Fuel (Publication of Tax Information)

Motion for leave to bring in a Bill (Standing Order No.23)

12.43 pm

Peter Aldous (Waveney) (Con): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a bill to require the inclusion on vehicle fuel receipts of the amounts of each tax paid; to require all retail fuel pumps to display the amounts of taxes paid when dispensing fuel; and for connected purposes.

This Bill calls for all taxes to be clearly shown on fuel receipts. Its principle is very simple: taxes should be clear to the people who pay them. At the moment, they are not. The Bill provides motorists with far better clarity on what they are paying—a simple breakdown of fuel duty, VAT and VAT on duty. There is no reason why these measures should be unnecessarily burdensome or expensive to businesses.

I understand that the Treasury is advising motorists who contact it in support of the Bill that it would be impractical to introduce it. My response would be that VAT—one of the taxes in question—is already shown on receipts, and that all that is required for fuel duty also to be shown is a simple arithmetic calculation multiplying the number of litres by the duty per litre. The software cost is minimal. With prices at the pumps rising to their highest for over two years and total taxation of fuel bills hovering between 65% and 70%, it is important that Government are open and transparent. Surely it is right that the nation's 37 million drivers should see the magnitude of the tax they pay every time they fill up their tanks.

The Government must be commended for freezing fuel duty since 2011. However, the UK remains one of the costliest nations in which to fill up with diesel and petrol. This is solely due to the high tax component in pump pricing. The amount of tax remains a huge issue for drivers. This is a tax on a resource that over 70% of people have no choice but to buy to go about their everyday lives. Total fuel duty revenue is approximately £27 billion per annum, with an additional 20% VAT on the duty itself bringing in an extra £5.24 billion. Once drivers find out about VAT on fuel duty—a tax on a tax—it really rankles and perplexes them.

The Bill aims to give motorists what my right hon. Friend the Member for Ipswich (Ben Gummer) has secured for taxpayers in general as a result of his Statements of Taxation Bill, which he presented on 25 January 2012 and which was subsequently included in the 2012 Budget and introduced in 2014. As a result of his initiative, taxpayers now see how their money is spent, broken down area by area of Government spending.

Council tax payers have the same right. The bills that they will receive this spring itemise what each authority will receive and invariably this bill comes with a letter from council leaders explaining what they will be doing with our money. It is only right that hard-pressed motorists are put on the same level playing field, rather than being continually exploited as a cash cow.

The initiative of my right hon. Friend the Member for Ipswich was an important step along the road to full tax transparency. It is now important to complete this

journey, so that motorists are able to hold Government to account. It must always be remembered that it is their money, not the state's.

I commend my right hon. Friend the Member for Harlow (Robert Halfon), who presented a very similar Bill to this on 16 October 2012. He has been a real champion of motorists and it is important that we build on the great work he did in helping to secure successive freezes of fuel duty.

It is also appropriate to pay tribute to the tremendous campaigning work of FairFuelUK, and its founders Quentin Willson and Howard Cox, for standing up for the motorist at every turn in the road. I am grateful for the support that I have been provided by the all-party group on fair fuel for motorists and hauliers chaired by my hon. Friend the Member for Dover (Charlie Elphicke). It is appropriate to highlight the pump watch app that FairFuelUK is launching, which shows how much UK drivers would pay for the same number of litres that they have just bought if they had bought them in 23 other countries. I am afraid that the UK does not occupy a good position in this league table.

I will set out four reasons why I believe there is a compelling case for introducing this Bill. First, there is the need for transparency—to be open, up front and honest with motorists, who as taxpayers have been taken for granted for too long. The magnitude of the tax paid every time drivers fill up at the pumps has been hidden from them for decades. UK drivers continue to pay the highest fuel duty in the world for diesel and the fifth highest for petrol. There is a need for transparency, so that the country's 37 million drivers can see how much they contribute to public services and our economy.

The traditional VAT-only fuel receipts that are given to us at petrol stations, which we invariably file in the glove compartment, must end now and be replaced by open and complete tax information. Every time a driver fills up their vehicle, they will be able to see where their hard-earned cash is going in the Treasury, and in what form—VAT, fuel duty and VAT on duty. When prices at the pumps fell to around £1 per litre in 2016, the tax that the Government took from drivers reached 75%. What other huge tax contribution is kept hidden from those who pay it? I believe that there is an obligation on the Government to be open with UK drivers regarding the taxes they pay. If drivers feel that they are being taken for granted, we are driving down a very dangerous road. There is a need to be completely up front and to show motorists what they are paying.

It is also important to highlight the regressive nature of fuel duty. In particular, it hits hard-working families and those who are just about managing—the JAMs whose challenges have been highlighted recently. We know that 90% of all journeys are by road, and 70% of drivers have no choice but to use their vehicles to get to work, to drive their children to school, to take their elderly parents to hospital or to go out for the day with their families. I see the problem for myself in my Waveney constituency, where wages are below the national average and many people have no choice but to use their cars to get to work, often travelling long distances to places such as Norwich, Ipswich and Felixstowe. There is also a limited number of petrol stations from which to buy fuel. Waveney motorists, like so many in similar areas around the country, are hit hard by this triple whammy.

It is important to highlight the impact that fuel duty has on the economy. Since 2011, the Treasury has listened to the carefully researched and evidence-based FairFuelUK campaign to freeze fuel duty, which has objectively proved that the level of fuel duty directly impacts on the success of the economy, the creation of new jobs, the level of inflation, investment by small and medium-sized businesses and consumer spending.

Mr Deputy Speaker, it is important to highlight the enormous groundswell of support for the measures in the Bill across the country and around the Chamber. The Bill is targeted at the nation's 37 million drivers and at all our constituents, so that they can see how much they are contributing to the public purse, to our public services and to promoting economic growth. The clandestine fuel tax receipt must end, and it must be replaced by straightforward and complete tax information for all drivers to see every time they fill up their vehicles.

This is a straightforward Bill that will provide straightforward transparency on fuel duty, on what people pay and on where their money goes. It will make the taxation system more honest. It will spark a debate on whether the motorist should continue to be used as the nation's tax cow and on how their money is spent. Mr Speaker, I have strained your patience, but I hope that the whole House will support the Bill.

Mr Speaker: The hon. Gentleman has never strained my patience. It is always a pleasure to listen to his mellifluous tones. I noted that, as he made his case, he single-handedly relegated me to the status of Deputy Speaker, for which of course I am extremely grateful.

Peter Aldous: I apologise for that, Mr Speaker.

Question put and agreed to.

Ordered,

That Peter Aldous, Mr Alistair Carmichael, Mr Angus Brendan MacNeil, Martin Vickers, Danny Kinahan, Charlie Elphicke, Ms Margaret Ritchie, Maria Caulfield, Drew Hendry, Rishi Sunak, Jim Fitzpatrick and James Cartledge present the Bill.

Peter Aldous accordingly presented the Bill.

Bill read the First time; to be read a Second time on Friday 24 February, and to be printed (Bill 133).

European Union (Notification of Withdrawal) Bill

[2ND DAY]

[Relevant document: First Report from the Committee on Exiting the European Union, The process for exiting the European Union and the Government's negotiating objectives, HC 815.]

Second Reading

Debate resumed (Order, 31 January).

Question proposed (31 January), That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Amendment proposed (31 January): to leave out from "That" to the end of the Question and add

"this House declines to give a Second Reading to the European Union (Notification of Withdrawal) Bill as the Government has set out no provision for effective consultation with the devolved administrations on implementing Article 50, has yet to publish a White Paper detailing the Government's policy proposals, has refused to give a guarantee on the position of EU nationals in the UK, has left unanswered a range of detailed questions covering many policy areas about the full implications of withdrawal from the single market and has provided no assurance that a future parliamentary vote will be anything other than irrelevant, as withdrawal from the European Union follows two years after the invoking of Article 50 if agreement is not reached in the forthcoming negotiations, unless they are prolonged by unanimity."—(*Stephen Gethins.*)

Question again proposed, That the amendment be made.

Mr Speaker: Just before I call the right hon. Member for Doncaster North (Edward Miliband), who will open the proceedings today, I should point out that there will be an initial, but short-lived, time limit on Back-Bench speeches of eight minutes.

12.55 pm

Edward Miliband (Doncaster North) (Lab): I want to say at the outset that this is clearly a fateful moment in this country's history, and the excellent speeches on day one of the debate reflected the gravity of the moment. We should all respect the way in which colleagues on both sides of the House are wrestling with their consciences as they decide how to vote on the Bill. No one should pretend that this is easy. For me, the actions I will take tonight were determined by the result on 23 June.

In case the House needs reminding, I did not want the referendum. I made a strong case to my colleagues before deciding that my party would not support David Cameron's decision in the last Parliament. I believed that, with the many other problems the country faced, the referendum would become as much about the state of the country as about Britain's place in Europe. Indeed, I believe that that is, in part, what happened. However, that is water under the bridge. I took part in the referendum campaign and I said that I would accept the result, which I do. That is why I will be voting for the Bill's Second Reading tonight, not least because I feel that the referendum stemmed in part from the sense of disaffection and deep frustration about politics that exists in the country. A heightened reason for saying that the process must begin is that we do not want to give the people who voted for Brexit a sense that they are being ignored once again.

Nick Thomas-Symonds (Torfaen) (Lab): Like my right hon. Friend, I accept the result in the country and in my constituency. Does he agree, however, that no one, whether they voted to remain or to leave, voted to become poorer, and that the test for the Government now is to produce a prosperous, post-Brexit Britain and a deal that is in the country's best interests?

Edward Miliband: My hon. Friend makes his point very well, and I shall come on to that in a moment.

Our responsibilities do not end here tonight or with the passing of this Bill. It is deeply problematic that the Government are embarking upon this process without any objective economic analysis of its implications, without clarity on key issues such as the customs union and without any sense of what transitional arrangements might look like, on the basis of what I believe is the fanciful proposition that all the future arrangements can be tied up within 18 months.

On day one of the debate, a number of speakers powerfully made the point that, given the paucity of information we have been given before article 50 is to be triggered, it is even more important that there should be proper parliamentary scrutiny, including a meaningful vote in this House, before the end of the process. The Prime Minister's apparent wish that our choice will be to accept her deal or face a hard Brexit on World Trade Organisation terms is quite wrong. Such a take-it-or-leave-it option would fly in the face of the central proposition that won the referendum—namely, that we want to take back control and restore parliamentary sovereignty. So I hope that Members—particularly Conservative Members—however they voted in the referendum, will support the amendments that seek to ensure proper parliamentary sovereignty throughout the process. I believe that parliamentary scrutiny will help the Government. It will improve any deal, it will strengthen their hand with the European Union and it will make it more likely that the Prime Minister will end up with a deal that has the support it needs in the country.

Dr Rupa Huq (Ealing Central and Acton) (Lab): Does my right hon. Friend agree that, without the safeguards he seeks, there may be a crock of something at the end of the rainbow but it might not be gold?

Edward Miliband: My hon. Friend puts it very well. This is deeply uncertain, and the truth is that the Government have not really levelled with the country about the trade-offs. At the moment, they are saying that they can have everything, and I fear that pretty soon in the negotiations we will discover that that is not the case.

I want to focus not on the economic questions, which were well worn yesterday, but on an equally important issue that has received less attention in this debate but is absolutely crucial: our place in the world and our foreign policy relationships after Brexit. The foundation of our foreign policy for a generation has rested on the combination of a special relationship with the United States and, crucially, our relationship with the European Union.

Enlargement of the EU following the fall of the Berlin wall—as a nation, we advocated for that enlargement; leadership on climate change under the last Government and, I freely say, under this Government; a commitment

to the rule of law and human rights; a belief in the importance of multilateral institutions—all of these have been bound up in our relationship with the European Union, and we should not be under any illusion about the real risk that, following our departure, our influence in the world will be weaker, not stronger.

I negotiated on climate change for the last Labour Government, and our strength, our power, our standing on that issue came from our membership of the European Union because we accounted for 10% of global emissions, not just 1%. The House should therefore recognise that the question of what strategic relationships come after Brexit is fundamental to the issue of real sovereignty and our ability to have an effect on the big issues that will affect us.

Sir Gerald Howarth (Aldershot) (Con): The right hon. Gentleman raises the important issue of the future not only of ourselves but of the European Union. Is he not concerned that the European External Action Service now has 139 overseas posts and is increasingly asserting the authority of the European Union over the member states? That process will continue and we will not be part of it. We will be reasserting the sovereignty of these islands.

Edward Miliband: I will not get extra time, so I am not going to indulge in that argument because we are leaving the European Union—the hon. Gentleman and I agree on that. The question is: what comes next? We all need to address ourselves to that question.

Of course the terrible irony is that, with the election of President Trump, our European co-operation is so clearly needed more than ever. I believe in the special relationship with the United States, but it must be based on values. The Foreign Secretary said after President Trump's election, and I slightly scratched my head at this, that

"he is a guy who believes firmly in values that I believe in too—freedom and democracy."

I do not agree and I hope that on reflection, after a few days of the Trump presidency, the Foreign Secretary does not agree, either.

My central point is this: I can go along with the Prime Minister that Brexit means Brexit, but I cannot go along with the idea that Brexit means Trump. I do not believe that that is inevitable, nor do I believe that it is what the British people want. The danger is that the Prime Minister feels it is an inevitable consequence of the decision to leave the EU that we are driven into the arms of President Trump.

So what should be done? This is the fundamental point. The Lancaster House speech was no doubt an improvement in tone on what had gone before, but not one of the Prime Minister's 12 principles concerned foreign policy, defence or climate co-operation. To put that right in the course of the negotiations I sincerely hope that the Government come up with an architecture for foreign and strategic policy co-operation with the European Union, not just ad hoc arrangements. I want to be clear—this relates to the question asked by the hon. Member for Aldershot (Sir Gerald Howarth)—that that co-operation would be intergovernmental, but there are many issues, from Russia to refugees, climate and defence, where we will be stronger, not weaker, if we have institutions that continue to mean co-operation between ourselves and the European Union.

We not only need the right institutions, but institutions founded on a strategic orientation that continues to value our role in Europe. We must be willing, even as we leave the EU, to join our European allies, whose values we share, in speaking up for the rule of law and human rights. I ask this of all European countries: where has been the co-ordinated response to the Trump Muslim ban? Why have the Government not been pushing for that response?

David T. C. Davies (Monmouth) (Con): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Edward Miliband: I will not give way because I want to get to the end.

As I understand it, the dual citizenship exemption won by the UK will be extended only to New Zealand, Canada and Australia. Of course it is good that we have that exemption, but we should be standing in solidarity with our European allies in calling for the ban to end.

There are other questions for the Government, too. In the wake of President Trump's election, Foreign Ministers sought to agree a joint statement on the continuing need for a two-state solution between Israel and the Palestinian people, but they were blocked by a few countries, including—shamefully—the United Kingdom. It is no wonder that Europe fears that we are throwing in our lot with President Trump and turning our back on it. No good will come of that. These are the tests of who we are as a nation, of our values and of how we intend to apply them in the years ahead. It matters to whether our world is governed by the rules of international order—rules that we helped to design and promote—or, alternatively, by something far, far worse.

Incidentally, surely there must be no more talk, particularly in the current context when human rights seem so at risk, of our leaving the European convention on human rights. I truly hope that the Government will be prompted by President Trump's first few days in office to think again about their approach.

I end on this point. History will judge us not just on the decisions we make on this Bill tonight, but on the decisions beyond. The Government have a heavy responsibility, and we expect them to exercise it on behalf of the whole nation, not just the 52%. For that we will hold them to account in the months and years ahead.

1.6 pm

Mr George Osborne (Tatton) (Con): The right hon. Member for Doncaster North (Edward Miliband) speaks, as he always does, with passion for an international Britain and for European solutions to the many problems we face.

Democracy is easy to defend when we agree with the majority. In many other political systems, such as dictatorships, people can get their way, but democracy has the added advantage of legitimacy and popular consent. Democracy is much more difficult when we disagree with the majority. As people know, I argued passionately in the referendum that leaving the European Union would weaken Britain's trade and commercial links, would diminish Britain on the world stage, would make international approaches to things such as climate change and atomic research more difficult and would

weaken a multilateral institution—the European Union—that has been vital to our collective security for many decades.

I made those arguments, and it saddens me that Britain and Brexit are bracketed in the same group as other isolationist and nativist movements across the world. We should strive to be, as the Prime Minister says, a more global Britain. But I lost the case. I made it with passion, and I sacrificed my position in government for it.

Mr Angus Brendan MacNeil (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr Osborne: I will make some progress before taking interventions.

We have to accept that, in a democracy, the majority has spoken. Although I am a passionate believer in an open, internationalist, free-trading Britain, I am also a passionate believer in Britain as a democracy. It is unfashionable in schools these days to teach what I believe to be a true tale of our nation's history, which stretches from Magna Carta to the Glorious Revolution, the founding fathers of the American constitution, the Great Reform Act, female emancipation and the like, but we have given the modern world a version of democracy that has spread far beyond our shores.

Therefore, to vote against the majority verdict of the largest democratic exercise in British history would risk putting Parliament against people, provoking a deep constitutional crisis in our country and alienating people who already feel alienated. I am not prepared to do that, so I will be voting for the Bill tonight.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Mr Osborne: I wish to make some progress, and I want others to have a chance to speak, so I will not take interventions.

There is a mandate to leave the European Union, but that was the only question asked of the British people in the referendum. We cannot assume that the British public gave a set of answers to the questions we now face as a Parliament. Indeed, those questions are now entrusted to us as we approach the negotiations.

I call them negotiations but I do not think they are going to resemble the negotiations that we currently read about in the media. The truth is that although Britain is seeking the maximum possible access to the single market for goods and for services, and we hope that the fact we have a trade deficit and a very important financial centre will count in our favour, the Government have chosen—and I respect this decision—not to make the economy the priority in this negotiation. They have prioritised immigration control, which was a clear message from the referendum campaign, and removing European Court of Justice jurisdiction from the UK and, in that sense, asserting parliamentary sovereignty, although I would point out that Parliament can choose to leave the EU, as indeed we are choosing to do in the coming days.

So we are not prioritising the economy, although we hope for the best possible arrangement, and the European Union is not prioritising it either in these negotiations. Having spent the past couple of weeks in Berlin and in Paris talking to some French and German political

[Mr Osborne]

leaders, it is clear to me that although they understand that Britain is a very important market for their businesses, their priority is to maintain the integrity of the remaining 27 members of the European Union; they are not interested in a long and complex hybrid agreement with the UK. Therefore, both sides are heading for a clean break from the EU for the UK.

The only thing I think the negotiation will come down to in the end is how that break is achieved. The Prime Minister, in her speech of a couple of weeks ago, made it clear that Britain is seeking a transition agreement, and that is obvious because it is simply not possible for this Parliament to introduce all the domestic legislation that is going to be required to replicate the arrangements we currently have with the EU, even with the great repeal Act. We will also need to have some kind of bridge to the free trade agreement that we seek with the EU. At the same time, the EU needs from us financial commitments that it believes we entered into to pay for European projects that were undertaken while we were a member. In practice, that means the negotiation will be a trade-off, as all divorces are, between access and money. We will try to scale down our payments to the EU, while scaling down our commitment to EU rules and access, until we reach that free trade agreement which we hope to negotiate.

Kevin Brennan (Cardiff West) (Lab): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way on that point?

Mr Osborne: I will just finish my speech and then others can speak.

That is what the negotiation is going to be like. I suspect it will be rather bitter. I spent four years negotiating with Michel Barnier, and I advise my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union to be well briefed, as he always is, and to pack a packet of Pro Plus, because there will be many long nights ahead.

It is very important that in the bitterness of that discussion we do not forget that there are some fundamental reasons why Britain wanted to be part of a European Common Market in the first place; nor should we allow the Europeans to forget that there was a fundamental reason why they created a European Community, which was to bring the nations of Europe together. We must try to keep those thoughts and hopes alive as we exit the EU.

The final thing I want to say is this: we have made a decision to leave the EU and, as the successful leave campaign put it, to take back control, but that means a series of issues are going to come to this Parliament that completely divide Brexiteers from each other, remainers from each other, Conservatives from each other and members of other parties from each other. We are going to have very lively debates about free trade, as we are beginning to see at Prime Minister's questions; these are debates about what kind of agricultural produce we want to allow into this country or the kind of public procurement contracts we want. We are going to have a very lively debate about immigration, how many people we want to let into this country, how we welcome skilled people into this country, and how we support our universities and scientific research institutions. We are

going to have an argument about agricultural subsidies and whether we are happy for the poorest people in this country to pay taxes to support subsidies to some of the richest. We are also going to have an argument about state aid and whether we should be able to bail out failing commercial enterprises. I will be in those fights in the couple of years ahead.

1.14 pm

Alex Salmond (Gordon) (SNP): May I start by congratulating the former Chancellor, the right hon. Member for Tatton (Mr Osborne), on his speech, which was a good deal shorter and a great deal less lucrative than the ones he is used to giving these days? [Interruption.] As is being pointed out to Tory Members, he is anything but cheap these days. He may have argued the case with passion during the campaign, but his tendency to take perfectly reasonable Treasury forecasts on the long-term damage that would be done to the GDP and wealth of this country as a result of withdrawal from the single market and turn them into apocalyptic, emergency Budget, day of judgment scaremongering was one reason why the remain side lost the campaign. Campaigns have to be built on more than fear.

I want to talk about the politics, the economics and the procedure, and about Scotland. My hon. Friend the Member for Na h-Eileanan an Iar (Mr MacNeil) asked me yesterday whether I could remember, in the last 30 years in this place, a time when the House was gripped by collective madness. Obviously, that time was Iraq, when this House was mesmerised by a strong Prime Minister into the blood and disaster of the Iraqi war, but it is certainly not mesmerising rhetoric that is responsible for mad MP disease in this case. The right hon. and learned Member for Rushcliffe (Mr Clarke) yesterday made a comparison with "Alice in Wonderland", but Alice only took herself into the hole; this Prime Minister is taking virtually all the Tory party, half the Labour party and the entire country into the hole. What is being done is politically crazy.

In 1962, Dean Acheson said:

"Britain has lost an empire and has not yet found a role."

After listening to the speeches of some Tory Back Benchers yesterday, I am not so sure that they are reconciled to the empire bit. Successive Governments and Prime Ministers found a solution by pursuing a role as a leading country in Europe, and balancing that with a special relationship with the United States of America. A German Chancellor once said that the relationship was special because only one side knew about it, and that is certainly true, but none the less, it was a rational policy. Some Prime Ministers took that far too far, into the desert of Iraq, but none the less it was a rational, logical policy.

We cannot, having pursued that policy of having influence in Europe and the good things that come from it, as the right hon. Member for Doncaster North (Edward Miliband) reminded us, cut that off and then pursue the special relationship with the USA. That leaves us caught in the headlights, as the Prime Minister was earlier this week. When asked to condemn the obvious thing that any human being would have condemned, she refused to do so three times, in case she offended her new bestie in the White House—and incidentally, if she had said it, she would have offended

her new best friend in the White House. So she goes headlong into the arms of a United States President who is, at best, unpredictable. This is going to get worse and more embarrassing because of the imbalance in the relationship.

Then we must consider the economic damage—

Mr Jim Cunningham (Coventry South) (Lab): Earlier, my right hon. Friend the Member for Doncaster North (Edward Miliband) mentioned climate change and the American President, who said he will tear up the agreements on that subject. Where will Britain stand then? What support will it get?

Alex Salmond: That is an excellent example of the embarrassments to come. As for the economic damage, there was nothing wrong with the Treasury medium-term forecasts on coming out of the single marketplace; even if there is a bespoke deal, it will result in a 6% loss in GDP.

Michelle Thomson (Edinburgh West) (Ind): Will my right hon. Friend help confirm my understanding that it was the Tories who wanted to safeguard British interests in the single market? Am I correct in recalling that in their manifesto?

Alex Salmond: The Tory 2015 manifesto is not my bedtime reading, but as I recall, page 72 said:

“We say: yes to the Single Market”.

The Tories were right to say yes. It was funny that yesterday all the Conservative speakers remembered the commitment to a referendum, but not one of them remembered their commitment to the single marketplace. Of course it was not the case that a withdrawal from the European Community meant a withdrawal from the single marketplace. During the campaign, I had the pleasure of debating with Daniel Hannan MEP, who said:

“Absolutely nobody is talking about threatening our place in the Single Market”.

Of course it is possible to honour the result of the referendum and stay in the single marketplace, and even if people think there will be an exit from the single marketplace, it is madness, in diplomatic negotiating terms, to abandon that position now. The UK should keep its place in the single marketplace and allow the other European countries to negotiate it out of it, not give it away before the first word is spoken in the negotiations.

I come next to the procedures of this House. I have here the list of amendments tabled to the Bill, stretching to 103 pages; we are told that they are to be debated in three days. Eighteen months ago, the Scotland Bill, which was not the greatest constitutional change in history, got six days of debate. I say to Labour Members such as the right hon. Member for Doncaster North, who listed all the things wrong with the Government's approach, that if they believe that now, they should vote against the Government; if they cannot do that, they should at least vote against a programme motion that will make it impossible to debate the sensible changes that the right hon. Gentleman outlined.

As was well pointed out yesterday, the process is procedurally deficient, not only in terms of the time given, but in terms of the question that will eventually be put to the House. The final vote will be on the deal that comes back from a Prime Minister who said that “no deal...is better than a bad deal”,

so the choice the House will likely get is a bad deal or no deal. It is therefore crucial that when the House debates it and comes to a decision, there is a meaningful vote—a vote that can make a difference—as opposed to Hobson's choice, made with a metaphorical gun to the House's head.

Mr Chuka Umunna (Streatham) (Lab): If we end up in a situation in which the only deal on the table is a bad deal, does the right hon. Gentleman agree that the responsibility for that will lie with the Prime Minister? It is not as if she can deny responsibility for that being a problem.

Alex Salmond: Yes, I would agree, but of course if we are all in the soup, finding out that it was the Prime Minister's responsibility will avail this country very little. It is far better to try to ensure by our votes that we get a realistic choice that can actually make a difference.

Finally, I come to the situation in Scotland. Scotland has a 1,000-year history as a European nation. There is a plaque to Sir William Wallace in great Westminster Hall, the site of his unjust trial—for which, presumably, he will get a pardon at some point soon. After his greatest victory in the battle of Stirling bridge, which was akin to Leicester City winning the premier league last season, in terms of upset and surprise, his first act was not to hold a cèilidh, but to write to the Hanseatic League in Lübeck and elsewhere to secure Scotland's trading concessions throughout Europe. The importance of Scotland's European connections stretches back a millennium, and we are not going to allow this non-vision—this act of madness from this House—to take Scotland out of those connections.

The Scottish Government have put forward the proposition, “Scotland's Place in Europe”, which offers the Prime Minister a way for Scotland to stay in the single marketplace, regardless of what she wants to do to this country. She said today that a frictionless border in Ireland was quite possible under the circumstances, without realising that if it is possible in Ireland, it is of course possible in Scotland. I see the right hon. Member for Preseli Pembrokeshire (Stephen Crabb) nodding; in the early hours of this morning, I think I saw him, or perhaps it was one of his hon. Friends, say much the same thing on the BBC's “HARDtalk”—a sad case, watching “HARDtalk” at 1 o'clock in the morning—and it was an important admission. Actually, it was the hon. Member for Esher and Walton (Mr Raab). It is important to understand that there are examples in Europe at present.

The Prime Minister has it within her power and capacity to accept the Scottish Government's compromise proposals and allow Scotland as a nation to retain its trading place in the European context. If that is not to happen; if the House says, “We will go ahead with a hard, Tory Brexit,” or a full English Brexit, as we are now calling it in Scotland, and says, “We're going to sweep aside concerns from across the House about the economic and political damage, and we will not accept the proposals from Scotland to follow the votes of the people in the nation of Scotland and retain their European connection. We are not interested in preserving Scottish jobs and investment”; if those are the criteria and that is the attitude of the Government; if that is what the Prime Minister wants to do with Scotland, and she is

[Alex Salmond]

determined to throw down that gauntlet, she can be absolutely sure that Nicola Sturgeon, as First Minister, will pick it up.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Mr Speaker: Order. I call Dr Caroline Johnson for her maiden speech. [HON. MEMBERS: “Hear, hear!”]

1.24 pm

Dr Caroline Johnson (Sleaford and North Hykeham) (Con): Sleaford and North Hykeham is not only the constituency that I am proud to represent; it is my home, and I feel a personal responsibility to nurture it. It is a thriving, predominantly agricultural area, with pockets of industry and a strong military tradition.

The town of North Hykeham is built directly on top of the old Roman road, the Fosse Way. To the south is Sleaford, where one is welcomed by the Handley monument, a large, ornate stone structure, within which is a statue of Henry Handley, who was the MP for South Lincolnshire from 1832 to 1841. He was such a popular MP that the townspeople created the memorial in his honour. It is not clear now whether he was so popular for his innovative ideas regarding science, technology and farming, or because of his strong opposition to the taxation of malt. Nevertheless, it is clear that I have a lot to live up to.

My predecessor was Stephen Phillips, who, like his predecessor, Douglas Hogg, is a silk. They brought great intellect and legal acumen to the House, and Stephen is particularly to be commended for his work on the Public Accounts Committee. Probably his greatest virtue, though, is his sense of timing: he resigned at exactly the right time for me to be able to stand for the seat. I thank Stephen for the personal encouragement he has given to me in this endeavour. I also thank the many Members of this House who have given me wonderful support, especially my hon. Friends the Members for Newark (Robert Jenrick), for Sherwood (Mark Spencer), and for Boston and Skegness (Matt Warman), to whom I am very grateful. In these challenging times, Mr Speaker, I promise to uphold the fine traditions of the House and serve my constituents to the best of my ability, ensuring that their voices are heard.

As a new MP, it is right for me to explain briefly who I am. I am a mother of three, a farmer's wife and the product of a loving family. I am a consultant paediatrician and therefore have particular interests in the health, education and general wellbeing of children. I am a committed Brexiteer, and I am also interested in farming, infrastructure and defence. I am not a silk, or even a lawyer, but I have firm principles based on what I believe to be morally right, and on the ideal of democracy under the rule of law.

I have spent all my working life as a doctor in the NHS, and care passionately about it. The NHS is not perfect; in fact, I doubt any organisation as large and so dependent on human judgment ever could be. However, although there are areas that could be improved, I feel many are too quick to decry the faults in the NHS without adequately recognising the brilliant work done, day in and day out, in helping more people than ever

before. I look forward to contributing my knowledge and experience to help to ensure that the NHS goes from strength to strength.

Improving the wellbeing of children remains a topic close to my heart, and I am delighted with the Government's commitment to young people's mental health. We must ensure that young people with mental health issues have access to the right treatment; however, as with physical health, we must also focus on prevention. That should include improvements in children's social care and helping to foster resilience. Resilience is very important. I feel we let down children with the “all must have prizes” culture. Young people should understand their strengths and weaknesses by being allowed to compete and take controlled risks; to win, but also to lose; and to learn from that experience, which better prepares them for the challenges they face in life ahead.

It is truly a privilege to give my maiden speech today in this historic debate. As someone new to the world of Westminster, the greatest surprise to me was that so many seemed surprised by the result of the EU referendum. I was brought up to believe that a good democracy is ruled by the majority, with protection for minorities. As I talk to my constituents, however, I increasingly understand that they perceive that we have rule by a vocal minority elite who are disregarding the views of the majority, and they are angry. Why is that important? Well, because so many people seem to have been surprised by the Brexit vote, having failed to understand the genuine concerns of the majority. This disconnect with the electorate has been seen not just here, but in the results of the US presidential election, and in the rise of far-right parties throughout Europe. There can be no democracy without an understanding of the views of the majority, and those views must be respected, heard and responded to by Members of this House.

There has been much debate recently over whether the referendum was mandatory or advisory, and over the relative authorities of the Government, the legislature and the judiciary. As I said earlier, I am not a lawyer, but I fail to understand how one can ask the electorate a question and then even consider disregarding the result. The referendum is not advice, but an instruction to us. We asked the people, and the people said “Out”, so out we must go.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Mr Speaker: Order. More than 80 right hon. and hon. Members still wish to contribute to the debate over the ensuing five hours, in consequence of which it is necessary, with immediate effect, to impose a time limit on Back-Bench speeches of four minutes. I am trying to ensure that everybody has a chance, on top of those who have already had their opportunity. It would be helpful if those who have already spoken were to refrain from intervening, because such self-restraint might increase opportunities for others. I am sure that all colleagues are concerned about others. I call Yvette Cooper.

1.31 pm

Yvette Cooper (Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford) (Lab): May I start by congratulating the hon. Member for Sleaford and North Hykeham (Dr Johnson) on an excellent maiden speech? She will do her constituents proud if her speech is anything to go by.

We have now a challenge for this whole House—what we do over the next two years and whether what we do strengthens or weakens our democracy. Over the past 40 years, Britain has worked with the EU to achieve some amazing things, but we have done so by sharing sovereignty. We were able to do so, because, when we went into the Common Market in the 1970s, we had popular consent expressed through a referendum. Last summer, we lost that consent, which should be a lesson to all of us who wanted to keep it. Surprisingly, I agreed with some of the things that the right hon. Member for Tatton (Mr Osborne) said, but disagreed with him over whether we should have done more. We could not make the referendum simply about the economy, and we took for granted too many of the things that we needed to argue, particularly about the necessity for politics to come together.

Christina Rees (Neath) (Lab/Co-op): I am a remainer, but I accept the democratic will of the people. Surely now is about securing the best deal for our constituents—the people we are here to represent.

Yvette Cooper: My hon. Friend is right. I, too, will vote for article 50, although I argued against leaving the EU last year. I am worried about the backdrop to all of this, because, across western democracies, democratic values are being undermined. We have seen: attacks on judges as the “enemies of the people”, even though they should be defending the rule of law; attacks on the Human Rights Act and on the protection for minorities against the tyranny of the majority; the steady undermining of democratically elected representatives; the assault on the free press; and the attack on truth itself. The challenge that we face over the next few years in many European countries is how we defend those democratic values. It will be much harder for me to defend that faith in democracy in my constituency if we ignore the results of the ballot box last summer.

Pontefract is the home of the very first secret ballot. We still have the first ballot box, and we see it as a symbol of peaceful democracy—of asking people to be part of that democratic process. That democratic process does not end with the article 50 vote, and that is my concern with the Government’s approach. They are trying to concentrate power in the hands of the Executive, when, in fact, they should be involving all of Parliament and the public in the debate about what kind of country we want to be and about where our future lies. There will be issues on which we will disagree. For example, I feel strongly that we should stay inside the customs union, because that will help our manufacturing in the future. On the rights of EU citizens who already live here, I feel that we should not be leaving them in the lurch while we start the negotiations when we could put them on a sure-footing straight away.

There will be issues about how we balance so many different things, such as how we get our security right, and we will need to debate them here in this House. At the moment, the process that the Government have set out does not give us the secure opportunity to have votes and proper debates and to be sure that we will not be left at the end of this process with what the Prime Minister has described as her way to change the British economic model if we do not get what we like. To the

Opposition, that sounds far more like a tax-haven Britain that would undermine people’s rights and the kind of British values that we want to stand up for.

I urge Members from all parts of the House not just to look at the array of amendments and not just to decide how we respect the referendum result last summer and the different and strongly held views of our constituents, but to look at how all of us, from all parts of the House, vote for the kinds of amendments that will ensure that parliamentary sovereignty is strengthened and that Parliament has a say. I urge Government Members to vote for some of those amendments to ensure that we have a real vote on the final outcome and that we can make real choices.

So much of this has been about how we defend democracy by voting for article 50. It should not be about that; it should be about how we strengthen democracy over the next two years. If this was about parliamentary sovereignty for all of us, let us have the strength and the confidence to use it.

1.37 pm

Mr John Whittingdale (Maldon) (Con): It is a pleasure to follow the right hon. Member for Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford (Yvette Cooper). I did not agree with everything that she said, but the one thing with which I most certainly did agree was her congratulations to my hon. Friend the Member for Sleaford and North Hykeham (Dr Johnson) who made an excellent first speech in this House. It is probably the case that she will never speak in a more important debate in this House no matter that she has, I am sure, a long career ahead of her here.

My first political act was to take part in the referendum campaign in 1975. I put leaflets through doors calling on people to vote yes in that referendum. I did so because I believed in free trade, and because I believed the assurances that were written on those leaflets that the decision taken would not affect the sovereignty of the UK Parliament.

I was working for Margaret Thatcher when she first delivered the Bruges speech, which highlighted the fact that that assurance was being steadily eroded and that the European Community was heading in the wrong direction. As a result, when I entered this House I opposed the Maastricht treaty, the Amsterdam treaty, the Nice treaty and indeed the Lisbon treaty as it was becoming steadily clearer that, although there may or may not have been economic benefits from our membership, this was a political project that was heading in the one direction of ever closer union.

It was a project on which the British people had not been consulted and which they did not support. I had hoped that the Prime Minister, David Cameron, would negotiate an arrangement that allowed us to opt out from the elements that we did not want. He tried valiantly, but what he came back with was insufficient, which left us with no alternative but to leave and then to seek new arrangements allowing us to co-operate in those areas where there was a benefit. The result of the referendum was clear. In my constituency, it was nearly two to one, and people did understand what they were voting for. It does not matter that a majority of younger people may have voted to remain, that a majority of those with degrees may have voted to remain, or even that some parts of the UK may have voted to remain.

[*Mr John Whittingdale*]

This was a nationwide referendum of the British people, and the British people spoke. I agree with the Prime Minister that we have no alternative but to leave the single market, as it is essential that we have control over our borders once more and that we are no longer subject to European Union law.

Mr Charles Walker (Broxbourne) (Con): Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr Whittingdale: I really am sorry, but I do not have time.

We have to leave the customs union if the condition of remaining in it is that we are unable to negotiate our own trade agreements. There are precedents, although I would not necessarily want to follow them completely. The new arrangements, for instance, between the European Union and Canada, and between the European Union and Ukraine, offer no application of European law in those countries and no free movement, but do give them access to the internal market and allow them to negotiate their own trade agreements. Ultimately, the European Union is flexible and an arrangement is perfectly possible.

The negotiations will be complicated. I am concerned, for instance, that we must have recognition of the adequacy of our data protection, so that data can continue to flow across borders. I would like us still to be recognised under the country of origin principle. However, it is vital for European businesses still to have access to our markets, so they will be putting pressure on their Governments to reach a sensible deal. The one thing I have found most astonishing is that when Britain voted to leave the European Union, the reaction of other member states has been more to seek to punish Britain than to ask the question why. The European Union is a flawed—

Mr Speaker: Order. I call Geoffrey Robinson.

1.41 pm

Mr Geoffrey Robinson (Coventry North West) (Lab): I will be brief and to the point, as many other hon. Members want to take part in the debate. We have heard some remarkable contributions, and I will mention two that were made yesterday. The former Deputy Prime Minister, the right hon. Member for Sheffield, Hallam (Mr Clegg) and the right hon. and learned Member for Rushcliffe (Mr Clarke), who has just left the Chamber so will not hear my remarks, challenged everyone who will be voting in favour of this Bill tonight, as I will be, to examine our consciences. They particularly challenged those of us—I strongly count myself among this number—who voted, argued and campaigned for a remain vote. I believe that, as we lost the vote, we have to face the consequences, although the former Deputy Prime Minister and the right hon. and learned Member for Rushcliffe feel that we should not.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Doncaster North (Edward Miliband) also said that this is an issue of conscience. I regret to some extent that we will be voting on a three-line Whip, as it is a deeply moral, conscious decision that we all have to take. However, I would have much more difficulty justifying and coming to terms with my conscience if I were to vote against the

Bill and, effectively, in favour of delaying and frustrating the beginning of the negotiations and, therefore, the whole process of leaving the European Union. We have only to re-read the referendum question. It was so simple, asking:

“Should the United Kingdom remain a member of the European Union or leave the European Union?”

There were no ifs or buts. It was a simple question understood by everybody who took part in the referendum. It is no good now to say that the referendum was really only advisory and that we should have a second referendum or a confirmatory vote.

I campaigned widely in the west midlands, strongly on the remain ticket. I went out of my way to warn my constituents about the economic consequences, although warnings, particularly from the then Chancellor, may have been overdone throughout the whole campaign, which did not particularly help us. I warned people that the referendum was a one-off, that it was a yes or no question and that there would be no second referendum or further bite at the cherry if we did not like the outcome. Members who are telling us that tonight's vote is a matter of conscience for those who were on the remain side and who felt strongly about remaining, as I did, believe that we should vote against the Bill. On the contrary, there is not a conceivable material argument for doing so. Indeed, to do so would be to betray the very basis on which we conducted the referendum; that is certainly what I spoke to, and I believe that it is what all Members who actively took part in the referendum spoke to.

We come to the question of how this House can be involved in and influence the negotiations. My experience of negotiations—business and others—tells me that we have to get real about this. The issues and choices will become clearer once we are in negotiations. I agree with the former Chancellor, who brings us great advice from Davos and other centres of learning, that perhaps economics will not be the big issue of the negotiations. However, the outcome on the economic and trading front is the essence of what this is really about for working people. My advice is simply this: soft Brexit and a transition period. Anything else would predict a harsh and uncomfortable future for the working people of this country.

Mr Speaker: As I said yesterday and perhaps I can be forgiven for repeating today, it would be hugely appreciated if colleagues did not keep coming up to the Chair either asking explicitly when they will be called, or doing so implicitly by inquiring whether it is alright if they go for lunch, repair to the loo, consume a cup of tea or eat a biscuit. It is not necessary. All I would say is, please be patient. I want to accommodate everybody—I am on your side—but it does not help if people keep coming up to the Chair all the time. It is incredibly tedious, especially when one is trying to listen to what colleagues actually have to say.

1.45 pm

Dame Caroline Spelman (Meriden) (Con): Having originally been elected on a slender majority of 582, I certainly understand that we have to accept the outcome of democratic elections, however narrow the margin, but I must admit that I was surprised by the leave result

in the west midlands, given that the region is in substantial trade surplus with the EU. Of course, I am delighted that the automotive industry has achieved so much success that it exports 82% of all its cars, mostly to the other 27 countries of the EU.

The subject of immigration dominated the conversations I had on the matter, even when standing outside the gates of the car factory. No distinction was made between EU and non-EU migration, which each account for 50% of migrants. I worry that our electors expect that taking back control will mean that very few migrants will arrive here. However, our history as an empire means that there are family obligations to non-EU migrants and an absolute obligation, through the Geneva and The Hague conventions, to provide safe haven for the most vulnerable people, many from countries for which we drew the lines on a map.

I heard mixed motives for voting leave. Some second-generation migrants told me they did not want any more coming in. Article 50 will be triggered and we will be in uncharted waters, trying to negotiate the things that are vital for our success. Access to our principal market is key. The car industry is desperately short of engineers, and its success will be choked if it cannot get the skilled labour it needs. If we are honest, migrants are more willing to do some jobs, such as picking fruit and vegetables. A spring onion producer told me he cannot rely on local labour to get the harvest in. We must ensure that horticulture is not destroyed by taking back control without being able to meet the demand for labour. These are not easy things to say in public, but we are about to make a momentous decision, and, as the Prime Minister says, we have to make a success of it. That will only be achieved if we are honest about some of the problems we face.

I am no starry-eyed Europhile. The political leadership in Europe failed to inspire its citizens about the benefits of working together. Other countries are seeing the rise of extreme right parties that promise to solve their problems. This goes beyond Europe. The leadership of the rich nations around the world are struggling to find answers to the impact of globalisation for the low waged. In America, Obama tried to extend healthcare to the poorest, and here we have the introduction of the living wage, but maybe we need to look to places such as Scandinavia for better models of wage equality and fairness in society. Those are the big questions left when we exit the European Union and we will need to answer them in our own way.

I expect that the EU will change after we have left, because it must collectively try to find answers to the big questions of globalisation, mass migration and robotics. By contrast with the US, we have decided to turn outward, not inward, partly because we have to and because our heritage is one of trade and exploration. I hope the electorate will be patient, but they will judge our efforts on their experience, not on our rhetoric. I hope that all that is great about Britain is not sacrificed in pursuit of an unrealistic ambition to go back to some mythical time when we were in control of all we surveyed.

1.49 pm

Tim Farron (Westmorland and Lonsdale) (LD): She is not in her place now, but I want to pay tribute to the hon. Member for Sleaford and North Hykeham (Dr Johnson) for her excellent maiden speech.

Liberal Democrats have always been proud internationalists. It was the Liberals who backed Winston Churchill's European vision in the 1950s, even when his own party did not do so. Since our foundation, we have been champions of Britain's role in the European Union and fought for co-operation and openness with our neighbours and with our allies. We have always believed that the challenges that Britain faces in the 21st century—climate change, terrorism and economic instability—are best tackled working together as a member of the European Union.

Being proud Europeans is part of our identity as a party, and it is part of my personal identity too. Personally, I was utterly gutted by the result. Some on the centre left are squeamish about patriotism; I am not. I am very proud of my identity as a northerner, as an Englishman, as a Brit, and as a European—all those things are consistent. My identity did not change on 24 June, and neither did my values, my beliefs, or what I believe is right for this country and for future generations. I respect the outcome of the referendum. The vote was clear—close, but clear—and I accept it.

But voting for departure is not the same as voting for a destination. Yes, a narrow majority voted to leave the EU, but the leave campaign had no plans, no instructions, no prospectus and no vision. No one in this Government, no one in this House and no one in this country has any idea of what the deal the Prime Minister will negotiate with Europe will be—it is completely unknown. How, then, can anyone pretend that this undiscussed, unwritten, un-negotiated deal in any way has the backing of the British people? The deal must be put to the British people for them to have their say. That is the only way to hold the Government to account for the monumental decisions they will have to take over the next two years.

Neil Coyle (Bermondsey and Old Southwark) (Lab): Does the hon. Gentleman not think that his party is partly responsible for the outcome of the referendum, because immigration became a proxy for issues like the pressure on the NHS and the inability to see a doctor, and the inability to get the right class sizes, owing to policies that his party supported which squeezed public services and meant that people looked for someone else to blame?

Tim Farron: I am staggered by the hon. Gentleman speaking the language of Nigel Farage—what a terrible disgrace.

The deal must be put to the British people for them to have their say. That is the only way to hold the Government to account for the monumental decision they will have to take over the next two years to ensure that the course they choose serves the interests of all the people, however they voted.

Several hon. Members rose—

Tim Farron: I will not take any more interventions because other people need to get in.

Here is the likelihood: 48% of the people will not like the outcome of the deal, and half of the 52% will feel that they were betrayed by the outcome of the deal. The only way to achieve democracy and closure is for there to be a vote at the end.

[Tim Farron]

The fact is that the Prime Minister is the one making the strongest case for giving people a vote on the deal. She had the choice to pursue a form of Brexit that united our country, reflected the closeness of the vote, and sought to heal the divisions between leave and remain. Instead she chose to pursue the hardest, most divisive form of Brexit, which tears us out of the single market and leaves us isolated against the might of world superpowers. Never mind that six months ago she herself argued the case for remaining in the EU. Never mind that numerous leave campaigners championed the Norway and Swiss models and spent the referendum campaign assuring voters that we would not leave the single market. Never mind that 48% of people—16 million British people—wanted to stay in the EU. Never mind that Britain's young people, who have more of a stake in our country than most of us here, voted three to one to remain.

The Prime Minister has made her choice—fine; she has chosen hard Brexit—but if she is so confident that what she is planning is what people voted for, she must give them a vote on the final deal. What started with democracy must not end with a Government stitch-up. When all is said and done, the decision on whether the deal the Prime Minister negotiates is good enough will be decided by someone; someone will make that decision. Should it be the Prime Minister, should it be those privileged to be here, or should it be the British people who have to live with that decision? I say that it should be put to the people in a referendum. That is why the Liberal Democrats are fighting for the British people to have the final vote on the deal that this Government negotiates. Democracy means accepting the will of the people, at the beginning of the process and the end of the process. Democracy means respecting the majority, and democracy means not giving up your beliefs when the going gets tough.

1.54 pm

Mr Gary Streeter (South West Devon) (Con): It is always a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Tim Farron), who always speaks with passion. However, let me put it squarely on the table that I will never vote for another referendum while I am in this House, given what we experienced last year.

I agree with those who have said that this is a conscience vote; forget the three-line Whips. We asked the people, “What do you want to do?”, they said, “Leave,” and as far as I am concerned that settled the matter. I will of course be voting for the Bill this evening.

I want to make three very quick points. First, I believe that the Prime Minister deserves personal credit for her leadership on Brexit since she emerged last July. Casting our minds back to the extraordinary events of last summer, we were shell-shocked, not knowing where the public vote would take us. “Brexit means Brexit”, she said,

“and we’re going to make a success of it.”

That phrase, much mocked in some quarters, gave a sufficient sense of direction to steady the ship. It became apparent by January that we then needed a more detailed plan, and at just the right time, the Prime Minister gave her Lancaster House speech, which set out a clear,

coherent and credible plan for the way forward. It was one of the most significant speeches I have heard in my 25 years in this House, and it was a game changer for me and for many people.

The plan is ambitious and not without risk. In particular, we will be leaving the single market and turning our backs on free movement, but seeking to negotiate a free trade agreement. That is a high-risk strategy, but I recognise that to remain in the single market would not properly reflect the desire of the majority who voted leave to control immigration. It is, however, vital that putting in place a bespoke free trade agreement is successfully completed as part of the overall deal. The one fear that companies in my constituency have is not so much tariffs, bad though they might be, but non-tariff barriers, which can play havoc with sensible trading arrangements and must be avoided if possible.

One part of the Lancaster House speech has received insufficient attention—the reference to transitional arrangements. I know that there are some, and some in this Chamber think that all this can be done in the blink of an eye, but it cannot. It is complex, it will take years, and we have to exercise patience. Once we start detailed negotiations—once we start to consider which parts of the *acquis* we want to ditch and which to keep—we are probably looking at a 10-year project. We might well leave the EU in 2019, but we should prepare ourselves for substantial transitional arrangements, and thereafter, I hope, a positive working relationship.

Secondly, we must now be brutally honest with the British people about the likely short-term impact of Brexit, not in an alarmist way, but simply making the point that because of uncertainty—because we have now made it clear that we will not be in the single market—there is likely to be an impact on Government spending for the next few years. We know that tax receipts have fallen against forecast since June, and that trend may well continue. There may well be long-term gains from Brexit—I certainly hope so, and we must strive for that end—but there will most likely be short-term pain, especially now that the phoney war is drawing to an end. International companies will weigh the certain knowledge that we will be leaving the single market against the hope of an equivalent free trade agreement, and some of them who crunch that calculation will decide to invest or expand elsewhere. Some financial institutions are already getting itchy feet, so there might not be as much money available for the NHS and social care and schools as we would like over the next two to five years, and we should prepare the British people for that fact.

Finally, living in these very turbulent times when all kinds of things are going on in our world, I encourage those on the Front Bench—those who are negotiating—thus: we have a clear plan, but let us not be slavish about it; let us be flexible and wise.

1.58 pm

Mr Nigel Dodds (Belfast North) (DUP): It is with great pleasure that I rise to speak in this debate on this historic day for Parliament and for this country. None of us who believed in withdrawal from the European Union believed that we would ever see an Order Paper displaying the words, “European Union (Notification of Withdrawal) Bill: Second Reading”. It is a very historic, landmark occasion.

The Bill implements a decision that this Parliament decided to hand to the people. It would be utterly wrong, therefore, to reject what the people of the United Kingdom decided in a national vote. I utterly respect those who have spoken who campaigned hard, enthusiastically and vigorously to remain but are saying that, as Parliament handed the decision to the people, we must respect the will of the people. I have little time for those who argue that we should now engage in procedural games to thwart the will of the people. That is dishonest and undemocratic. I agree with the Liberal Democrats about believing in democracy and listening to the will of the people, so let us get on and implement what the people have said, not engage in efforts to thwart it. This was a national vote across the United Kingdom and everybody's vote was equal.

I want to address the issues that affect Northern Ireland in particular. It has been said that, because Northern Ireland voted to remain by 56% to 44%, it should not be part of the withdrawal or it should be given a special status. I can think of nothing that would be more calculated to undermine the Union between Northern Ireland and the rest of the United Kingdom than for Northern Ireland to be able to thwart the will of the people of the United Kingdom as a whole. That would be a deeply anti-Unionist position to take.

It is right and proper that we respect the special needs of Northern Ireland, and we are arguing them vigorously with the Government. We are engaged with this House and with Ministers back home, and that is why I deplore the fact that at this crucial juncture our locally devolved Assembly and Executive have been brought down needlessly. The people who brought it down are the very people who are now making speeches saying, "Brexit undermines the Good Friday agreement." Thankfully, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland has completely demolished that argument and made it clear that nothing in the Good Friday, St Andrews or any other agreement is in any way impaired or imperilled by the decision to leave the European Union. Those who are now complaining the hardest about Northern Ireland have denied themselves a voice by not taking their seats and arguing their case in this House or engaging with Ministers. They have now brought down the elected Government in Northern Ireland, so they do not have any input there, either.

The reality is that of course this presents challenges for Northern Ireland. However, when we kept sterling and the Irish Republic joined the euro along with other European partner nations and states, we were told that it was a massively detrimental act and that it would cause all sorts of major problems on the island of Ireland and lead to all sorts of disruption, both economic and political. None of that happened—people adapted. They were told that we would have to change our currency at the border. Northern Ireland has a different currency from that of the Irish Republic, but trade continues—it is flourishing—and the economy has done extremely well. None of the dire predictions of terrible consequences came to pass.

I am confident that we will see a better future for the United Kingdom and for Northern Ireland. I welcome the Prime Minister's commitment to maintaining the common travel area. I reject the idea of a special status for Northern Ireland, and I am glad that the Taoiseach of the Irish Republic rejects it too, because it is code for separating Northern Ireland from the rest of the United Kingdom and undermining our—

Mr Speaker: Order. I call Sir Gerald Howarth.

2.2 pm

Sir Gerald Howarth (Aldershot) (Con): This is indeed an historic moment in our nation's history. This is the moment that we begin to take back control of our laws, our borders and our money. Once again we become a sovereign nation state in command of our own destiny, and I am absolutely delighted about that.

I was brought up in post-war Germany. I campaigned to leave in the 1975 referendum and, along with 43 others, I voted against the Single European Act in 1986, so I have form. The hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr Skinner), the right hon. Member for Islington North (Jeremy Corbyn) and I are the last remaining members of that band. Although Margaret Thatcher pushed for that Act, I have no doubt that, if she were with us today, her response to this Bill would be, "Rejoice!"

I pay tribute to all those, on both sides of the House, who have campaigned over the years for this outcome. I also salute David Cameron for honouring his commitment to give the British people a referendum on membership of the EU. Many said that he would renege on that, but he kept his word.

The referendum was not advisory. It was an instruction to withdraw from the European Union. The Bill simply authorises the giving of notice to leave, without which negotiations cannot begin. It is touching to hear the new-found respect for parliamentary democracy from the Bill's opponents—the same people who for four decades have been complicit in the relentless campaign to transfer power from this Parliament to Brussels.

Mr Charles Walker: Does my hon. Friend agree that, having asked the people to give us their voice, we now need to respect that voice and get on with it?

Sir Gerald Howarth: Absolutely, and I think that the overwhelming view, not only in this House but across the country, is in favour of that proposition.

A number of speeches during this debate, principally yesterday, have sought to rerun the referendum arguments, but it is no good complaining that the people did not know what they were voting for. The Government spent £9 million of our money on a brochure riddled with inaccuracies, and they mounted an extraordinary and utterly counterproductive "Project Fear" campaign warning of dire consequences if we voted to leave, none of which have come to pass. My right hon. Friend the Member for Tatton (Mr Osborne), the former Chancellor, who is sitting in front of me, predicted an

"immediate and profound economic shock across the country"

and a DIY recession, but none of that happened. Instead, the economy grew by 0.6% in the third quarter of 2016, compared with 0.3% in the first quarter, before the referendum. Major companies such as SoftBank, Google, Novo Nordisk and Nissan have announced significant investment in the United Kingdom.

Some have argued that the public were not told that a leave vote would require us to leave the single market, but recovering control of our borders and restoring to this Parliament responsibility for the laws of these islands—in other words, a return of sovereignty—was at the heart of the debate. Membership of the single market is completely incompatible with those objectives.

[Sir Gerald Howarth]

As my hon. Friend the Member for Boston and Skegness (Matt Warman) said yesterday, the people knew what they were voting for and it is patronising to suggest otherwise.

Some suggest that the validity of a referendum in which more than 33 million voted is in doubt, yet no such question troubled them in 1997 when Tony Blair secured a majority of 179 with just 13.5 million votes. By contrast, 17.4 million voted to leave the European Union. We are leaving and there will be no second referendum. We undoubtedly face challenges ahead, but let us not kid ourselves: there would have been major challenges if the United Kingdom had voted to remain.

There are 70 billion reasons why our EU partners will want to reach a mutually beneficial trade deal with us, because they have a £70 billion trade surplus with us. I hope that those countries that in large part owe their liberation from the Soviet yoke to the Conservative Government of Margaret Thatcher will respect our decision and help us forge a new, constructive relationship. I hope that the same will apply to those countries that we helped rebuild after the second world war.

Free from the EU customs union, we will be able to embrace the world and negotiate trade deals with our Commonwealth friends, encouraging fair trade deals, and the tiger economies of the world. However, it will be hard graft; the US may be our closest ally, but commercially they will be no pushover.

I have another note of caution: the EU's determination to create an EU defence identity shows no sign of relenting. Such a policy presents a direct threat to the ultimate guarantor of European security, NATO, and risks alienating its principal paymaster, the United States of America. I shall support this Bill tonight.

2.7 pm

Ian Murray (Edinburgh South) (Lab): I have been a Member of this House for almost seven years and rarely have I spoken on a Bill of such great importance, not just to the country and to Scotland but to my own constituents. It is a great pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Aldershot (Sir Gerald Howarth). Although we fundamentally disagree about the European Union, it is right that we are able to express our views in this House on behalf of our constituents and the country.

If that is what taking back control is about, let us talk about that democratic process. We have been able to debate this Bill yesterday and today only because the public took the Government to court to express the view that they were railroading through a decision without due process or the taking back of control that they had promised this Parliament. We should pay tribute to those people for making it possible for us to make these arguments on behalf of our constituents.

Like many right hon. and hon. Members, I campaigned vigorously for a remain vote. One of my party members, Gordon Dalyell, the son of Tam Dalyell, campaigned alongside me night after night. I pay tribute to Tam. Our thoughts are with Gordon, Pam, Matthew and the rest of the Dalyell family.

I campaigned vociferously for the UK to remain a member of the European Union because it was in our national interest. When I was tramping around the

streets of my constituency in 2010 and 2015, I was not knocking on doors promising my constituents that if I was elected to this House I would do everything I possibly could to make their lives poorer. Indeed, the new Chancellor of the Exchequer has said quite clearly on the record that nobody votes to make themselves poorer. It is incumbent on everyone in this House, throughout the process, not simply to railroad the Bill through as though it did not matter, but to fight for every single amendment so that the House sends a strong message—both to the Government and to our European partners—that we will make sure that the country gets the best deal for our constituents.

Lisa Nandy (Wigan) (Lab): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Ian Murray: I will not give way, if my hon. Friend does not mind, because of the timescale and the fact that other people wish to speak.

At the end of the EU referendum campaign, 78% of my constituents voted to remain. Many Members from across the Chamber in the last day or so have talked about not respecting the democratic will of the people, but, as far as I am concerned and according to “Erskine May”, we are representatives of our constituents. None of these decisions in the House is taken easily; in fact, it is with a heavy heart that I will vote against triggering article 50 this evening, but I will do so in the knowledge that I will be able to walk down the streets of Edinburgh South, look my constituents in the eye and say to them that I have done everything I possibly can to protect their jobs, their livelihoods and the future of their families.

When the Bill goes through Third Reading and the Lords, as we know it will, I will work enthusiastically to get amendments to it and hold the Government to account. Brexit might mean Brexit, but to my constituents and to many people across the country Brexit does not mean Tory Brexit. The rhetoric we have been hearing from the Government is wrong. I do not know why they are fighting the people to stop Parliament having a say, and I do not know why they are not reaching out across the Chamber to try to get a common sound and a common voice, to make sure that Britain can get the best possible deal from our European partners. I will vote no this evening, against triggering article 50, but rest assured that I will spend the rest of the time in this Chamber fighting for my constituents' lives.

2.11 pm

Alistair Burt (North East Bedfordshire) (Con): Thank you, Mr Speaker, for calling me to speak in a debate that I never wanted to happen, ahead of a vote that I never wanted to cast. This summer, I will have been an MP for 30 years, in which I have supported the pro-European cause with a passion. I do not think I need to elaborate.

I believed that the referendum that forms the basis of the Bill had become an inevitability, and I supported David Cameron's call. I may have been wrong, and I envy the steadfastness of my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Rushcliffe (Mr Clarke), and his consequent vote on the Bill. I am in a different place; I voted for the referendum Bill believing that the result of the referendum would count. On the public platforms

on which I argued to remain, I made the bargain with the good people of North East Bedfordshire that we would honour the result of the referendum; if we voted to remain, that would be that, and if we voted to leave, I would support the decision if I was required as an MP to vote on the matter. We have, and I will.

I am not giving up fighting. I want the very best for my constituents out of the new arrangements. That is why I stood to be a member of the Exiting the European Union Committee, and it is why I will work with others in Parliament and beyond to assist the Government who have been landed with this in making the best of it. The Bill does not provide much opportunity for the addition of detail governing future negotiation. The Government need a pretty open hand, although one or two amendments might help them to retain parliamentary support.

I will fight for a negotiated settlement, watching carefully for any sign that “no deal” is moving up the agenda. I want the Government to be as open as possible to as many options as possible. The degree of detail to be covered is staggering, both for us and for our partners, and new consequences are being uncovered every day. This is way more complicated than some of our colleagues ever wanted to believe, and not all the consequences will be beneficial.

There is one fight that I want to see an end of, and on which I am calling time. I do not believe there is any realistic prospect of the UK remaining in or rejoining the EU, certainly not in my lifetime in the House. I think it is time for me to place my support for the EU and Europe on a different footing—one that recognises the reality of what we have done. I will work for the future prosperity of the EU, for our partnership relationship with it and for all the things we must continue to do together from that new position. I will defend the EU against those who still wish it further harm—from those misguided enough to believe that the further disintegration of the EU is of some benefit—whether that is those in some quarters in the UK with a viewpoint of malevolence, those with a viewpoint of ignorance in the United States.

I have decided that I will not, at present, fight for the UK somehow to find a quick way back to the EU. Let me be clear: I believe sincerely that the decision of those who voted out was wrong, as was the view of those who led them. I am reconciled to Brexit, but I am not yet persuaded of the wisdom of the decision. However, spending the next few years trying to reverse 48:52 and make it 52:48 does not seem to me to be in the UK’s interest. I do not want an already divided country to become more so. Honest patriotism has merged seamlessly into jingoistic nationalism, and the national debate has become sad and dispiriting. As a confirmed remainer and supporter of the EU, I do not want the next generation of Conservative MPs to have the blight of this argument dogging them, their associations, their members and their voters in the way it has dogged us. It has soured friendships, deepened bitterness and damaged relationships—I swore at a mate in the Tea Room, and I am sorry.

Instead, I want to work towards a new partnership with the EU that will start to command ever-increasing support. We should aim higher than a minimum of support and look towards the vast majority of those in the UK supporting such a partnership. It is possible to

be pro-European and not define oneself solely in terms of membership of the EU. It is time to be proud to be British without hating the EU. I hope it will help if some of us who lost take the opportunity to create something better out of what has happened. Although I will vote for the Bill with a heavy heart, that is the relationship I am looking for.

2.15 pm

Neil Coyle (Bermondsey and Old Southwark) (Lab): I have listened to yesterday’s and today’s debate, a lot of which has focused on process and procedure. I want to focus on people. I made a very simple promise to the people of Bermondsey and Old Southwark in May 2015 that I would never support anything that would damage them, their lives or their children’s lives. I made that promise precisely because my predecessor was a Liberal Democrat who backed Tory measures—the bedroom tax, cuts to legal aid and tripling tuition fees—that damaged my community. I made that promise, and I stand by it.

I hear from people, day in, day out, about the damage that has been done since the referendum. The universities in my constituency—the London School of Economics, King’s College London, South Bank University and the University of the Arts London—are worried about research funding from the European Union, the Erasmus programme and a drop in international student numbers, which could mean higher fees for British students. That was not in the referendum last year.

I hear from medical professionals who are worried about recruitment. The NHS is not getting £350 million extra a week, and it is struggling, even with 54,000 staff who are non-UK EU nationals. I hear from the financial sector—my constituency has the third-highest level of financial sector employment in the country—that 7,000 jobs have already gone. Nobody voted to lose their job. I hear from food importers, such as Brindisa today and Mamuska! last week, that have seen costs rise since the referendum by 15%. Those costs are being passed on to consumers and customers. People did not vote to pay more for a dinner out.

I hear from hotels. Although tourism has gone up since the referendum, there are many non-UK EU nationals working in our hotels, and there are simply not enough unemployed, unskilled Londoners to fill those jobs if we leave. I also hear from exporters in my constituency, who worry about future tariffs and the cost of things such as having to print a different label for beer bottles that will go into the EU market. I hear from people who are very worried about their economic prospects—young professionals who supported the Conservative party at the last election, but who are now politically homeless.

The former Prime Minister John Major referred to the likes of the former Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, the right hon. Member for Chingford and Woodford Green (Mr Duncan Smith), as “bastards”. The former Prime Minister could not have known that his party would become a whole Government full of bastards, who are absolutely causing economic damage to my constituents and the whole country. At the risk of offending my own Front Benchers as well as Government Front Benchers, I say that my members campaigned vigorously to remain in the European Union, and they

[Neil Coyle]

deserve a Front-Bench position that is not us signing up to the Government's position, the Government's timetable and the Government's curtailing of debate. It is a disgrace.

Mr John Baron (Basildon and Billericay) (Con): On a point of order, Mr Speaker.

Mr Speaker: Order. I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman, but there is no need for a point of order. I say to the hon. Member for Bermondsey and Old Southwark (Neil Coyle) that he should not have used the word he used. He tried to wrap it up in a quote, but it was very unseemly, rather undignified and quite unnecessary. He should not have done it, and he should apologise.

Neil Coyle: Although I share the former Prime Minister's sentiments, I apologise if it was unparliamentary language.

Mr Speaker: It was unparliamentary language, and the hon. Gentleman should not do it again. Has he finished his contribution?

Neil Coyle *indicated assent.*

Mr Speaker: We are grateful to him.

2.19 pm

Nicky Morgan (Loughborough) (Con): Thank you very much, Mr Speaker, for calling me to speak in this historic debate. Although he is not in his place on the Government Benches, I want to pay tribute to my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Rushcliffe (Mr Clarke), my constituency neighbour, for his wonderful speech. Boy, does he show us how it is all done.

This is a short Bill with huge ramifications for all of us for years to come. Like other Conservative Members, I campaigned for remain, but I accept the democratic vote, and I think we should allow the article 50 notice to be triggered. I agree with those who have said that if we do not do so, the crisis in our democracy that this Bill's defeat would lead to will help no one.

Yesterday, the Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union said that the outcome he wanted was a country that was

“stronger, fairer, more united and more outward-looking”.—[*Official Report*, 31 January 2017; Vol. 620, c. 821.]

I agree with him, and the Government's negotiations must lead to that outcome. As colleagues have said, Parliament must be involved, not just at the start of this process, but throughout and particularly at the end. The manner of the vote at the end of the process is important. Ministers will have noted the amendments that have been tabled about that parliamentary vote, and I hope that they will add to the Prime Minister's words about that, either in the closing speech tonight or in Committee next week.

I welcome the fact that a White Paper is to be published, and particularly the Prime Minister's announcement that it will be published tomorrow, but I have been clear that the Bill and the White Paper, which will set out the Prime Minister's 12 pillars, are separate and should be considered as such.

For me, the tests leading us to a successful new relationship with the European Union are threefold. First, leaving must not undermine our economy. It must not unduly affect the jobs, household finances and financial security of our constituents. I hope we will get a chance to debate that as part of the discussions on the White Paper. Secondly, leaving must not undermine our constitution. That was tested in the courts, and I welcome the decision of the High Court, which has been upheld by the Supreme Court. Finally, leaving must not undermine our values as a country. I thought that the right hon. Member for Tottenham (Mr Lammy) spoke very powerfully about values, as have other Members on both sides of the House, yesterday and today. Upholding values is up to us as Members of Parliament, the Government and Ministers.

I have to be honest: never in my adult life have I felt so concerned about the stability and state of the world in which we live. With the Brexit vote, we have added an extra layer of uncertainty to our world. However, I want to take the Secretary of State at his word when he said yesterday:

“This is just the beginning”.—[*Official Report*, 31 January 2017; Vol. 620, c. 819.]

To paraphrase a great former Prime Minister who believed in a united Europe, the Bill is not the beginning of the end, but may be the end of the beginning, of the Brexit process.

2.22 pm

Mr Angus Brendan MacNeil (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP): I am grateful to my right hon. Friend the Member for Gordon (Alex Salmond) for trailing my speech in his remarks.

I did not intend to speak yesterday or today, but as I listened to the speeches yesterday, it occurred to me that the House of Commons has quite clearly taken leave of its senses. That happens at times, but the difficulty and danger is that the public trust the House of Commons at moments such as this. They trusted the House of Commons on Iraq, when it had taken leave of its senses, and on the poll tax, when it had taken leave of its senses. On the poll tax, that was quickly corrected, but Iraq still lies in ruins. It is at times when the Opposition unite with the Government that the House particularly takes leave of its senses. If ever there was a time to beware, it is now.

I listened carefully to the right hon. Member for Tatton (Mr Osborne), who is not in his place. He gambled with his scare stories on the EU and on Scotland. On Scotland, he won; on the EU, he lost. This time, are we feeling lucky? A deal is in the gift not of the UK Government alone, but of 38 assemblies and regional parliaments across Europe, 27 sovereign nation Parliaments and one EU Parliament. We are but one in 67 voices, and we have to get that into our heads.

The Prime Minister has said that no deal is better than a bad deal, but no deal would mean for farmers that meat had 22% tariffs, dairy had 36% tariffs and fish—this particularly affects my constituency—had 12% tariffs. People assume that the House of Commons knows what it is doing, but it does not. It is crossing its fingers and hoping for the best.

We are told time after time in the Chamber that people know what they voted for. Perhaps they knew what they were voting for—to leave the EU—but they

certainly did not know the destination, and neither does this House. The International Trade Committee, of which I am Chair, does not know the destination, nor does the Department for International Trade. The Prime Minister does not know the destination. The pretence that because the people voted to leave the EU, they knew the destination is beyond facile. People who have appeared before my Committee from BASF, Manchester Airports Group, the CBI, the National Farmers Union, Dairy UK, the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders, the British Chambers of Commerce, the Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board, Tech City UK and the Law Society do not know the destination for the UK. The UK is on a precipice.

Sir Oliver Letwin (West Dorset) (Con): The hon. Gentleman is speaking as though that is a great perception. Has he ever come across a negotiation between two parties in which it was possible to predict the outcome in advance?

Mr MacNeil: The right hon. Gentleman makes precisely my point, and I am grateful to him for doing so. He may be able to tell me how many member states of the United Nations are not in a regional trade agreement. Anybody? [*Interruption.*] The hon. Member for Braintree (James Cleverly) knows: he was at my Committee session today. There are only six member states of the United Nations that are not in a regional trade agreement.

Kevin Brennan: Name them.

Mr MacNeil: I will. They are Mauritania, Palau, São Tomé and Príncipe, Somalia, South Sudan and East Timor, and soon to join this illustrious group is the United Kingdom. This is playing fast and loose; it is “Cross your fingers and hope it works out for the best.” The UK will find itself, for the first time since 1960, not in a free trade agreement. It joined the European Free Trade Association, the original free trade agreement, in 1960, and that is how it has been since then. I have been told by the Library that every member of the OECD is in a regional trade agreement, and even North Korea signed up to one in 1988. The UK is boldly going where even North Korea fails to go.

If that does not give Members pause for thought, what will? As they head over the edge of the cliff, they will take their constituents and the poorest people of society with them. Let us remember who paid for the bankers: the poorest in society. Who will pay for this fashion of Brexit? The poorest in society will be paying for it. We are feeling our way and crossing our fingers. It is not the best deal for the UK.

Let us remember that the best deal that the UK will now have with Europe will be after we have smashed up the Rolls-Royce. We will head down to the second-hand car dealer and ask him for the best motor he has got, because we have smashed up our Rolls-Royce and thrown it to one side. Having refused to travel in the best possible transport, we are now going for the best after we have smashed up the Rolls-Royce.

This House has to come to its senses, as it did on Iraq, the poll tax, the bedroom tax and numerous other matters. Unfortunately, the people who will pay for this are not here. Members are hellbent on going to any destination so long as it involves leaving the EU. That is

gross irresponsibility. There is only thing—I repeat, one thing—that can save Scotland, and that is independence, and independence very soon.

2.27 pm

Nadine Dorries (Mid Bedfordshire) (Con): I am very much looking forward to voting tonight and to the debates on universities, education, immigration and the economy that will take place in the Chamber during the next two years. I truly feel that, as a result of this referendum, we as MPs and Parliament as an entity are closer to the people now than we have ever been. I believe that they will watch those debates and follow what we are talking about. We will be responding to a mandate that has been given to us by the people. I, for one, am looking forward to the vote tonight.

I cannot speak in this debate without responding to the leader of the Liberal Democrats, the hon. Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Tim Farron), because he called for a second referendum. Does anybody remember the hon. Gentleman calling for a referendum in 2010? His party leaflets and posters said:

“It’s time for a real referendum”.

They also called for a referendum on the alternative vote in 2011. They lost that referendum, and they lost the most recent referendum. They had the best of three, and it is time for them to stop calling for referendums.

The hon. Gentleman spoke with passion, in the same way that he spoke with passion about tuition fees. I must just say that, as we are speaking in the Chamber, the news is breaking that some Liberal Democrat Members are going to abstain, some are going to vote for and some are going to vote against. He has divided his party of only nine MPs in a far more efficient manner than the Labour party. Well done—what an achievement with nine MPs.

That brings me to the Labour party. I have a better example than the one used by my hon. Friend the Member for Aldershot (Sir Gerald Howarth). In 2005, 9.5 million people voted for Mr Blair to lead a Labour Government, but 17.2 million voted against. More people voted for Brexit than voted for the Labour party to be in government in 2005. The point is this: some Opposition Members who served as Ministers in that Government and voted for the referendum are going to vote against the result and the mandate given to them by the people. That is slightly rich coming from Members who served as Ministers in a Government that achieved only 9 million votes. Did anybody call for a second referendum then? No. Did anybody refer to the rule of law then? No, of course not, because the people of this country respect a democratic vote.

I apologise for my tone, Mr Speaker, but it was with some dismay that I woke this morning to the news that a former Prime Minister had tried to skew and influence the outcome of the referendum by attempting to have the editor of the *Daily Mail* removed from his post. I say this with a degree of shame: a leader of my party allegedly attempted to manipulate and distort the freedom of the press—not the editor of *The Guardian*, the editor of the *Daily Mirror* or a paper that subscribed to his world view, but the editor of the *Daily Mail*. I find that so distressing, because it brings into relief the way that those who could did wield their power to try to achieve the result they wanted: from *The Guardian's* and the

[Nadine Dorries]

IMF's fantasy doom-and-gloom projections, to Mr Carney's inaccurate forecasts and Obama's back-of-the-queue threat.

I caution those thinking of voting against the Bill tonight to be careful what they wish for and to be careful of wishing for second referendums. I think the people—advocates of free speech, a free press and a powerful democracy—would view their wishes dimly.

2.31 pm

Mr Graham Allen (Nottingham North) (Lab): George Orwell said:

“In a time of universal deceit, telling the truth is a revolutionary act.”

I would like to try to tell some truths in the brief time I have.

Every Prime Minister in my political lifetime has fostered the elitism that bit back in the referendum. Those leaders held that the European project was far too precious to share with our people. They failed to build a British vision for a reformed EU, and they failed to build a credible immigration policy with the public. They fed the beast that roared last June and we all bear some responsibility for that.

Fear of the hard right in the Conservative party has led two Prime Ministers to gamble recklessly with the future of our country. One called a referendum he never thought he would lose; the other has been pushed into triggering exit before even thinking through how it will actually happen. Weakness and incompetence then, weakness and incompetence now. One lesson we should all learn is that never again should a complex economic and international issue be reduced to an “X Factor”-style plebiscite.

Last week, embarrassingly, the British Government were caught acting unconstitutionally by the Supreme Court, when trying to use a Trumpian style Executive order to bypass Parliament on exit. The Government's fear of Parliament, even one whose agenda it controls, led to wasted months fighting a legal action when every MP could have been put to work helping to craft the best exit deal for the UK; time the Prime Minister could have used to tour the capitals of Europe to work out a position and build the goodwill we will need to get us a good deal. The Government are doing the bare minimum they think they can get away with, without being in contempt of court. They do this by bringing this derisory and undernourished Bill before Parliament. No apology. No White Paper. No plan for leaving the EU. Today, we are meant to meekly aid and abet this incompetence, and buckle to the dog whistle threat that if MPs dare to do their job and believe in parliamentary sovereignty the wrath of the social media mob and the Conservative press will be unleashed against us. I ask my colleagues to show some strength today. This day will not be repeated. This is the moment that, in 10 years' time, they will think about what they chose to do.

We are not voting on in or out. That is history. That has been decided. We are voting on whether we believe that the Government are ready to trigger article 50, when clearly they are not. The emperor has no White Paper. Let us take heart from the judges who stood firm in doing their duty despite the “enemies of the people”

media headlines. Let us take heart from Gina Miller and individual citizens who have held the Government to account, acting where this supine Parliament feared to even seek legal clarification of its own rights before the courts.

Yes, we should vote for a Bill authorising exit from the European Union, but we should do that when we have done our duty on due diligence: when we and our constituents know what the Government have planned, which of the thousands of exit permutations they are going for, and how they want to meaningfully involve Parliament. The Bill is not about ignoring the referendum result, it is about realising it and ensuring that our whole democracy works to secure the best deal possible: unifying our nation, not glorying in its division into winners and losers.

Chris Bryant (Rhondda) (Lab): On a point of order, Mr Speaker. When my hon. Friend spoke about a White Paper and a date of publication, the Minister said, from a sedentary position on the Government Front Bench, that the White Paper would be published tomorrow. Is that news for the House?

Mr Speaker: It is not news for the House in the sense, if memory serves me correctly, that the Prime Minister indicated as much in the course of Prime Minister's questions.

Chris Bryant I can't have been listening.

Mr Speaker: If there is one thing I know about the hon. Gentleman, it is that he is invariably listening to his own wisdom. We are grateful to him for that.

2.36 pm

Stephen Hammond (Wimbledon) (Con): Parliament, since its beginning, has been the place where elected Britons debate and make the decisions that affect our country's future, so it is only right that tonight this House will vote to trigger article 50. I was one of the 544 who voted for the referendum to give our people a choice on our future, so it would be entirely inconsistent to reject the verdict of that referendum, even if it is at odds with my own view. I voted and campaigned for the UK to remain in the EU, and I was disappointed by the result. Some 71% of my constituents voted to remain. In the past week, I have received literally hundreds of letters telling me that I should represent them tonight and vote against the Government. As much as my hon. Friend the Member for Aldershot (Sir Gerald Howarth), I too am a defender of democracy. I voted knowing full well that if leave won the debate then that is what would happen. Tonight, therefore, I will be in the Lobby voting to trigger article 50.

Andrea Jenkyns (Morley and Outwood) (Con): Since September, the Exiting the European Union Committee has been established, there have been 26 debates and seven statements relating to the EU and our exit from it. Does my hon. Friend agree that those statistics highlight the many hours of debate available to all Members, contrary to what some might suggest, and that it is time we respect the majority of the public and support the British people tonight?

Stephen Hammond: I do not know if my hon. Friend heard me, but I said that I would certainly be respecting the result of the referendum. We have had those debates in Parliament, but what is crucial is where we go from here. What the people did not say to us in the referendum was how, or on what terms, we would leave. I believe that the best way to decide those issues, and to mitigate the impact of uncertainty, is for the Government to keep Parliament updated as much as possible throughout the negotiations and allow this House to have a meaningful input on those negotiations. Like my right hon. Friend the Member for Loughborough (Nicky Morgan), I absolutely welcome the publication of the White Paper tomorrow. I hope the Bill will build on the Prime Minister's speech and create some certainty.

I believe it is also in the Government's best interests to have the fullest possible involvement of Parliament. I believe that that will help our negotiating position. Our negotiations will carry much greater weight with the EU 27 if it is clear that our negotiating stance has the backing of this House. Among all the talk of sovereignty and the hope of trade deals, we must not forget the effect of this process on individuals—our constituents. Many of the people who live in Wimbledon are EU citizens. I hope that the Government will find a very early resolution to guarantee the rights of those people who may not be British citizens. Many of them are my constituents.

I have said several times, in the debates to which the hon. Member for Morley and Outwood (Andrea Jenkyns) referred, that uncertainty is a key concern for industry and financial services. The financial services sector is vital for London's success. It employs 2 million people and is our biggest tax generating sector—I do not need to go on. We should therefore strive for a deal that has financial services at its heart, including equivalence and mutual recognition. Equally, as my hon. Friend the Member for South West Devon (Mr Streeter) said, the negotiations will be complex, so we need to guarantee certainty through a proper transitional process where everybody can adjust to the new rules without sudden shock. That can be achieved, and I hope the Front-Bench team will clarify that it is at the heart of their ambitions.

The Bill gives the UK the ability to trigger article 50, and almost everybody in the Chamber will vote for it tonight. I am pleased that the Prime Minister has promised Parliament a vote on the final deal, but it needs to be clarified at what stage in the process that will take place and that all information will be given to Parliament. It also needs to be clear that Parliament will be able to vote if the Government seek to withdraw from the EU without a deal. I hope that the Secretary of State will commit, if the Government believe that no deal is achievable, to coming back to Parliament with all the options placed before us. If the vote is after the agreement of the treaty but prior to ratification, as is the current legal position, it will probably be too late and therefore meaningless.

In my view, therefore, the vote must occur before the Government conclude the agreement. If anyone has read article 50, they will know that that is what will happen in the European Parliament. Are we suggesting that the European Parliament should be more sovereign than this Parliament? I think not. If the deal needs the consent of the European Parliament, it should need the consent of this Parliament as well. As Churchill said of

the Battle of Britain, the Bill is the end of the beginning, but it also gives the House the chance to show our constituents that we can come together, heal divisions and find the best deal for this country.

2.41 pm

Tulip Siddiq (Hampstead and Kilburn) (Lab): As Members, we make difficult decisions every day. Some of them are of local significance and others take on national significance. The only reason we have the ability to make these decisions in the House is that our local constituents gave us their consent and voted for us at the general election. The point has been made to me that we are not delegates, but when all my neighbours, local business people, local pharmacists, local health professionals and local political allies and, indeed, opponents are telling me to take a stand, I cannot help but feel that this is the right course of action. I did not want to resign from my Front-Bench role. I know it was not a great office of state, but it was an important role that allowed me to hold the Government to account over their aspirations for social mobility.

Today, we are debating whether to trigger article 50 and give the Prime Minister permission to exit the EU. I feel that I would be abandoning my duty to my constituents, who have overwhelmingly and unwaveringly made the point that they do not want to leave the EU—75% voted to remain—if I voted for the Bill. My hon. and learned Friend the Member for Holborn and St Pancras (Keir Starmer) made the point powerfully from the Dispatch Box yesterday that this decision has not been easy. It has been in a haze of conflicting emotions that the Labour party has sought to decide what to do, but for me there are two main reasons for voting against the Bill.

The first concerns the future of the 17,000 EU nationals living in my constituency. Some people have accused me of taking this stand only to ensure my re-election at the next election, but those EU nationals cannot vote for me anyway. I am taking this stand because in Hampstead and Kilburn we do not wince when we hear people speaking a different language on public transport; we do not scapegoat others for the pressures on our health system, criminal justice system and housing just because they do not look like us or sound like us; and we do not indulge in baseless theories that our country is at breaking point. Rather, we celebrate these EU nationals—they are as much a part of our fabric as anyone else and have as much right to be here as the generations before them. If I vote for the Bill, I will be abandoning my responsibility to these EU nationals.

The second reason I will be voting against the Bill concerns the lack of access to the single market, which will affect three main groups in my constituency. The first are the self-employed, who have argued that they need tariff-free trade with the EU. The second are those in the scientific and technical industries. In the last 10 years, the scientific funding from EU sources has increased by 73%, and at this point their projects are in jeopardy. The final group are those in the financial services and insurance sectors, who have no clarity over the future of their passporting rights.

These are the reasons why in good conscience I cannot vote for the Bill. To quote my right hon. Friend the Member for Leeds Central (Hilary Benn), this is not

[Tulip Siddiq]

how we do things in the House. We need clarity. We need to see the economic impact of this decision. In good conscience and for the sake of my constituents, whether they can vote for me or not, I will not be voting for the Bill today.

2.45 pm

Dr Andrew Murrison (South West Wiltshire) (Con): It is a great pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Hampstead and Kilburn (Tulip Siddiq), who expressed herself with clarity and passion, and though I will not be in the Lobby with her this evening, I very much share many of the sentiments she has expressed.

In 1519, Hernán Cortés arrived in the new world, and the first thing he did was to burn the ships that had brought him there. Pointing up the beach, he told his astonished crew that since retreat to Europe was no longer an option, the only way forward was up the beach, to the opportunities he saw in the new world. Britain now stands on the brink of its Cortés moment. When article 50 is triggered, there will be no way back. Brexit Britain must of course broker the best possible deal it can with the EU, but our future long term will depend just as much on our ability to operate freely and globally.

Meanwhile in Europe, Mr Tusk this week told us that “assertive and spectacular steps” were needed to “revive the aspiration to raise European integration to the next level”.

Whose aspirations? They are plainly not those of the British public. Mr Tusk, however, has done moderates like me—people who admit the risks as well as the benefits from Brexit—a real service. His remarkable candour and his false prescription have explained more eloquently than I ever could why it was that the British public voted to leave on 23 June.

We have had some truly excellent contributions today and yesterday, and I pay tribute to hon. Members who have expressed their positions forthrightly, even if I disagree with them. This is the House at its very best. This is the House listening to the public we serve.

Last week, the permanent secretary at the Ministry of Defence, in an interview for the engagingly titled *Civil Service Weekly*, said that the EU was “operationally irrelevant” to defence and security. He was wrong. The EU is relevant to our defence and security. I am fully supportive of the Petersberg tasks—the use of assets for humanitarian and peacekeeping operations—under the EU’s common security and defence policy. I admire Operation Atalanta, which is run from our own fleet headquarters at Northwood, and I accept that the European Defence Agency, a body whose budget I tried to contain as a Minister, runs a number of projects from which Britain benefits. My point is that we must seek to engage with Europe post-Brexit wherever it is expedient to do so. I urge Ministers, representing as they do Europe’s principal military and naval power, to continue engaging, in particular, on the CSDP whenever that is to our mutual benefit.

Yesterday, TheCityUK reversed its previously held Euroscepticism and announced that in its view the EU was a “straitjacket” and that Brexit presented “an unprecedented opportunity”. I agree absolutely. It spoke

of achieving a global Brexit. That reminds us that in all those years, the only trade deals concluded by the EU were with South Korea, Mexico and South Africa. Britain pooled its ability to do deals with the EU in the mistaken belief that Brussels would undertake the task on its behalf. Clearly, it was asleep on watch. Now is the time for Britain to rediscover its historical engagement with global markets, and I hope that in the years ahead Ministers will do just that. We have seen the bizarre spectacle of Germany making more money from exporting coffee than the developing countries that grow coffee—

Mr Speaker: Order. I call Mr Betts.

2.49 pm

Mr Clive Betts (Sheffield South East) (Lab): As my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Holborn and St Pancras (Keir Starmer), the shadow Brexit Secretary, said at the beginning of the debate, this is very difficult for many of us on the Opposition side of the Chamber. I strongly supported remain in the referendum campaign, and I did so because I believed it was in the interests of the country and the constituency I represent. I thought that the economic arguments advanced by the remain campaign would, in the end, succeed, but that was not the case. In the end, I did not ask the people for their views in order not to listen to what they said.

I accept that a vote for this Bill only opens the exit door, but ultimately it is likely to mean that, as a result, we leave the EU. In the end, I will listen to my constituents and their views, because my constituency voted overwhelmingly to leave. The reason my constituents gave me on the doorstep was that many of them felt left behind by economic progress over a number of decades; they felt they were not in control of their lives; they felt that we, the political class as their representatives, were not listening to them. One of the fundamental issues of concern related to unrestricted immigration from the EU. That is the honest information that they gave to me, which I am relaying to the House.

People who are not racists still have genuine concerns about the impact on their public services and their jobs, pay and conditions from that unrestricted immigration. Those concerns were expressed to me by people from different ethnic backgrounds—people from the Pakistani, Kashmiri, Bangladeshi and Somali communities, as well as white British residents. I feel that if we now fail to listen to those genuinely held concerns, the disillusionment with politicians and politics will simply grow, and we risk driving those people into the arms of the racists, who actually do want to put forward a completely different agenda.

At the same time I recognise that although I will vote for the Bill, it is still important for Sheffield’s industry to have free access to EU markets. My constituents do not want to pay tariffs on imports from the EU; they want assurances that the food they eat in the future will be safe, as it is now; they want to see co-operation on environmental matters, on defence, on security and on science and research; and they want to keep the same employment rights and protections as they now enjoy. They do not want to see a race to the bottom to reduce taxation on corporate matters so that we can compete with offshore tax havens elsewhere.

In the end, if we are to keep those issues on the agenda, it is important that Parliament is regularly updated on progress on the discussions, and this Parliament

must have a vote on the final outcome, just as the European Parliament will. I still have concerns about voting for the Bill—concerns that I felt when I argued strongly for remain in the referendum. In the end, though, I am more concerned about the damage to democracy if I do not vote for the Bill.

2.53 pm

Richard Benyon (Newbury) (Con): I am not one to brag, but I humbly suggest that I know something about how to negotiate in Europe. My personal best was what the civil service calls “a three-shirter”—three days and two nights of continuous negotiation. I wish my right hon. and hon. Friends well as they enter this process, and I ask them to ignore all those who suggest that they might like to share with us and the world every single red line and every single negotiating nuance, because nothing would be likely to secure a worse deal for this House and this country.

I have to break it gently to some Members and some of the people deluging our in-boxes that most people out there are not absolutely fascinated by the politics of Brexit, but are rooted in the realities of it. This is about the small family farming business in the Berkshire downs concerned about what Brexit means for them; the life sciences company in Newbury that wants to sell its world-beating products to health services in Europe; and companies that will be part of consortia or supply chains, some of which will be in, some of which will be outside, the European Union, and how it will work for them. It is about people who want to study abroad and people who are concerned about the future of our environment.

The experience of the referendum campaign was, for me, a miserable one. It was a new low in the political discourse of the nation, and I put the blame for that on both sides. As the dust settles, I, like many in the House, have a choice—whether to play the role of some sort of parliamentary insurgent, finding devious mechanisms with which to do down the view taken by the public in an open and fair referendum; or whether to represent the views of our constituents, the vast majority of them, who want us to act in their best interests and who understand that the Government face a heavy burden as they seek to achieve an orderly exit.

One notable voice is absent from our debates in these historic proceedings—that of my hon. Friend the Member for Grantham and Stamford (Nick Boles). He wrote an article, difficult though it must have been for him in the middle of his treatment for cancer, that was full of intelligence and common sense. It had an understanding of what it is to be a liberal Conservative at a time like this. He reminded us that we need to look forward to a world in which we can have a decent, open and generous relationship with our European partners. That is what we believe, not just because it is in our nature, but because free trade and a belief in markets are important to us. The article is also a reminder of why we want our hon. Friend back here in good health in the near future. He reminded us that we need to co-operate on issues such as climate change, science, countering terrorism and all the other things that matter to us; and that we should show generosity and decency to our partners and reject the kind of insular, backward-looking and small Britain that has infected this debate for too long.

I, as a remainder who thinks that the country has taken a wrong turn, will passionately support this Bill tonight. I give those on the Treasury Bench full notice that I shall at every available opportunity hold them to account to ensure that we reach the best deal for our constituents and all the people of our country—and do that in a constructive way.

2.56 pm

Jim Dowd (Lewisham West and Penge) (Lab): I shall be as brief as I can. It is slightly depressing when, because of collusion between the Front Benchers, the result is, as everybody knows, a foregone conclusion. Eric Forth, whom many of us will remember, always used to say that when the Front Benchers agree with each other, it is time for the House to be at its most active in examining precisely what that alliance means.

My hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield South East (Mr Betts) mentioned the fact that yesterday my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Holborn and St Pancras (Keir Starmer) said this is a very difficult issue for the Labour party—and indeed it is. I think it is a very difficult issue for every Member, presenting us with a paradox in knowing what is the right thing to do. Some say the result of the referendum means that supporting the Bill is the right thing to do, while others disagree, saying that their duty to their constituents transcends even party loyalties.

Let me make my position perfectly clear. I am in a very fortunate position. As I told the Prime Minister during her statement on the Monday after the referendum, on 27 June, my constituents voted by about 2:1 to remain in the European Union. As I said then, I always regard my prime responsibility to be towards my constituents.

My constituents have written to me in unprecedented numbers—I am sure that most Members will have had more contact with, and information from, constituents over this issue than just about any other; it certainly applies to me in my 25 years in this place—urging me to support the constituency's vote. I will support their objection to leaving the European Union, and I will vote against Second Reading tonight. I will vote for the SNP amendment and against the programme motion—and I will continue to do so. I say to my Front-Bench team that I will be active next week, when the Bill is in Committee. I will seek to amend it, but I will vote against Third Reading as well. I will not be complicit in something that I know and feel to be wrong, and to be against the best interests not just of my constituents or this city, of which my constituency is a small part, but of the whole country and all its people. Anything else—whatever negotiations take place, whatever agreements are made—will be sub-optimal. Reform of the European Union, staying in the European Union and leading the campaign of reform was in the best interests of the British people, and I will do nothing now to undermine their position.

People have mentioned the status of European Union citizens in this country. I am sure that the Prime Minister is in earnest, and is being genuine, when she says that she wants to secure early agreement on reciprocal arrangements in Europe for British nationals living in EU countries. I say, as do others, that the answer is in her own hands. She can reassure EU nationals living

[*Jim Dowd*]

in this country now by saying that their future, and that of their families, is secure. She can then go, quite rightly, to the chambers and the councils of Europe, and say, “We demand the same from you.” [HON. MEMBERS: “What if they say no?”] There is only one reason why I would ever turn my back on the European Union and agree that we should leave. I would only do that if members of the EU denied British citizens the right that we can give to EU nationals.

Kevin Brennan: Conservative Members shouted “What if they say no?” Surely that is the point. Is the Prime Minister seriously suggesting that if the other countries said no, she would ask the European Union citizens who are currently resident in this country to leave?

Jim Dowd: That is indeed precisely the point. We can do that, and we can do it now.

The reason UKIP has so little traction in London, for example, is that most Londoners, within a generation or two, are immigrants themselves—not necessarily from overseas, but from other parts of the United Kingdom: from Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland, the north or the south-west. The idea of “the other” is nothing new to Londoners. I agree with what Members have said about the pace of social change. People need to feel that they are in control of it, that there is a role for them, and that they understand the nature of the change that is being effected.

I will vote as I have indicated because I believe it to be right. That might, in the fullness of time, prove to be a mistake on my part, but I nevertheless believe it to be right. What worries and depresses me about today’s proceedings is that I fear that many Members will vote tonight for something that they know is not right, because it is expedient for them to do so. I shall not join those ranks. I shall do whatever I can to ensure that the deal that will inevitably follow is the best it can possibly be, but I will not be complicit in undermining the position of the British people.

3.2 pm

Charlie Elphicke (Dover) (Con): For centuries Dover has had an important role as the gateway and guardian of the kingdom. During the referendum campaign, I was concerned about the potential impact on border security and cross-border co-operation and the potential impact on trade, because Dover is, in a very real sense, on the front line. I set out those concerns to my constituents, as well as my concerns about the medium-term risks to the economy that the former Chancellor, my right hon. Friend the Member for Tatton (Mr Osborne), alluded to earlier.

The referendum followed a long and thorough debate. Whatever Members may think of its quality, there was a proper debate. People knew what they were voting for, and they made a clear decision. I, for one, will vote to respect the result.

The leader of the Liberal Democrats seems to think that it is all like “Hotel California”: you can check out, but you can never leave. I do not think that that is the right approach. Members of the Scottish National party think that there should be multiple referendums until

one of them possibly produces the right result, but given their track record—losing the referendum on the alternative vote, losing the independence referendum and losing the European Union referendum—they are not doing too well. They might start to think that perhaps they ought to accept and respect a referendum result. I shall respect this result.

We need to be very clear about the red lines that we were given by the British people. My constituents have made very clear that, No. 1, there must be an end to unchecked EU migration, and, No. 2, there must be no more billions for bloated Brussels bureaucrats. That plainly indicates that we must leave the single market, and that if we want to do unfettered trade deals with the rest of the world, we must leave the customs union.

I make no bones about the fact that there will be a real impact on Dover, which is why I am working hard to make this a success. I have put together proposals on how we can restore border controls at Dover effectively, and I have convened a group to discuss how we can manage customs duties if we leave the European Union in two years, and how we can be ready on day one.

It is the job of the House, and the job of each and every one of its Members, not just to respect the result but to make it work for the good of the British people. We cannot be here hoping for doom, hoping for things to go wrong. We need to recognise that if things do go wrong, that will have an impact on the people whom we serve and represent. They will lose their jobs; they will lose their homes; they will be less well off. That is why I am making every effort to make this work, and why I implore everyone in the House to make it work and make a success of it. We must recognise that we shall have to leave the single market, recognise that we shall have to leave the customs union, and recognise that we shall have to be ready on day one.

We also need to recognise that there may not be a deal. We should work tirelessly, in good faith, for a deal, but it may be that no deal is immediately forthcoming—again, for the reason set out by my right hon. Friend for Tatton: that the mindset of our European colleagues is not currently conducive to a deal. That is why we must be ready on day one, and we must be ready for the fact that the EU may not wish to do a deal at that time. We should also bear it in mind that, as any deal-maker or negotiator will tell you, the best way to land a deal is to be prepared for no deal to take place. That is why we need to be ready for border controls, ready for customs duties, and ready for trade with the whole wide world, as well as being ready to do a positive deal and have positive engagement with the European Union in the years to come.

I implore the House to think and act constructively, to respect the result, and to look to the future of this nation believing that the best days are yet to come.

3.6 pm

Mike Gapes (Ilford South) (Lab/Co-op): I arrived in the House with my hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham West and Penge (Jim Dowd) 25 years ago. I am delighted to be sitting on the Bench with him today, and I am delighted to say that I agree with every word he said—which gives me four minutes in which to talk about other things.

President Donald made a very important statement yesterday—President Donald Tusk, that is. Donald Tusk pointed to the threats that face Europe: the threats from Russia, the threats posed by climate change, and the threats from across the Atlantic, from the other Donald. I suspect that if this situation had arisen before the referendum, we might have seen a different result. More and more people in this country are realising that we need our European partnership, and that this is not the time to be leaving the co-operation of European foreign and security policy, not the time to be leaving the European Defence Agency, and not the time to be leaving that co-operation with our European partners.

David Rutley (Macclesfield) (Con): I understand what the hon. Gentleman is saying, and he is arguing with passion, but neither is it the time to replay the arguments of the referendum. The British public have spoken, and now it is down to us to act on their views and vote with the Government this evening.

Mike Gapes: I am not replaying the arguments. I am dealing with realities. It is interesting to note that, at the last general election in 2015, the hon. Gentleman may have stood on a manifesto in which his party said yes to the single market. It also said that it would hold a referendum: it had a mandate to do that. But as the former Europe Minister, the right hon. Member for Aylesbury (Mr Lidington), said in June 2015:

“The referendum is advisory, as was the case for both the 1975 referendum on Europe and the Scottish independence vote last year.”—[*Official Report*, 16 June 2015; Vol. 597, c. 231.]

This Parliament must decide how, when and if the referendum should be implemented. The problem with the position that is being taken by both Front Benches is that triggering article 50 early will place us on an escalator travelling in one direction, with no ability to get off. A legal process is taking place in the Irish courts at this moment about whether—about the possibilities, the implications—article 50 is reversible. We do not know the judgment yet. Why on earth are we triggering before we know the legal position on article 50? Why have our Government decided to go for the hardest possible leaving of the EU—no customs union, no Euratom, problems for Gibraltar, and problems for the Northern Ireland peace process and the Good Friday agreement? All those things have been done before we know whether we could decide in a year’s time, or perhaps in two years’ time, before this process is complete.

We need not be on this escalator. We need a means to stop this process, and that is why we need clarity before we start triggering it. We did not need to trigger it in March this year; we could have waited. This did not need to be done before the French election and the German election.

The reality is that the ratification process requires decisions in 27 national Parliaments, in the regional Parliaments of Wallonia and elsewhere in Belgium, and in the European Parliament. If we have that process, we will have a narrow window of opportunity—perhaps just about a year from the autumn of this year to the autumn of 2018—and then there will have to be a ratification process. We will not get a good agreement. We could be in the disastrous position of going off the cliff with no agreement at all—with the terrible economic

consequences of World Trade Organisation terms only. That would be an unmitigated disaster for my constituents and for the country.

I am doing what the right hon. and learned Member for Rushcliffe (Mr Clarke) talked about yesterday: I am voting as Members of Parliament should—I am following my own judgment and I am listening to my constituents and to the country.

Kevin Brennan: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mike Gapes: No, I have to conclude.

I will not be voting to trigger article 50 at any stage.

3.11 pm

Alec Shelbrooke (Elmet and Rothwell) (Con): I cast my personal vote for remain in the referendum. I had, and have, concerns about the security implications of leaving the EU. I have always been opposed to an EU army, and I wonder whether one may come about without us there to veto it. Many of the concerns I had about security issues across Europe have still not even been addressed or answered. I also had concerns about the inflationary effects of leaving, and some of those are kicking in, but I note that inflation has not reached the 2% level that the Bank of England aims for.

I surprised many of my colleagues, and especially those I sat with on the European Scrutiny Committee, by voting to remain, because they recognised that I never had any truck with the federalisation of Europe—the political side of Europe. I felt that that was wrong and that it impinged too far on the work of this Parliament. Indeed, many people in my constituency said to me, “We joined a common market. We didn’t join an EU.”

Even though my personal vote was for remain, there was one thing I always passionately felt and fully supported. I do not class myself particularly as one of the hard right wingers of the Conservative party—one of those whom Opposition Members and those who are against this policy have painted as the only reason why the former Prime Minister was forced into a referendum. I passionately believed that there had to be a referendum, because people were never given their say on the European Union. They were given their say on the common market, and they said they wanted to be in it, but they were never given their say on the European Union.

What has been clear since the result of the referendum is that the EU has not taken seriously any of the lessons, in terms of why people in this country moved against it. I have to say that I would tomorrow vote to leave. We had an opportunity to negotiate with the European Union and work on some of the issues that were a problem for people in this country, but the European Union ignored our former Prime Minister, David Cameron; it did not think our country would vote to leave. I see the same issues now in the comments of the Maltese Prime Minister and of Donald Tusk, and there are real warnings on the horizon for such people in some of the elections taking place across Europe. This is an organisation that needs to reform; if it does not, I fear for where it will go.

Above all, the referendum was an exercise in democracy. It would be folly in the extreme for the other place, where politicians may be dominated by parties that have been diminished in the elected House, to try to go

[Alec Shelbrooke]

against the will of this House. It would be a suicide bid by the other place if it tried to amend or disrupt the will of this House. That is a warning that I give. I am on the record as wanting Lords reform. We cannot get Lords reform if the public are not behind us, but believe me, they will be right behind us if the Lords try to stop the will of this House over the next few weeks. I send that as a friendly warning that the Lords must take note of what this House says, because what this referendum has been about, above all else, is democracy: people saying they did not want to be controlled by unelected bodies in Europe.

People had their choice, and they expect us to action that choice. The result may not have been the one I voted for, but I am a democrat. Above all, I respect the ballot box and the outcome of the ballot box, and this House must respect the outcome of the ballot box, too.

3.15 pm

Mrs Madeleine Moon (Bridgend) (Lab): We as a Parliament and a democracy have not done that well by the people who elected us. We took the country into a referendum that had nothing to do with the best interests of Britain and everything to do with attempting to heal deep divisions in the Conservative party.

Labour Members did not oppose the referendum, because we did not wish to appear not to trust the voters, and I have to admit that we had some divisions of our own. However, all of us failed to set the rules for the referendum. We did not impose a super-majority, and we did not have a requirement for a road map showing the implications of a leave or a remain vote and the cost implications of the two alternatives. Then came the shockingly irresponsible referendum campaign, which was full of lies, misinformation, dog-whistle politics, fear and xenophobia.

When the people of Bridgend voted by a majority to leave the EU, they did so for a variety of reasons. They wanted the money back that the battle bus told them was going to Europe while, apparently, nothing came back to the UK, and they wanted it spent on the NHS. They are not going to get it. They wanted control of immigration and spending. They wanted an end to austerity, and they wanted to wipe the smug look off the faces of the Prime Minister and the Chancellor—well, they achieved that one.

On the doorstep, people did not tell me they would be happy to lose their workers' rights, to lose their jobs, to have lower standards of living or goods, or to have reduced opportunities for their children and grandchildren. Nor did they talk about wanting to leave the single market or the customs union, or to pursue a bold and ambitious free trade agreement. Somehow, we as politicians were to square the circle: stop immigration, get our money back, get control back and become more affluent. I cannot keep on voting for a process that gives the people of Bridgend no assurance of a secure future for them and their children. I will not be voting to trigger article 50.

Kevin Brennan: I have taken the unusual step of listening to the debate, rather than contributing to it. Having listened for many hours over the last two days, I will join my hon. Friend in voting against Second Reading this evening.

Mrs Moon: I welcome that information, because my hon. Friend is someone whose integrity and contributions in debates I always take note of, and I am deeply pleased that he will be joining me in the Lobby.

We are voting today, with the White Paper promised for tomorrow; it was not in place before this debate. We have no risk assessment, no financial assessment and a total lack of clarity on the Government's policy. We have nothing but the thin promise of the sunlit uplands—this is not in the Prime Minister's gift anyway—of a passporting and tariff-free agreement that means that costs will not rise for financial services, or for my Ford engines plant and for Tata Steel next door in Aberavon, both of which send over two thirds of their output into Europe.

I intend to keep voting no until I see a position that is the best we can obtain for this country. I am ashamed at the way we have abandoned EU citizens and their families, who give their lives, their love and their settled future to the UK. I have a wonderful German daughter-in-law and an extended German family. I have many friends who are MPs across Europe and members of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly and who are deeply saddened by the words and threats emanating from the UK Government.

I accept the outcome of the referendum. We are leaving the European Union, but that does not mean that I am willing to vote for the Conservative party to lead this country into a treacherous, uncertain future. There is a Gramsci quote that, depending on the translation, says that the old order is dying, the new one is struggling to be born, and in the interregnum monsters are abroad. They most certainly are. We are voting before we know the outcome of three European elections that will influence the deal we finally face. And then there is Trump's America. Can we trust any part of our economic security to an America that has just had Trump's inauguration speech: support for torture, a ban on Muslims entering the US, anti-climate-change rhetoric, the clear statement of "America first", and the commitment to end trade agreements that are not in America's best interests?

I am voting as I am particularly because I do not trust this Government taking me to the right place. I trust the British people; I do not trust this Government.

3.20 pm

James Cleverly (Braintree) (Con): I am in an easy position: I have an easy decision to make—in fact I have no decision to make. I campaigned and voted for Brexit, as did my constituency and the United Kingdom, so I am not torn on what to do this evening. However I will not demand that hon. Members vote a certain way, or even suggest how they should vote, because each one of us has a unique combination of local constituency pressures, and I cannot look into the heart of other Members of this House to see where those pressures sit, so I will not call on anyone to vote one way or another. Instead, I will reflect on the implications of the Brexit vote for all of us, irrespective of our political position and how we choose to vote in the Divisions this evening and in Committee next week.

Brexit provides us with an opportunity, but it also exerts upon us an external discipline; discipline guides our actions and decisions, and also encourages us to do what is difficult but right. The discipline that Brexit

imposes on us is to listen very carefully to people in Britain who clearly feel that they have not been listened to up until this point. It is very easy for us to project our own prejudices on to why people voted the way they did, and we all do it. We have seen those who voted for Brexit projecting base motivations on to those who will vote in alignment with their constituents, but we would be wrong to do that. However, we also have to understand why some communities in Britain are concerned about their standard of living, migration and globalisation, and we have to respond to those concerns. Also, we Government Members have to understand that at some point we will need to explain why we are, perhaps, prioritising certain markets and business sectors in our negotiations above others. We will need to explain the value that international migration brings to the British economy, and perhaps why immigration will not suddenly stop overnight, the day after we leave the EU.

David Rutley: I thank my hon. Friend for the speech he is making, and his important points on the next steps. Does he agree that the modern industrial strategy that is now being set out will be vital in paving the way for our economy in a post-Brexit world?

James Cleverly: It is incredibly important that the Government lay out a pathway for moving forwards that explains to many people in Britain how a global economy can work for not just the greater good, but their individual good.

Ultimately, when Members of this House state that the British people need to have a say, they are absolutely right, but they should remember that Brexit is the start of an ongoing existence, not a discrete process, and that the deal that the Prime Minister and Ministers negotiate will be the deal that is put to the British people at the 2020 general election. Members from other parties might feel that they have a better version of a relationship with Europe. They might prefer a version that prioritises market access over border control. That is not necessarily a position that I would agree with, but it is none the less a legitimate position. If they wish to prioritise membership of the customs union over our ability to strike independent free trade deals, that, again, would not be a position that I would agree with, but it is none the less a legitimate position.

Parliamentary sovereignty means that those alternative versions of Brexit—a Scottish National party Brexit, a Liberal Democrat Brexit or a Labour Brexit—can be put before the British people in the lead-up to the 2020 general election, and those hypotheses can be tested in the ultimate crucible of the British democratic system. If their versions of Brexit are seen to be more palatable than the Government's version, we will know, because Members will be returned here in proportion to how palatable or otherwise those various versions of Brexit are. That is how British democracy should work, and how it has been prevented from working up until now, which is why I will not just vote to trigger article 50 this evening and in future Divisions, but will do so passionately and happily—because it means that for the first time in 40 years, the way British parliamentary democracy is meant to work will be the way it is able to work. But I will not ask or force others to vote with me.

3.26 pm

Chi Onwurah (Newcastle upon Tyne Central) (Lab): My constituency voted to remain. My country voted to

leave. My conscience continues to believe that the country's interests are best served within the EU. I believe that my job is to act in accordance with my conscience, in the interests of my constituents, within the parliamentary democracy I am proud to uphold. I believe that my constituents' trust and belief in parliamentary democracy is the greatest security our country has against the rise of fascistic leaders and the destruction of our national value system. So it would be wrong to reject the result of the referendum. Newcastle is part of a nation, and that which unites us is greater than that which divides us. For that reason, I will vote for the Second Reading of this Bill.

But there is a "but", and there was always going to be. This Government are attempting a constitutional land grab. The referendum was about the will of the people, not the will of a Prime Minister who is not even elected. Some 52% voted to leave the European Union but they did not vote to leave the single market, and they did not vote to leave the customs union.

The north-east is the only region in the country to export more than it imports, and more than half of that goes to the European Union. It is estimated that 160,000 jobs are directly linked to our membership of the single market, while our great universities received £155 million in EU funds in the current funding cycle alone.

When I talk to businesses, they are incandescent that Tories are rejecting the greatest free trade alliance on the planet. I can also tell the House that, having negotiated joint ventures, regulatory undertakings and multi-million pound contracts across three continents, I have never come across a negotiating position as inept as the one being adopted by this Government: "Give us what we want or we'll duff up your economy." I have zero confidence in their negotiating trade deals, in which Parliament will have no say. They will sell our socioeconomic birthright for a mess of right-wing pottage. When the Chancellor talks of changing our economic model, he means turning the UK into a low-wage, low-skilled tax haven with little or no welfare support.

More than a third of children in Newcastle live in poverty, and one in five of my constituents claim benefits. North-east workers are, on average, almost £4,000 a year worse off than they were 10 years ago. Am I going to vote for a Trumpian, dystopian, "alt-right" free market future for them? Absolutely not. Already, constituents are asking me questions I never expected to hear. They are asking whether they could be deported to the European Union. They want to know just how racist an insult has to be before they should complain. And they are asking whether there will be a nuclear war, and which side we would be on. The Government need to accept amendments to the Bill that will ensure that our values, our socioeconomic model and our membership of the single market are safeguarded; otherwise, democracy for my constituents, and my conscience will—

Mr Speaker: Order. I am sorry, but in a bid to accommodate all would-be contributors, I shall have to reduce the time limit on Back-Bench speeches to three minutes with immediate effect.

3.30 pm

Scott Mann (North Cornwall) (Con): It is a privilege to take part in the debate on this historic Bill, which is

[Scott Mann]

designed simply to start a process. A number of hon. and right hon. Members have signed amendments to the Bill, and I say to them that there will be plenty of time over the next two years to debate aspects of European Union legislation when we introduce the great repeal Bill. To those who feel that now is the time to begin discussing our terms of membership or to cling to certain aspects of the EU, I would simply say that they are too late. Since joining the EU in 1972, we have been subjected to mission creep and stealth integration with no votes and no say. The great British people were clear with their instruction on 23 June: they said, “Leave. We have had enough.”

I know that voting on this Bill will present a moral dilemma for many in this place, but for me, it is a relatively easy matter because the will of the people in North Cornwall is clear, with 60% in North Cornwall and 55% in Cornwall as a whole voting to leave the EU. They voted with their eyes open, clear in their belief that they wanted to leave. Some have suggested that the vote was advisory, but I am a democrat and I say to those Members across the Chamber that it was an instruction, and I will vote this evening to ensure that it is carried out. To those discussing the question of a hard or soft Brexit I would say that there is no such thing. There is leaving, and there are different levels of remaining in.

We have seen the effects of globalisation and EU integration in Cornwall over the past four decades, including coastal communities being left behind while cities increased in wealth and growth. There has been no trickle-down to our rural communities, and it is little wonder that they felt disconnected, under-represented and powerless as decisions taken inside the EU affected their day-to-day lives. Whether because of restrictive Brussels farming policy, foreign trawlers in our territorial waters or immigration levels, people in North Cornwall and the UK have said that they want to be in charge of their own destiny. The erosion of our sovereignty has stopped us dealing with those and other issues, but that will be no more. I know that people across this great nation voted on 23 June for many different reasons, but we in Cornwall have seen with our own eyes the destruction of the fishing industry by the common fisheries policy. Leaving the EU will be seen as a success in that area if the common fisheries policy and common agricultural policy are replaced by British versions that work much more effectively for the people involved.

The people of Britain have spoken, and the people of North Cornwall have spoken. I stood at the general election to oppose EU membership unless significant reforms were negotiated. That did not happen, and my constituency voted to leave the European Union. That is why I will walk through the Lobby this evening to vote in support of a Bill to trigger article 50, to ensure that the democratic process that started with the referendum is completed in full.

3.33 pm

Chris Bryant (Rhondda) (Lab): At the very first hustings I attended in 2001, at Treorchy comprehensive school, the first question I was asked was, “Will you always vote with your conscience?” I recently visited Ysgol Cymer, also in my constituency, and asked members

of the school council how I should vote today, after setting out the problems involved. Every single one of them said, “With your conscience”, and that is what I intend to do. I am a democrat, and most of those in my constituency voted in a different way from me. I am a democrat, but I believe in a form of democracy that never silences minorities. The 48% in this country and, for that matter, the 46% or 45% in my constituency, or whatever the figure was, have a right to a voice, so today I am voting and speaking on behalf of a minority of my constituents.

All my life I have believed that the best form of patriotism is internationalism. My first political memories are of Franco’s guards in Spain. I was thrown out of Chile in 1986 for attending the funeral of a lad who had been set on fire by Pinochet’s police. I distrust politicians who spuriously use the national security argument to launch campaigns against migrants, refugees and ethnic minorities. I fear the turn this world is taking towards narrow nationalism, protectionism and demagoguery. Distrust of those who are different from us can all too often, although not always, turn to hatred of foreigners. That way lies the trail to war.

I know that is not the tradition of the Rhondda. We were built on migrants from England, Scotland, Ireland and Italy. This country was built on the sweat, the courage, the ingenuity and the get up and go of Huguenots, Normans, Protestants fleeing the inquisition, Irish Catholics fleeing famine, Jews escaping persecution, Polish airmen, Spanish nurses, Indian doctors and Afro-Caribbeans who wanted to help make this country great.

I have stood at every election on a platform and a party manifesto that said we would stay in the European Union. That was my solemn vow to the voters of the Rhondda. I admit that I lost the vote, including in my constituency, but I have not lost my faith. It remains my deep conviction that leaving the European Union, especially on the terms that the Government seem to expect, will do untold damage to my constituents, especially the poorest of them.

Lilian Greenwood (Nottingham South) (Lab): My hon. Friend is making a very brave and compelling case. I came into the Chamber today not having finally decided which way to vote. Does he agree that, if I believe the Government’s plan is not in the interests of my country and my constituents, I should join him in the Lobby and vote no to the Bill tonight?

Chris Bryant: I am going to vote for the reasoned amendment tonight because I believe it is in the interest of my constituents. I know that many of my constituents will disagree with me, and maybe they will take it out on me, just as it was taken out on Burke in Bristol. In the end, there is no point in any of us being a Member of this House if we do not have things that we believe in and that we are prepared to fight for and, if necessary, lay down our job for.

This moment is so dangerous because the Government have stated that it is irreversible. This is it, folks: now or never. In this most uncertain of times, we are being asked to vote for a completely unknown deal. Yes, I know we are going to leave the European Union and that the House will vote for it. My vote cannot change that, but I believe this Bill—this way of Brexiting—will

leave us poorer, weaker and at far, far greater danger in Europe, in the west and in this country, so I say not in my name. Never, never, never.

3.38 pm

Amanda Solloway (Derby North) (Con): It is a great honour to speak in this historic debate. On 23 June we saw 52% of the United Kingdom, and 57% of Derby, vote for the UK to leave the European Union. In Derby, voter turnout was 70%, almost double that for our local elections, with 18,000 more people voting to leave than to remain.

I deliberated for a long time over my decision, and I spent time listening to both sides of the argument. I could see strong reasons to leave and to remain. I started veering towards leave, but I finally decided that remain, in my opinion, would be best for the country. I campaigned hard for us to stay in the EU.

While I was out campaigning, people came to me with clear messages. They said that they wanted to clamp down on immigration and how this was an opportunity to stand on our own and make our own decisions. On the other side, there was uncertainty about the country's future outside the EU and about the long-term implications and potential consequences. The decision will shape this country for generations, and it is one that we must respect. We must ensure that it becomes a reality, and we must look forward so that future generations benefit from this opportunity. It is now the time to look for the opportunities Brexit can bring to our country. Of course that will be challenging, but the Government are already working hard to create new avenues of trade and investment with new friends and partners, inside and outside Europe. Since the referendum, I have been talking to a wide range of people and businesses in my constituency, and they tell me they are now looking forward to the opportunity that Brexit brings. There is a feeling of optimism about ensuring that small, medium-sized and large businesses thrive after we leave, while of course there is an acknowledgement of the complexity of the negotiations.

Mims Davies (Eastleigh) (Con): My hon. Friend the Member for North Cornwall (Scott Mann) spoke about eyes being wide open and looking to the sunny uplands. Does my hon. Friend the Member for Derby North (Amanda Solloway) agree with the many constituents who have written to me to say that they knew what they were doing, they saw both sides of the argument and we should now be looking forward, just as my hon. Friend the Member for North Cornwall said?

Amanda Solloway: Absolutely. As my hon. Friend said, people did know what they were doing, and it is clear that in my constituency people are looking for opportunities and the way forward. I am excited by the prospect that lies before us, as I believe we have a genuine opportunity to forge new trade deals and new relationships, and make this great country even greater, taking us forward proudly and successfully. The great repeal Bill will be the starting point for us to look at legislation. I am confident that this Government will, as they must, safeguard and indeed enhance employee and human rights, holding dear the British values that we all share. We should of course be mindful that we are not leaving Europe; we are leaving the EU.

As I mentioned, 57% of those who voted in Derby voted to leave, and we now have a responsibility to negotiate the very best deal, not only for the people of Derby but for the people of this country as a whole. Democracy is about listening to the people. As my hon. Friend the Member for Sleaford and North Hykeham (Dr Johnson) said in her excellent maiden speech, this was not a request—it was an instruction. This should therefore be a time for us to come together and not be divided on this decision. Our duty is to the public we represent, which is why I shall be supporting the Bill.

3.41 pm

Tom Elliott (Fermanagh and South Tyrone) (UUP): I welcome this debate, which has in general been a good one, both today and yesterday, with people speaking from the heart and honestly giving the facts as they see them. This is a historic decision that we are taking in Parliament, but let us not forget that the decision has already been delivered by the people of the United Kingdom. We gave them the opportunity to have their say and they have had it; it was not, as was said earlier, an act of madness of this House. I deplore that suggestion, as this decision was delivered by the people and we must respect it, although people can have their views in here, and I respect those, too.

My constituency is right out in the west of the UK and is bordered by four counties in the Republic of Ireland. We therefore need to have flexibility, but let us move on and get that. Let us have that common travel area and an open border—one that is as open as possible—so that we can have good friendships with the EU when we leave it. We are not leaving Europe; we in Northern Ireland are just as good Europeans as anybody. Our ancestors went to fight for Europe, just as our colleagues from Scotland, England, Wales and many other Commonwealth countries did. We went to help those Europeans, and we still want that common relationship. The people have delivered a decision for us, and it is more important now that we look to how we make the best of that decision. We need to get the best for all of our constituents—for the people of the United Kingdom—and the only way to do that is by working in harmony, as far as is reasonably possible.

Kevin Foster (Torbay) (Con): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that a key part of maintaining that harmony is by ensuring that we have unfettered access to travel across these islands, that a border between Northern Ireland and southern Ireland would be unacceptable, and that any border controls between Northern Ireland and the mainland UK would be unforgivable?

Tom Elliott: I absolutely agree with the hon. Gentleman, and we in Northern Ireland totally support that position. We want that for the whole United Kingdom, because there is great trade between the Republic of Ireland and Great Britain, and between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, and we want to see that flourish.

We must move on, because it is the indecision that is putting our economy in a difficult position. It will progress into a more difficult position if we do not continue to take decisions. The best thing we can do is move on with this decision. Hopefully, we will have negotiators who will do their best for the United Kingdom. I have heard the arguments today: some people are

[Tom Elliott]

saying that we do not know what the agreement is or what we are getting out of the deal. That is absolutely right, but it is what the people voted for. We need the best negotiators, and we need to have faith in them. It is up to Parliament to make sure that we keep up the pressure on those negotiators to get the best deal possible. We in the Ulster Unionist party will certainly be scrutinising all the amendments. Hopefully, there will be some that could make the Bill better that we will look at positively.

3.45 pm

Mark Pawsey (Rugby) (Con): One of the benefits of making a later contribution to a debate is the opportunity to reflect on earlier speeches. The standout one for me came late yesterday evening, when my hon. Friend the Member for Boston and Skegness (Matt Warman), who supported remain in the referendum but represents a constituency that voted to leave, set out very clearly why it is important to recognise the referendum result and why we should vote to deliver the wishes of our constituents and the country as a whole. That is also my position.

Last week, I met some children in my constituency when I visited their school. I was asked some pretty serious questions. They asked me why I voted remain, and I explained why I felt that remaining would have been better for our businesses and given us a sense of certainty. They asked why so many people voted to leave, and I explained that I believe that people were attracted by the proposition of taking control, particularly of immigration. They then came up with the tough one: what happens next? This debate is all about that—the process of triggering article 50 and the negotiations that will take place over the next two years.

We have before us a clear, simple Bill that represents the result of the June referendum. I supported the Government's decision to give the people a say. It was in the Conservative party manifesto, and in 2015 my constituents gave me a significantly larger majority and Parliament voted six to one in favour of it. It therefore follows that support for the referendum requires respect for its outcome. As my right hon. Friend the Member for North East Bedfordshire (Alistair Burt) argued, I do not see how anyone can suggest otherwise. No decision had been made for more than 40 years and the body of which we were a member had changed, so it is entirely right that we voted for a referendum. As with the United States election, though, if we ask the public a question, we should not be too surprised if the electorate come back with an unexpected answer. It is now our job to implement their decision.

The decision to leave the EU presents us with opportunities, as was underlined to me in a discussion with a small business owner in my constituency. He was an ardent remainer who had joined me to hand out leaflets to commuters at the station. Nevertheless, he described the referendum as being like a business owner pitching to retain an account and the custom for his business. The decision had gone against his company—the customer decided not to renew and was not going to change his mind. A businessman in that position has to start to look for other deals elsewhere.

That is precisely the approach the Government are taking. They have formed the new Department for International Trade and are making deals with new

partners and managing the process of the leaving. I have some misgivings about the route we are about to go down, but we must accept the wishes of the people and proceed with the Bill in support of what the people decided.

3.48 pm

Vernon Coaker (Gedling) (Lab): I campaigned for and voted to remain, but I will respect the result of the referendum and vote in favour of the Bill. However, like many of my colleagues, that does not mean that I am voting to give the Government a free ride to pursue a right-wing hard Brexit. It is our responsibility to show how divisions can be healed. We need to speak not only of process but about what sort of country we want the UK to be and how we can build new relationships with Europe and countries around the world. We must watch and scrutinise. It is not about whether the UK is leaving the EU, but how.

For so many people in my area, the referendum was an emphatic shout of “Enough!” from those who felt left behind by globalisation—people who have had enough of being economically, politically and socially excluded. They feel powerless and excluded, with nobody listening to them on issues such as immigration. The referendum was an opportunity for many of them to take decisive action in the hope of bringing about change. We must now listen to that demand for change and act. The change must begin by ending the characterisation of some leave voters as people who did not know what they were doing. That serves only to deepen the chasm running through the UK today. We need to take time to understand the pain and anger of those people.

What we also must do is hear the legitimate concerns of the 48% of people who voted remain. We should not just brush them off as remoaners who are attempting to frustrate the will of the people. Rhetoric is powerful and can be incredibly divisive. We are one country, and the stark divisions of the referendum must be allowed to heal. That should start with a common narrative from the Government that the Brexit negotiations will strive to get the best deal for everyone, not just for those who voted leave. That is why the amendment process is so crucial—the amendments set out a vision, which we, the Labour party, and many others want to see. The whole process is about looking to the future, not the past, which is why we now have to work to find a way through the process.

After we have left the EU, globalisation will not cease to exist, nor will the refugee crisis, the problems with immigration, the threat of terrorism, the lack of funding for the health service and education, and the pervasive inequality that exists in the UK. Brexit must seek to address those issues in a liberal, open and inclusive way—a way that insists on a plan that supports jobs and the economy, tackles inequality and is based on building a new consensus here in Britain on immigration. It must include the protection of workers' rights and guarantee legal rights for EU nationals living in Britain. That plan must be progressive and united by our common principles of respect, tolerance and open-mindedness. In that way, hope can overcome despair, and a brighter, fairer future for all will seem possible, even if we are no longer part of the EU.

3.51 pm

John Howell (Henley) (Con): I have listened to this debate for the past couple of days, and I can quite understand why constituents feel that we are voting on coming out of the European Union tonight. We are not. The Bill is a simple and straightforward matter that simply puts us back to what we believe the situation was before the Supreme Court judgment. That is all the Bill does.

I disagree with those who tell me that the referendum was only advisory. In our manifesto, we said explicitly that we would accept the result of the referendum whatever it was. The referendum effectively ceased to be advisory at that point. No one has ever said how voting against giving the Prime Minister permission to start article 50 negotiations complies with that, or indeed how we could ever be trusted again to take democratic decisions in the interests of the people.

Those like me who voted to remain need to accept that we lost the argument and the vote—but I am not throwing in the towel. Like my right hon. Friend the Member for North East Bedfordshire (Alistair Burt), I am doing all that I can to work on the aspects that are needed to take us forward. That includes, for example, this morning's meeting of the Justice Committee in which we had yet another session with leading lawyers about what we need to carry forward in the justice system.

Both Houses of Parliament have already spent 60 hours discussing the EU and our leaving of it. That is 60 hours of debate to which the Front-Bench team has listened.

Let me quickly comment on two things. The first is the term “hard Brexit”. It is one of the laziest forms of journalism I have ever heard. It is a great shame that it has been used in this House. How maintaining the common travel area with Ireland and the rights of EU nationals in Britain, and protecting workers' rights and the best places for science and innovation can possibly be called a hard Brexit, I do not know.

I would like Ministers to give us some confidence on the issue of Euratom. The Joint European Torus project is located at Culham in my constituency. I heard what the Secretary of State said yesterday, but I would like some reassurance, because it was negotiating in good faith and then this suddenly occurred.

3.54 pm

Michelle Thomson (Edinburgh West) (Ind): There has been a lot of Sturm und Drang around this debate over the past couple of days. I will try to reflect how I feel about it. I have a sense of disbelief and despair at the decision that is about to be made, and significant doubt in the abilities of those who seek to give voice to my constituents in going any way towards meeting their needs. Let us be clear: 71% of my constituents in Edinburgh West voted to remain.

The Scottish National party's reasoned amendment is backed by many of my constituents, the vast majority of whom voted against independence in our independence referendum and many of whom are not SNP supporters. To a man and to a woman, they are writing to me, saying, “If this goes ahead, I am firmly in favour of taking the next steps to protect my business, my child who wants to go through Erasmus, and my ability to

travel, work and live freely within Europe.” How strongly we feel about the matter in Scotland—for those in and without the SNP—is fundamental.

This is not just about economics, although stepping away from that matter is, incidentally, a vast collective madness. The philosophy of Europe as a unifier to protect against the sort of madness and rhetoric we hear from Trump—racist, misogynistic and protectionist—is a fundamental for me. So, yes, I feel disbelief. With every breath in my body, I am going to ensure that Scotland can continue to access the single market.

3.57 pm

Victoria Atkins (Louth and Horncastle) (Con): I congratulate my neighbour, my hon. Friend the Member for Sleaford and North Hykeham (Dr Johnson), although she is not currently in her place, on a fantastic maiden speech that bodes well for the future of Lincolnshire. My contribution will be short and to the point.

In the 2015 general election, my Conservative colleagues and I stood on a manifesto pledge that we would let the British people decide whether to stay in or leave the European Union, and that we would honour the referendum result, whatever the outcome. We won the general election and kept our promise on holding the referendum. We must, therefore, keep our promise on honouring the result. It is on that basis that I will vote with the Government tonight to trigger article 50.

3.58 pm

Daniel Zeichner (Cambridge) (Lab): I am fortunate; my personal long and strongly held views align with those of the three quarters of my constituents who voted to remain. I will therefore be voting against triggering of article 50, by whatever route someone is empowered to do it—royal prerogative, referendum result, prime ministerial diktat or whatever. I am against it and my constituents are against it, and I will not be moved from that.

Let me explain why I feel so strongly. I ask your forgiveness, Mr Speaker, if my contribution is a touch personal. Both sides of my family suffered from the wars of the last century. It was my grandfather on my mother's side who formed my early views. Joe Mead, an agriculture worker from Shepreth, a village outside Cambridge, was a keen and competitive race-walker. I grew up surrounded by his trophies. When he moved to Chingford in north London, he used to walk home at weekends—50 miles each way—but that was before the first world war. Like many other brave young men, he stood knee deep in water in the trenches for months at Passchendaele. He at least came home, but the gangrene meant that he lost one leg—a race-walker no more.

A few decades later, there was another war. My father, who was born in Austria, was forced to flee Vienna when the Nazis marched in because, as I have recently learned, of his family's left-wing views. He came to Britain and was made welcome, for which he and our family are eternally grateful.

I recount the story because the reason I am passionate about the European Union and the part it has played in keeping a fractious continent from falling out. Some people say that it was not the EU but NATO, but the EU was born out of a desire to stop war in Europe, and there is no doubt in my mind that having a political

[Daniel Zeichner]

framework to resolve conflicts and differences, to negotiate and to compromise, has made a huge contribution to keeping the peace. My generation is a privileged one—we have not, most of us, had to go to war.

Sir Gerald Howarth: I fully understand the hon. Gentleman's personal circumstances and his passion, but does he not agree that the European currency—the euro—has done more to divide Europe by impoverishing Spain, Portugal, Italy and Greece, and that so long as that continues there is likely to be further division in Europe?

Daniel Zeichner: No, I do not agree. I think our continent is much more united than when it was at war.

How quickly we have forgotten just how this was achieved. At this of all times, when the world is such an uncertain place, this is not the moment to turn away from our European home, and to take a huge gamble on getting a deal with the most reckless and unreliable American President any of us have known.

There is much more that I would like to say about Cambridge and the threat to our universities and to our research institutes. I associate myself with many of the comments that have been made by my hon. Friends. I am particularly concerned about the 9,000 non-UK EU nationals in and around Cambridge whose future is so uncertain and whose future could have been assured if the Government had moved more swiftly, and the damage that it will do to our country if those people start to leave. The effect that that will have on our university and research sector troubles me a lot.

Last week, out of the blue, as we have heard, the Government announced that they want to pull out of the European nuclear agency, Euratom. This appeared to happen without discussion or consultation with the industry, and without thought to the wider consequences.

There are so many other things to say about the threats to our environmental protections, to our rights at work, to our data and privacy rights, and to our world-leading life sciences sector—but I return to my starting point. Three quarters of people in Cambridge voted to remain. I came into Parliament to represent their views. They put their trust in me, and I will not betray that trust. There is a real risk that the Government will lead a retreat to turn Britain into an isolated island. The United States is building a wall. At such a time, we must be brave and go on making the case that retreat, isolation and walls do not a modern world make. The European Union is far from perfect, but we should be working to make it better, not weakening it at a dangerous time.

4.2 pm

Henry Smith (Crawley) (Con): This is a long Second Reading debate, and yet the Bill is very succinct, and rightly so. I therefore think it is incumbent on me to be concise in my remarks.

In the lead-up to the referendum on our membership of the European Union last June, the Government published—at the cost of a little over £9 million, from memory—a booklet that went to virtually every household in the UK explaining why they believed it was best for

us to remain members of the EU. The booklet also said, however, “Whatever decision the British people make, we will implement.” It is therefore, I believe, our duty to ensure that we pass this Bill tonight, without delay or amendments designed to wreck it, so that the Prime Minister has the authority to start the official formal withdrawal process, and so that this Parliament can once again exercise its sovereignty in rightly holding the Government to account to ensure that we get the best possible deal as we leave the European Union and once again broaden our horizons as a global Britain.

4.3 pm

Alison McGovern (Wirral South) (Lab): I rise to speak in this debate as a European. I was born a European. Those who supported the Brexit cause told us that if we left the European Union we would be no less European. I say this to them: I will hold them to their word.

I do not believe that the referendum was our finest democratic moment. I disagree with the Brexiteers about that. Many of my constituents have raised serious concerns about the referendum, but that is not what the debate is about any more; it is about the beginning of the most important question that our country has faced for a generation.

We must rapidly move on from the process and on to substance. To those who proudly say that immigration is not a problem in our country's metropolitan areas and who disparage those areas that feel strongly about it, I say that they are not taking the right approach. We need to understand that all parts of our country have benefited from immigration and that all British people are tolerant and respectful of others. Those are the best of British values, and the Prime Minister is wrong to design an economic policy entirely based on shutting down immigration.

Economic division in our country was the cause and will be the consequence of Brexit. Our economy is designed for London to charge ahead like Singapore, while the northern regions of England are held back like eastern Europe, and that is why people feel left out. The reason for that economic division is that power is hoarded here in this city. People in the north feel that for too long they have not had enough of a say, and they voted to leave as a result. The answer must be to address that power imbalance, never again to hoard power here and to have a truly federal Britain.

In my maiden speech, I said that Wirral was an internationally minded and cultured place. It was then and it is now. To those in our country who have been shocked, horrified, embarrassed and ashamed by the disgraceful racism and xenophobia that we have seen, I say that those are not our values and that is not my country, and we move on from this point with our values at our heart.

4.6 pm

Nigel Huddleston (Mid Worcestershire) (Con): The manifesto on which I stood in 2015 not only promised an in/out referendum on Europe, but stated:

“We will honour the result of the referendum, whatever the outcome.”

During the referendum campaign, I committed to respecting the result, even if it was decided by just one vote. In the

end, the difference was more than 1 million votes. That 72% of the population turned out showed just how seriously the British public took the task of deciding their future. In my constituency, the turnout was more than 80%. By contrast, 58% turned out for the recent US presidential election. That was an election with huge consequences, not only for the USA but for the world, yet nearly 100 million Americans could not be bothered to turn out and vote.

As others have said, the referendum was not a consultation but an instruction. Today, I will do my duty and vote to trigger article 50. Then the work really begins. To use the analogy of a flight, we have boarded the plane and we are leaving Europe. Although we know the general direction, we do not yet know the destination. Some passengers believe that we are heading for some kind of tropical paradise, others an icy wasteland. Luckily we have a pilot who has a clear flight path, and I suspect that after flying around for a while, we will land not on an icy wasteland or in a tropical paradise, but somewhere quite familiar and similar to where we originally began.

I do not wish to belittle the great challenge ahead of us, but the fact is that the British economy is strong, resilient and dynamic. I never for one moment believed that the sky would fall in if we left the EU, but different segments of our economy will inevitably be impacted in different ways by Brexit. Some will obviously benefit and some will obviously struggle, and all are impacted to some degree by uncertainty. We must work hard and quickly to reduce that uncertainty, and we must provide every support and comfort to those sectors of the economy that we know are at most risk from Brexit.

We must listen to people with deep knowledge and expertise in sectors that are perhaps not well represented in this place, yet face particularly complex challenges due to Brexit, including the aviation industry, digital and creative industries, and those sectors for which there is no clear World Trade Organisation alternative. I encourage the Government to continue to engage with industry and with experts, and I look forward to playing my part by providing constructive input and holding the Government to account to ensure that they deliver a successful deal that helps Britain and secures my children's future.

4.9 pm

Christian Matheson (City of Chester) (Lab): I intend to vote in favour of activating article 50 tonight out of respect for the result of the referendum, despite its flaws and despite the deceit of the leave campaign, but I will write no blank cheques to anyone, least of all this simultaneously incompetent and ideological Government. I reject the assertion that the result of the referendum is the will of the people. It is not; it is the will of a slim majority. The use of that sinister phrase "the will of the people" to airbrush out of existence the 48% who voted remain is deeply troubling.

All Labour Members recognise the growing individual and geographical inequality in our country, the growing pressure on public services, the growing competition for low-paid jobs and the fear of cultural change from rapid social and economic transformation, but I certainly do not understand how a hard Brexit and the Government's vision of a low-tax, low-regulation Singapore Britain is the answer to any of those legitimate concerns. That

will destroy jobs, employers and our public finances, and make it more difficult to address the social and economic challenges that we now recognise.

We need a vision of a Britain that is closely integrated with our European partners and the European market, to which we are most close. Our manufacturers, our service sectors, our creative industries and our universities are hugely dependent on those markets and on European skills. If we walk away from Europe out of petty malice, we will cut off our nose to spite our face, and we will destroy livelihoods, opportunities and hopes throughout the land.

That vision is the antithesis of what those who are driving forward the Government's agenda want. They threaten to create a low-tax, low-public-service haven on the coast of Europe if we do not get a trade deal with the EU, but that is precisely the kind of UK that they want, free from what they see as the constraints of employment rights and environmental protection. They want a UK with low corporation tax, low income tax for the rich, no protection for people at work and minimal public services. The Government have taken the understandable concern about immigration and the justifiable anger about bad employers using cheap imported labour to drive down nationally agreed pay rates, and have used those concerns to drive through their own vision, which, ironically and tragically, would end up hurting most the people who are most concerned about the current arrangements.

The Government are so desperate for a trade deal with the United States that we go cap in hand to the racist President Trump, because we need his good favour to get such a deal. At the same time, we are alienating all the other countries with which, until recently, we shared the values of decency, tolerance and respect.

Tonight I will respect the result of the referendum, but after that, all bets are off. I will not allow good people who voted to leave for understandable reasons to be hoodwinked by the hard right of the Conservative party, and I will not allow our wonderful, beautiful, decent and tolerant country to be abandoned to a vision of ultra-hard Brexit, shorn of the standards we have all come to enjoy and, perhaps, take for granted.

4.12 pm

Robert Neill (Bromley and Chislehurst) (Con): Like my Conservative colleagues, I stood in the general election on a manifesto that promised an in/out referendum and promised to respect the result. I campaigned hard before the referendum for this country to stay in the European Union. It pains me that my side lost, but honour and decency bind me to the pledge I made before the referendum, and I will vote to support the Government tonight.

That said, it is also my duty to my constituents and to the country, as it is for all of us, to make sure that we get the best possible outcome thereafter. To my mind, that means the following. First, in my constituency, some 35% of people work in the financial and professional services sector. That is one of the highest percentages anywhere in the country. It is critical that that key economic interest of the United Kingdom be central to our negotiating objectives. In my judgment, it should not be regarded as secondary to anything. If we have to,

[Robert Neill]

we should be prepared to make pragmatic compromises to secure the welfare of that key economic sector.

Secondly, we should not forget the interests of our territory of Gibraltar. It does not have anyone to speak for it here, but I shall take the liberty of doing so. Its economy must be protected and its border flows must be uninterrupted and free. Thirdly, we must make sure that our parliamentary sovereignty is real. We are acting in accordance with the process set down by our highest courts, where the judges acted in accordance with their judicial oaths and constitutional duty. That should be accepted, and they should be commended for having done so. That means that Parliament must now be prepared to have proper control of the process.

I welcome the commitment to publishing the White Paper, and I accept the words and good faith of the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union, but there are two other things we must do. First, it is very important as we go forward that Parliament has the maximum information available to it. In particular, it would be quite wrong if Parliament at any stage had less information than our European counterparts. Secondly, the pledge of a vote in both Houses on the final deal must be a meaningful one. That means it must be a vote before the deal is put to our European counterparts for ratification, otherwise it will be a Hobson's choice of little value. I hope that Ministers will reflect very carefully on those key points as the Bill makes progress through the House.

4.15 pm

Stewart Malcolm McDonald (Glasgow South) (SNP): Despite my constituency producing two enormous Brexiteers—one Sir Teddy Taylor, who went on to represent Southend, and Tom Harris, who led the Brexit campaign in Scotland—I have the Glasgow constituency with the highest remain vote; it was over 70%. I get why lots of people did not feel that they had a connection with the European Union. It felt as though the EU did not have a relationship with their daily lives, and as though it was something done to them, rather than something inclusive. Sadly, however, this Brexit deal is going in exactly the same direction. The Prime Minister did everything she could to try to prevent this House from having a say or a vote on it. In fact, we are only in the Chamber for this debate today because the Government were taken to court—and the case had to go to appeal at the Supreme Court. The Prime Minister has done everything she can to freeze out Parliament, the public and the devolved Administrations, and that is highly regrettable. This Brexit process has all the hallmarks of a hostile takeover. The vote on 23 June 2016 is being used; all sorts of other issues—the single market, the customs union—are being couped in alongside it, which is just not good enough.

Ian Paisley (North Antrim) (DUP): The hon. Gentleman has expressed concern—indeed, confusion—about the Brexiteers' position. Will he help to alleviate my confusion about the Scottish position that SNP Members seem to be putting forward, which is that they want a free, independent Scotland, but it has to be ruled from Brussels? Will he explain that conundrum?

Stewart Malcolm McDonald: I will not explain it. The hon. Gentleman makes such a lazy argument that he must have heard all the points before. I will use my extra minute to make the arguments that I wish to make. The Prime Minister has no consensus on proceeding—[Interruption.] I suggest that the Deputy Leader of the House takes that back.

James Cartlidge (South Suffolk) (Con): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Stewart Malcolm McDonald: No. The Prime Minister has no consensus on proceeding as she is doing. The failure to get consensus is hers and hers alone. She talks about

“a country that works for everyone”,

but the Brexit negotiation and the article 50 process have been incubated and kept in Downing Street. That will do nothing for our attempts to fight against the poison of political cynicism that is eating away at liberal democracies around the world, including the liberal democracy that we serve here. Our party's position is well known. The Britannic isolation that this Government are seeking is something that I cannot and will not back, and I will vote against the Government tonight.

4.18 pm

Michelle Donelan (Chippenham) (Con): I voted remain in the referendum, not for any nostalgic or ideological love of Europe, but more in the pragmatic belief that it was not the right time for us to leave. However, the point that has sometimes been overlooked in the debate in this Chamber is that this vote on article 50 is different for one reason: it is not our decision. We have a duty as democrats, and a fundamental duty as Members of Parliament, to enact the result of the referendum.

I have not changed my mind, but it is important to remember that the Conservative manifesto—the one on which we Conservative Members were elected—pledged to hold the referendum. I was proud to vote in Parliament to hold the referendum, and I promised my voters that I would honour the result. It was made abundantly clear during the referendum campaign that it would be final, no ifs and buts, and when I make a promise to my voters, I intend to keep it—no ifs, no buts.

To me, this debate is less about triggering article 50, and more about democracy. The mere suggestion that we could consider riding roughshod over democracy, destroying what is left of the British public's faith in politicians is, quite frankly, absurd. Yes, we can all think of loopholes and justifications to rationalise voting against the referendum result, but we are surely in a sad state if it comes to that. And is it not patronising to claim that people did not really understand what they were voting for?

It is important that we do not distort the meaning of this debate. The vote should not be turned into a pro-immigration or anti-immigration vote. It is simply recognition of how the public voted, in part through a desire to take back control. There has been a lot of talk in this debate about immigration and the end of free movement. Members have spoken about the cultural and economic benefits of immigration, and I echo that message wholeheartedly. However, I seriously question whether that can only be achieved by European immigration.

It disadvantages those from the Commonwealth and the wider world, who should have exactly the same rights and opportunities as those living in Europe. Europe has bound our hands and given us no chance to link our immigration to skills. It deeply saddens me that some Members have distorted this debate.

Let us be clear and not misguide the public today. This vote is about starting the process. Yes, we could spend several weeks speculating about what we might be able to negotiate, and what we can and cannot change, but we have a duty today. Our economy and businesses need certainty. The last thing they need is another referendum, or more speculation. Now is the time to get on with the job, be positive, work together and get the best deal for Britain. We have a duty to honour the result and a promise to keep. We need to show the British public that we can listen, can be in touch, and are the Parliament for the people, not a Parliament superior to the people.

4.21 pm

Peter Grant (Glenrothes) (SNP): May I say first that I respect the views of any Member who acts according to their conscience, and that I have nothing but contempt for any Member who acts purely out of self-interest or self-preservation?

The Government can claim a mandate to take the United Kingdom—or what is left of it—out of the European Union, but nobody can claim a mandate to take anyone out of the single market. That, essentially, is a major part of the reasoned amendment tabled by the Scottish National party. We are being asked to hand complete control of the process to a Prime Minister and a Foreign Secretary who between them cannot even handle a dinner invitation without creating a major international, political and diplomatic stooshie.

The Government, if anything, have a mandate to keep us in the single market. That is what was in the 2015 Conservative election manifesto. I know that Conservative Members do not like to be reminded about it now, but that is the mandate they were given by the people. As recently as 24 October 2016, the Prime Minister told the House:

“I want to get the best possible deal with the maximum possible opportunities for British businesses...to operate within the single market and to trade with it in both goods and services.”—[*Official Report*, 24 October 2016; Vol. 616, c. 36.]

The fact that as recently as October the Prime Minister wanted to stay in at the very least should tell us that membership or non-membership of the single market is far too important to be dealt with without a single debate or vote in this House.

Some MPs have been subject to unfair pressure to vote in a particular way. Nobody here has the right to tell anybody that they are being dishonest or anti-democratic by exercising their vote. I have had that as well. I received an email darkly hinting that there are a number of people in my constituency who want to leave and threatening me with deselection if I dare to vote against the Government tonight. Given that the email came from Labour Leave, I have no intention—[*Laughter.*] It did cross my mind that, pension-wise, I could get a much better deal by losing rather than retiring. Maybe when I decide that the time has come to leave, I will stand as a Labour candidate to guarantee my “loser’s pension”. [*Laughter.*]

The Secretary of State concluded his speech yesterday by asking us to trust the people. What we have heard from the Tory Benches is actually much more than that: what we are hearing from the Tories today and yesterday is the abolition of the sovereignty of Parliament. They have finally accept that the people are sovereign. I welcome that. It is 700 years after some of us accepted it, but they are welcome.

There are four different sovereignties represented here. The sovereignty of my people tells me that 62% want to stay in. We put forward a compromise that respects the wishes of those who want to leave, respects the wishes of those in Scotland who want to remain, and respects the issues of the 55% in 2014. If we are forced to choose between the 55% and the 62% who want to remain in the European Union, I think the Conservative party might get a very nasty surprise indeed.

4.24 pm

Chris Green (Bolton West) (Con): I campaigned and voted to leave the EU, in line with the boroughs I represent, Bolton and Wigan, which voted overwhelmingly to leave. It was an incredibly important referendum, and I am a little disappointed sometimes to get the impression that people think we should never have had it. It was vital that we did. When there is a transfer of power, it is for the people to approve, even if retrospectively. It was for the people to approve the vast transfer of power from Westminster to Brussels. Otherwise, it would have been like the SNP taking Scotland out of the UK without a referendum, or the Liberal Democrats changing our voting system without the approval of the people. We had to have the referendum to approve the transfer of powers to the EU.

Dissatisfaction with the EU seemed to grow in proportion to the powers handed to it. Whether we wanted to remain or leave, we could all see that the referendum was vital. David Cameron, in his Bloomberg speech, set out a fantastic vision of EU reform, but every visit to Brussels or a European capital whittled away that vision until there was almost nothing left—and that was the proposal put to the British people: either we leave or we have this almost non-existent programme of reform. It now seems that there is a campaign to resurrect the Bloomberg vision through the soft Brexit that people keep talking about, but that was the vision already rejected by the EU.

During the campaign, there were problems and misleading information on both sides, but that £350 million figure for the NHS is overstated. In a general election, we look at the policies and the ideas developed over months and years. We look at the performance of the Government and we listen to the arguments of the Opposition. We have years to make up our minds at the general election, and the British people had 40 years to make up their minds about the EU. It was not about the last few weeks of the referendum campaign; it was about the lived experience in the EU. That is why the people rejected it. It was not because of a few debateable arguments on one side or another. I look forward this evening to voting for the Bill and supporting our leaving the EU.

4.27 pm

Julie Cooper (Burnley) (Lab): Since the vote nearly seven months ago, a shadow has been cast across this country. The decision to leave the EU has weighed

[Julie Cooper]

heavy on us all. It has divided communities, workplaces, families and political parties. The campaigns were not our finest hour. I campaigned to remain in the EU not because I thought the EU was perfect but because I did not want the UK to close its doors and shut itself off from the rest of the world. I want us to work with our European neighbours to find common solutions to the multitude of problems every developed country faces, from a rapidly aging population and its impact on our healthcare and pensions system to the co-ordinated action necessary to tackle climate change and terrorism.

My constituents voted 66% in favour of leaving the EU, and I respect that decision. Some voted to leave because of concerns over immigration and fears that this was negatively impacting on the availability of jobs and local services; some voted out because they thought it would mean more money for the NHS; and for some, the referendum was an opportunity to register their discontent not just with the EU but with the direction the country was travelling in as a whole. While globalisation has brought wealth and economic growth, it has also left many people behind. In Burnley, people have seen manufacturing jobs decline and wages stagnate while bankers pay themselves million-pound bonuses and the rich increasingly find ways to dodge paying tax. They have been told consistently by the Government that the UK is the fastest-growing economy in the G7, and yet they have not seen that growth. They do not see more job opportunities or wage increases; all they find is that things are getting harder.

Because I respect my constituents and the democratic process, I will vote to trigger article 50, but I will not vote blindly for a Brexit deal that leaves my constituents poorer or worse off. First, the deal must protect jobs, which means access to the single market. Some 5,000 people in Burnley work in manufacturing and many of our biggest employers are European. It is vital that these jobs be protected. Secondly, workers' rights must be protected. I am proud that past Labour Governments have championed workers' rights. Thirdly, Burnley receives £5 million a year from EU funding. This money is vital, and has helped us to expand. The Government must commit, beyond 2020, to replacing that investment.

These circumstances were not of my making, but I believe that we must now seize the moment and all work together to do our very best to achieve a deal that will serve the interests of all our people and, in so doing, begin to heal the divisions in our country.

4.30 pm

David Warburton (Somerton and Frome) (Con): It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Burnley (Julie Cooper). Her words about healing division and working for the will of the people—a phrase we are not allowed to use any more—very much chime with me.

This is clearly an historic moment—the result of decades of campaigning in this House and outside it, and of course the result of a decision by the people of the UK. It is perfectly reasonable and perfectly rational for people to hold the view that we should not go ahead and free ourselves from Brussels, but to try to frustrate the decision by trying to show that the referendum result was in some way illegitimate or

incomplete so that others can impose their view of what they think ought to have happened, is really not quite the ticket.

I reckon that no one voted thinking, “I’ll vote leave, because I’m pretty sure that we’ll still remain a member of the single market, so it will all be okay”. No one said, “I’ll vote leave because I’m pretty sure Parliament won’t vote to trigger article 50”. No one said, “I’ll vote leave, because I’m pretty sure that when the final deal is put to Parliament, they will reject it and we will go back”. People voted to leave because they wanted to leave.

The two district councils that make up most of my constituency voted to leave by 13,000 votes, and they voted to leave because they wanted to leave. That means triggering article 50. In its judgment on 24 January, the Supreme Court, in common with the divisional High Court, made it clear that once given, article 50 notice cannot be withdrawn. When this House makes the decision on that final deal and the choice is put, it is only to approve the deal. Our choices thereafter will be to approve the deal, seek a renegotiation or exit the EU with no deal. There will be no option of remaining in the EU. This is a simple choice, and we have a very short Bill before us, although we have an awful lot of long amendments. The Supreme Court agreed in its judgment that Parliament can perfectly well content itself with very brief legislation. As many Members know, length need not equate to quality.

The Prime Minister’s speech at Lancaster House was the exception that proves the rule, splendidly setting out the 12 areas of work that the Government will now seek to address. The next two years, I must say, impose an obligation on every Member not only to heal the divisions, as we heard from the hon. Member for Burnley, but to help shape the negotiations and ensure that our future relationship with the EU emerges in a way that reflects an open, tolerant spirit of exchange and accord—without political control. We should believe in the future, just as the country did on 23 June last year.

4.33 pm

Joanna Cherry (Edinburgh South West) (SNP): The Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union finished his speech yesterday by saying:

“For many years, there has been a creeping sense in the country...that politicians say one thing and then do another.”—[*Official Report*, 31 January 2017; Vol. 620, c. 823-4.]

I am not sure which country he was talking about, because the UK is, of course, a Union of more than one country. What I can tell him, however, is that, for the country of Scotland, the sense that politicians sometimes say one thing and do another is more than a creeping sense, it is a well-founded and widespread concern, and it relates in particular to the Conservative party, its Prime Minister and its leader in Scotland.

Tonight we shall vote on an SNP amendment, and I welcome the support from other Members for that amendment. The amendment is, in part, designed to ensure that the Conservative party delivers on promises made by politicians to the people of Scotland during the 2014 independence referendum—promises made by Ruth Davidson, such as the idea that voting to remain in the United Kingdom was a guarantee of our EU citizenship; and promises made that Scotland is an equal partner in the Union.

Listening to yesterday's debate, one could be forgiven for thinking that Scotland is seen as an unwelcome distraction from the main event. The message seems to be, "Get back in your box, and know your place". Gone are the lovebombs, which have been replaced with instructions to "Sit down, shut up and put up with it".

The EU referendum did not take place in a void in Scotland, separated from what has gone before. In 2014, the question of Scotland's future membership of the European Union was central to the independence referendum. The SNP, and the wider "yes" campaign, warned that a "no" vote would be a threat to Scotland's ancient trade links, about which my right hon. Friend the Member for Gordon (Alex Salmond) spoke so eloquently earlier. We said that voting to remain in the United Kingdom was a threat to our membership of Europe because of Tory Euroscepticism.

John Nicolson (East Dunbartonshire) (SNP): Does my hon. and learned Friend agree that there has been much misreporting of the recent Supreme Court decision? While it established that Scotland need not be consulted legally, there was no requirement that it should not be consulted constitutionally.

Joanna Cherry: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. Paragraph 151 states:

"The Sewel Convention has an important role in facilitating harmonious relationships between the UK parliament and the devolved legislatures. But the policing of its scope and the manner of its operation does not lie within the constitutional remit of the judiciary".

So, basically, it is up to the politicians.

When we in the SNP warned that staying in the UK was a threat to our EU membership, the "no" campaign said that we were scaremongering. Ruth Davidson said.

"No means we stay in",

that is, stay in the EU. The Liberal Democrats and Labour Members who were in the Better Together campaign told us that voting to remain part of the UK guaranteed our EU membership. The question for the Conservatives, Labour and the Liberal Democrats now is this: what are they going to do to deliver on the promises that they made at the time of the independence referendum? What are they going to do to protect and guarantee that EU citizenship that they told us was guaranteed by our voting to remain in the UK?

The Scottish Government, unlike others, have produced a document—"Scotland's Place in Europe"—which sets out a detailed plan. It is a plan which, as we heard from the Prime Minister's own lips today, is possible, because it is possible to have a soft and open border between a country that is in the single market and a country that is not. The question for all Members in the House—Labour, Liberal Democrat and Tory—is this: "What are you going to do to deliver on the promises that you made to the people of Scotland? Or are you just going to sit there and admit that those promises were lies?"

4.37 pm

Geoffrey Clifton-Brown (The Cotswolds) (Con): This is an historic debate. I was in the Chamber during the Maastricht debates 25 years ago: it has been a long time. The British people voted by a margin of 1.35 million to leave the European Union, and two thirds of the constituencies in the country voted to leave. I respect all

my constituents who voted to remain—and The Cotswolds voted very narrowly to remain: it was 51% to 49%—and I totally reject the Liberal Democrats' assertion that I cannot represent those constituents.

The British people, through this referendum, have regained the sovereignty of this Parliament. We will no longer be subject to the directives and regulations laid down by Brussels. We will regain control of our borders, and, above all, we will be able to reassure the Europeans who are living in this country that they are welcome here, provided that our European partners give reciprocal rights to us. Shorn of the EU competence for trade, we will be able to regain our old entrepreneurial spirit and go round the world, trading openly with all its nations. Some people assert that the peace in Europe has been maintained by the European Union. I say that the peace in Europe has been maintained by NATO—and it is absolutely right for our Prime Minister to ensure that all NATO members abide by their obligation to spend 2% of their GDP on defence.

As many speakers have said during this debate, we shall not be leaving Europe. We shall be leaving the European Union, but the Europeans will still be neighbours and friends. I think that, pragmatically, we will do a deal for this country that will be in the interests of all its people. It is a byzantinely complex negotiation on which our colleagues on the Front Bench are about to embark. I say to them that we have an absolute duty to get the best deal that we possibly can for this country. However, I am confident that when our partners look at what we have to offer them and what they have to offer us, it will, pragmatically, be in their interests to make sure we do a deal that suits both of us.

We will reset our relationship with Europe: it will be an easier relationship; it will be a relationship that all parts of this kingdom can relate to—whether that is England, Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland. I simply say to our Scottish nationalist friends, echoing the soothsayer in Shakespeare's "Julius Caesar": beware of referendums—you cannot be certain what the result will be.

4.40 pm

Seema Malhotra (Feltham and Heston) (Lab/Co-op): Periodically, a nation has to stand tall and say what ideas it is driven by, and what values lead its sense of direction and its destiny. I am proud of all we have achieved as members of the European Union in terms of not only our economy and our security, but the peace between our nations, which, twice in the last century, were at war.

I campaigned hard for remain, but I accept the result. I will not vote against Second Reading, but I will not criticise others for making a different choice. I am sad that tonight this House will take the first step in what I believe is the wrong direction for this country—a country in which I was proud to be born, which has shaped me through its openness and generosity of spirit, and which has shaped my very firm sense of partnership with other nations and of the need for an internationalist politics. The Government's responsibility has never been greater.

This must not be, or feel like, the end of the debate. It is right that tomorrow the Government will be publishing a White Paper; it is wrong that we did not have it before. It is right that we have a vote; it is wrong that it took the

[Seema Malhotra]

Supreme Court to make it happen. A vote for article 50 today is not a blank cheque. It must be for this House to be consulted and to meaningfully vote on the final deal. This Bill has been tightly written to limit the ability of MPs to amend it, but it is clear that the views of Members of this House will not be silenced.

I want to make three broad points in my contribution to this debate. First, we should not rule out membership of the single market, but instead make the case for EU-wide reforms of the freedom of movement that can give member states greater control if they wish it.

Secondly, we must engage the public. That is why the Prime Minister should bring forward a national convention that includes MEPs, elected Mayors, nations, devolved Administrations, local government, universities and higher education, civil society, business and others. The public were asked their view about our membership of the European Union, and they should also be properly involved in the debate about our future.

Thirdly, there are the needs of our young people. They are our future, and we have a stake in their success, too. The way we conduct this debate and make decisions, the language we use and the way we design in relationship-building between young people across borders will be a gift we give to the next generation. That is why I am tabling amendments that call on the Government to set priorities for young people in their negotiations, retaining the rights and opportunities for young people to work, study and travel visa-free if they are under 25, so that they do not become worse off than their European counterparts.

The referendum was not a proud moment in our nation's history, but there is more than one way to Brexit. There are risks, and we must be open about that, but we must also have an evidence-based debate: our prosperity, our security, and our respect and our place in the world depend on it.

4.43 pm

James Cartlidge (South Suffolk) (Con): It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Feltham and Heston (Seema Malhotra). Like her, I campaigned for remain, and I did it passionately. I argued that if we left, we would miss the opportunity to be the largest country in the EU that was not in the euro. That is an amazing position, but it is gone, and I accept that. Like the hon. Lady, I will support the Bill. I would, in the most extraordinary way, be reneging on my vote for the European Union Referendum Act 2015—one of the first pieces of legislation I voted for as a new MP—if I now turned against it just because I campaigned for the remain side.

However, that does not mean that I do not have concerns, and there are two primary areas where I am worried about the future. The first is trade. At all costs, we must avoid a game of protectionist chicken with the EU. That could happen, particularly given what is going on in Washington, where we have an openly protectionist President. This is not “Project Fear”, but hon. Members should be under no illusion: if protectionism breaks out on both sides of the Atlantic, we could have a severe economic crisis, and we know where that finishes.

The other point is on immigration. It is absolutely right that we cannot control immigration from the EU unless we leave, but we cannot reduce the numbers, which is what the country actually wants, unless we have a native British workforce who are willing and able, and available in sufficient numbers, to step into the breach if the immigration shutters come down. I recently joined the Work and Pensions Committee. We have held evidence sessions on this and heard from employers who are completely dependent on migrant labour and struggle to recruit locally, including in the care sector and construction, which are vital parts of our economy. We should not pretend to the British people that immigration will be slashed if we leave.

It is particularly important that we discuss one part of this topic, and I might not agree with all my colleagues on it. At the moment, it is not true that there are no restrictions on EU migration. At the moment, legally, people cannot come to this country as an unskilled migrant—which, by the way, includes many skilled people; that is just an immigration term—if they are from outside the EU. They can only legally come in from within the EU, and I think that we should be very cautious about changing that, because the British people might like the idea of going global, but I do not think they would support globalising unskilled migration to this country, which is by far the largest part of it. We need to debate that and be open about it.

Having said all that, I voted for the referendum Act and we must implement the will of the people. As many of my colleagues have said, we are democrats, and we should do this in a way that is open and united, because if the national interest at this moment is best served by maximum unity, a show of strength by Parliament—

Sir Gerald Howarth *rose*—

James Cartlidge: I give way to my hon. Friend.

Sir Gerald Howarth: I am grateful to my hon. Friend and son-in-law for giving way, because I want to endorse what he has just said. We have shown that it is possible on this very divisive and complex issue for members of not only the same party but the same family to hold different views, and yet now to look forward to going ahead united to secure the best possible deal for our country.

James Cartlidge: The local paper did speculate on this matter, and when asked about my wife's views, I said, “Well, she is my father-in-law's daughter”—[*Interruption.*] Not just in biology and spirit, obviously. On the morning after the referendum, I purchased her a bottle of champagne and congratulated her as she was on the winning side.

Yes, we do have to unite, and we have to show a positive and open spirit in our negotiations with Europe. We have to have a deal that is in its interests too, and that is why this is about openness, free trade and a positive Brexit. We can and should all get behind that, and we do that by voting for this Bill tonight.

4.47 pm

Mr Adrian Bailey (West Bromwich West) (Lab/Co-op): When I campaigned as one of a fairly beleaguered minority in the Labour party in the 1970s to join the EU, little did I think that many years hence I would be

standing up today to vote in favour of triggering the negotiations for our exit, but I am. It is against all my historical instincts and my preference for an international way of delivering our business, and it is also against the economic logic that says that a large and uniformly regulated home market is a prerequisite for a fast-growing economy and the benefits that accrue from it.

I am going to vote this way for three reasons. The first is the democratic argument that has been articulated by many. There is a lack of faith in Parliament and our democratic institutions, and for Parliament and politicians to win an election on a promise of a referendum, to hold that referendum, and then to not implement the result of that referendum would have profound implications in terms of faith in our democratic system.

I also believe that, given the complexities and difficulties of the negotiations we are going to be confronted with, the public will expect this Parliament to do its very best to implement the will that they have expressed. I do not want conspiracists to be able to blame the very real problems that will arise from the negotiations on the reluctance of Parliament, rather than the difficult issues that will be confronting us.

I will also vote this way because it is in the interests of business. A decision has been made, and my discussions with businesses run along the lines of, “We’d prefer to remain in, but we recognise we are coming out, and what we want is certainty about our future trading relationships.” That will depend on investment decisions and recruitment decisions, and until we start to negotiate and try to shape the future that our business is going to be confronted with, that uncertainty will continue, and it will severely affect our economy.

I want to make it clear that in voting to trigger article 50, I am not committing myself to accepting the final outcome. I will work with others to ensure that we shape the negotiations in a way that will be beneficial, and I reserve the right to vote against the subsequent outcome if I do not feel that that has been achieved.

4.50 pm

Antoinette Sandbach (Eddisbury) (Con): My constituents have a great deal of common sense. They are intelligent and thoughtful, and they go about their lives with incredible diligence. When people wrote to me to say that they did not understand what they were voting for, I did not believe it, because I know my constituents and I trust in them. We trust in our constituents enough to put them on juries, and I trust in mine enough to make a decision when they are exercising their vote.

I, too, argued for remain. I believed the Prime Minister when he said he would go to Europe and seek to negotiate a better deal for Britain. He went out there in good faith and he played those negotiations with a straight bat. Unfortunately—to paraphrase another speaker—he found out when he came back here to stand at the crease that his bat had been broken, his shoes had been nicked and his stumps had been hidden. He was hampered by Europe’s failure to recognise that it needed reform and that it needed to deal with the crucial issue of free movement. That failure to recognise the concerns that he was raising on behalf of Britain bears a great deal of responsibility for the outcome of the vote. I was deeply concerned when I heard the right hon. Member for Sheffield,

Hallam (Mr Clegg) say yesterday that he had it on great authority that the Germans had offered a deal involving an emergency brake after the referendum. If that was indeed on the table and people were willing to sign up to it, it would have been far too late to do it afterwards without it having drastic consequences for this country.

I very much welcome the approach being taken by the Prime Minister. I welcome the fact that she wants to reach out globally, and that we will still be members of Europe even if we are no longer members of the European Union institutions. It is vital that we build on those links and continue to look outwards. We must work on co-operation in crime, terrorism and national security, and we must negotiate the best possible deal for our economy. My constituents knew that there was a risk to the economy. That was explained to them very seriously. The point was made yesterday that the risks were understood and accepted by the British electorate when they voted to leave, and I think we have to respect that decision. I will work hard to deliver the best outcome for my constituents.

4.53 pm

Hannah Bardell (Livingston) (SNP): Benjamin Franklin famously said that if we fail to plan, we plan to fail. That is exactly what this Tory Government have done over Brexit, leaving this supposedly equal family of nations with a very stark choice. If you will indulge me, Mr Speaker, I want to pay tribute to Irvine Welsh, Danny Boyle and Ewan McGregor, because I saw “T2 Trainspotting” recently and it inspired me. Choose Brexit. Choose making up numbers from thin air about the NHS and plastering them on the side of buses. Choose racist and xenophobic sentiments seeping out from some corners of the leave campaign. Choose hate crime rising by more than 40% and LGBT hate crime rising by more than 150% in England and Wales following the Brexit vote. Choose taking the people of our nations to the polls on one of the most important issues in a generation with nothing written down and no plan. Choose ignoring the interests of the people of Scotland and my constituents in Livingston, despite the fact that they voted overwhelmingly to remain in the EU. Choose leaving the single market, risking 80,000 Scottish jobs within a decade and costing the people of Scotland an average of £2,000 a year in wages. Choose lowering Scotland’s GDP by more than £10 billion and Scotland’s exports by more than £5 billion. Choose vital EU worker status being under threat, with widespread uncertainty to families, businesses and the economy. Choose risking our international standing in the academic, research and innovation communities as we lose access to funding, expertise and people from the EU. Choose walking away from the European Medicines Agency and Euratom without any detail or thought of the impact. Choose the great Brexit power grab, taking back control of straight bananas. Choose returning to the Thatcher era of poverty and austerity. Choose the UK turning its back on Europe.

Those are not the choices that the Scottish people made. Scotland chose differently. Scotland chose to look outward, to face the world and to embrace the EU and all the protections and advantages it brings. Scotland chose life in the European Union, not a hard Tory Brexit. This Tory Government must respect that.

[*Hannah Bardell*]

Conservative Members quoted Churchill, saying that this could well be the end of the beginning of the Brexit process. If they do not respect the democratic will of the Scottish people to remain in the EU, it will be the beginning of the end of this disunited kingdom.

4.55 pm

Helen Whately (Faversham and Mid Kent) (Con): This evening I will vote to begin the formal process of leaving the European Union because, though I voted remain, the referendum result was clear. In my constituency, and in the country as a whole, the majority voted to leave. Had the result gone the other way, all of us who voted remain would have expected that result to be honoured. Whether voting to remain or voting to leave, British people voted last year in the expectation that the Government would enact the result, so we must see it through.

The referendum has shone a light on the divisions in British society. There is a divide between those for whom life is working out and full of opportunity and those for whom life seems to be going nowhere. If we think that people are angry and divided now, just think what anger there would be if MPs rejected the referendum result, effectively telling so many voters that they got it wrong. The Government's job now is to make a success of Brexit and, in so doing, truly tackle the problems that the referendum laid bare.

As a first step, we must give the Prime Minister the scope to negotiate the best possible Brexit deal. To those who ask for more and more detail at this time, I say—drawing on my experience of negotiating business deals, albeit at a much smaller scale—that giving away more detail does not generally enable people to secure a better deal. We need to be clear, as the Prime Minister has been, that we will walk away if we do not get a good deal.

To those who want a second referendum to choose between a final deal and staying in, I ask: could there be any stronger incentive for the European Union to offer us unattractive exit terms? Proposing a second referendum may be in their political interest, but it is clearly not in the UK's interest.

Now we must get on with it and use this time of change as an opportunity to frame the sort of country that we want to emerge—an open Britain, engaged with Europe and the world, that offers opportunities to all with the confidence and identity that enables people to be tolerant and welcoming. That is the task ahead when we have honoured the referendum result and enacted the Bill.

4.58 pm

Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck (South Shields) (Lab): Like many others, I hoped that this debate would never take place. I campaigned to remain in the firm belief that it is the best way to protect jobs and stability for my constituents. However, my constituency voted by a clear margin to leave. I respect the democratic process, and I respect the views of all my colleagues and my constituents.

I will vote for the Bill tonight but, now that we are having this debate, it is my duty to speak up and fight

for the people I was elected to serve. For decades the benefits of the EU were not sold to people. The European Parliament was shrouded in mystery, leaving a vacuum for UKIP to sell an alternative narrative of what the EU did and does for us. At times during the referendum campaign it felt like I was trying to share with people in a few months things that we should all have been sharing with them for years.

I campaigned in the referendum against the backdrop of an increasingly dark and globalised world in which things are constantly shifting at an alarming and dramatic pace and in which intolerable cruelty is inflicted on people simply because of their race or religion. People are being displaced and humanitarian crises are happening right across the globe. Disasters, poverty and disadvantage are becoming the norm for so many, and the old answers to our country's and the world's problems are just not coming from our politicians any more. The vacuum left in British politics as MPs and parties struggle with how to respond to this pace and veracity of change has been filled with racist, misogynistic and divisive rhetoric, which is creating an inward, nationalist, isolationist environment.

When experiences like those of my dad are thrown into the mix, we see that it was no surprise that people voted out. My dad, Davey Lewell, is a retired welder. He is a kind, considerate, hard-working man. He used to work in the shipyards with economic migrants from Europe, who came to work alongside him. He hated seeing them being exploited. He wanted them to have rights, and the same terms, conditions and pay that he had, but instead they continued to be exploited, to such a degree that the yard owners could pay them so little that it was no longer a good business model to have people like my Dad employed there. In short, he lost his job. When people see Governments not fighting for them and allowing people to be exploited, they lose faith and they become angry. No Government should ever underestimate what unemployment can do to an individual, to their family and to their community, because these scars last. This referendum was a chance for people like my Dad to vent his hurt. In areas like mine this referendum was lost a very long time ago.

5.1 pm

Maggie Throup (Erewash) (Con): For me, this Bill is about just one thing—process. Like many other hon. Members, I began on a Brexit “road to Damascus” by advocating that Britain remain in the EU. That is not because I am a die-hard Europhile; it is because I am a pragmatist. I believe that, on balance, retaining EU membership was the safer option for Britain, both economically and socially. However, the collective majority of the British people, including the overwhelming majority of my constituents, disagreed with that view, and I accept that we now must leave.

The debate on the nuts and bolts of our exit deal are for another day, because this Bill is not about the substance. It is not about which laws to keep or abolish, or about our future trading relationships. It is not about how we share our security interests. Today, we are dealing with the mechanism that will enable us to begin having those discussions and debates, not only among ourselves here in this House, but, more importantly, with the other 27 member states. It comes down to the

core question that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union posed yesterday in his opening speech:

“do we trust the people or not?”—[*Official Report*, 31 January 2017; Vol. 620, c. 824.]

Although I have been quick to learn that we are often required to take some difficult and unpopular decisions as Members of Parliament, which can be contrary to the views expressed by some constituents, on this issue I choose to trust the people and so will vote accordingly this evening.

5.2 pm

Stella Creasy (Walthamstow) (Lab/Co-op): Let us make no mistake: we are leaving the EU. The referendum seven months ago settled that issue. Today's vote is not about whether Members have a leave or remain constituency. This Bill is about green-lighting the Prime Minister in her approach to Brexit and to parliamentary scrutiny: a fast-tracked process devoid of any detail for triggering article 50 in March when key European allies will have elections distracting them; and the grudging promise of a White Paper tomorrow for a vote today to replace the blank paper we currently have. Those of us who campaigned for remain know that Brexit is to happen, but how we green-light it is a different matter. All of us have to ask ourselves whether we are confident that, as things stand, this Government are going to get the best deal, or even a good deal, for our country. I cannot answer yes to that question. This Bill is our only opportunity to send the Prime Minister back to the drawing board, both on the process and on the purpose of her negotiation.

In the short time available to me, I wish to deal with three points that Walthamstow residents whom I met on Sunday, both leave and remain voters, wanted to make clear. They understand that there are many different ways in which Brexit could happen, but they get the importance of the single market being part of the negotiations. They understand that when 50% of goods cross borders at least twice before they hit the shop floor, we are now talking about more red tape for British businesses. They understand that a Government who abandon the customs union and the common commercial policy for a form of associate membership that does not even exist put thousands of jobs at risk from the beginning. The Secretary of State himself said that businesses would ensure that trade with Britain continues uninterrupted and under similar circumstances. That is clearly not the case, and the British public deserve better.

Walthamstow wants rights for EU citizens to be confirmed, not to be used as bargaining chips or to upset the new company that we keep, in the shape of President Trump. Finally, Walthamstow wants employment rights to be protected. I just attended a statutory instrument Committee in which the Government were already talking about extending the erosion of employment rights, so it is clear that it is not a done deal.

Yesterday, my constituency neighbour, the right hon. Member for Chingford and Woodford Green (Mr Duncan Smith), who sadly is not present, said that he would vote to trigger article 50 simply because of all the mistakes of the past. Well, I cannot green-light article 50 tonight because of all the opportunities for the future that it puts at stake. I am a proud patriot: I am

proud of my country and I want the best for my country. We can and should be doing better. We cannot trigger this process now. We must rethink and go back to the drawing board, for the sake of everybody we represent, whether they were for leave or remain.

5.5 pm

Steve Double (St Austell and Newquay) (Con): It is clear that tonight's vote is an historic event. I consider it an incredible honour to be in this Parliament at this time, and to be able to cast my vote for the Bill.

People often ask me how long I have been a Eurosceptic, and I often reply, “For as long as I knew what one was.” Growing up in Cornwall, I witnessed the impact of EU bureaucracy and regulation on our communities. I saw how it strangled our fishing communities, and overburdened our agricultural sector with red tape and bureaucracy that meant that businesses could not operate as they felt was best.

I waited for the outcome of the former Prime Minister's negotiation before I decided how to cast my vote in the referendum. It became clear to me that, despite all the rhetoric, the EU was not willing or prepared to change, and was set on continuing on the course it had been on for some time. That was the final straw that made me decide that casting my vote for leave was the right thing to do. It was a great relief to me when the constituency I represent, St Austell and Newquay, agreed with me, with 62% voting to leave. I am in an easy position: it is not only my personal view but that of the vast majority of my constituents that we should leave the European Union. Since the referendum result, I am even more convinced that it was the right decision and the right thing to do.

I have detected a new confidence in our country: a new, positive, outward-looking approach. Despite all the predicted doom and gloom, business people I have spoken to have said that they are positive about the future. They want the Government to take a clear lead and to set a clear direction, so I welcome the Prime Minister's approach to doing that, and her setting out where we are taking our country as we negotiate to leave. Clearly, all the “Project Fear” predictions of what would happen if we decided to leave have been proven completely unfounded, but when companies invest in the UK, the media say that they are doing so despite Brexit. Maybe, just maybe, they are investing here because of Brexit, and because they are confident about the future of our country.

Tonight's historic vote gives us the opportunity to start writing a new chapter for our country, which has a long and great history of standing up positively, and looking at and engaging with the world. I view tonight's vote as the next step in writing a new chapter for our great nation.

5.8 pm

Mary Creagh (Wakefield) (Lab): The European Union is a bureaucratic, cumbersome and imperfect system, but it is also the longest and most successful peace process the world has ever seen, transforming historical enemies into trading partners, allies and friends. It gave hope to those labouring under the yoke of communism, and it has protected the UK's workers, consumers and environment, supported the Northern Ireland peace process, and driven Britain's economy, innovation and prosperity.

[*Mary Creagh*]

I did not vote to hold the referendum, and I campaigned to remain, but people in Wakefield voted to leave. The Labour Whip says that we should trigger, but my Labour values—solidarity, internationalism, social justice—say something else. The Prime Minister talks about free trade, yet she is walking out on the largest free trade area in the world to chase an imaginary trade deal with Donald Trump. A trade deal with the USA is a distraction. The most important trade deal is the one that we negotiate with the European Union. That deal determines whether Brotherton Esesco in Wakefield faces tariffs on the sulphites it exports to wine-makers across the EU, and whether Wakefield farmers face tariffs on the lamb that they export to Belgium.

The Prime Minister has a weak negotiating hand, but she has thrown her cards on the table before the other players have even sat down, rejecting staying in the single market, in which 44% of the UK's exports are tariff-free. This hard Brexit was not what leave campaigners promised people in the referendum. The UK's access to the largest free trade area in the world will be worse after 2019, and that puts thousands of British jobs at risk.

An open society without discrimination is the founding pillar of our British and European identity. Since the referendum, hate crime and far-right activity in Yorkshire is up. My father, Tom, died in October. The last vote he cast was to remain in the EU. He came to Britain from Ireland in 1962 to earn his living, met his wife, got his degree, raised his family, and worked and paid his taxes here. After Brexit, someone like him without a degree from, say, eastern Europe will face barriers in coming here. I hope that we are better than that.

To the people of Wakefield I say that I have always sought to act in their best interests. My duty is to use my judgment to make their lives better. They did not elect me to make them poorer, destroy their jobs, and weaken their public services. As someone who has lived in Belgium and Italy, who has worked with entrepreneurs for seven years, and who has been an elected Labour public servant for the past 19 years, I judge that this vote will make people in Wakefield poorer, destroy jobs and businesses, remove social, consumer and environmental rights and reduce the tax base that funds our NHS, schools and services. History has its eyes on us today, so here is my answer: I can no more vote for this Bill than I can vote against my conscience. I cannot vote for it because it is against my values, and I can no more vote for it than I can vote against my own DNA.

5.11 pm

Chris White (Warwick and Leamington) (Con): My constituency voted to remain by a large margin, and I voted to remain, so coming to the conclusion that I should support this Bill this evening has been very difficult. In 2015, I stood for election on a manifesto that promised a referendum. Soon after, I voted in favour of a Bill to put that referendum before the British people. In December, I voted for a motion calling on the Government to invoke article 50 by the end of March. I did so because the democratic process had been undertaken, and it would be wrong of me to ignore the result.

I was disappointed by the result of the referendum, but this indecision and uncertainty cannot continue indefinitely. Voting against triggering article 50 would prolong the uncertainty. We will leave the European Union; that much is sure. Delaying that process, which is, in effect, all that the vote will achieve, can only have negative implications for our economy. Any attempt to overturn the decision made would damage this country's reputation for democracy, which all of us in this place prize so highly. It is time for this House and the nation to come together, not only to mitigate the risks of Brexit, but to exploit the opportunities. The best interests of our constituents must be promoted and protected, whether through trade or an industrial strategy.

Warwick and Leamington is home to a thriving local economy, a superb education system and constituents with an outward-looking and inclusive approach. That will not change as a result of our impending exit from the EU. Now is the time to set out a positive vision for the UK and to turn that vision into reality.

5.14 pm

Rushanara Ali (Bethnal Green and Bow) (Lab): It is an honour to speak in such a historic debate. As a passionate pro-European, a proud Londoner and the MP for a constituency where almost 70% of the electorate voted to remain, and given my background—Britain was a welcoming home to me and my family—it goes without saying that I wish I did not have to vote on this Bill. The decision to trigger article 50 and leave the European Union cannot be stopped once it begins. There is no turning back.

I do not agree with the Prime Minister's plan to take us out of the single market and the customs union, because the effects will be dangerous and devastating to our economy. That is well understood and well documented where it concerns the City of London and Canary Wharf, which my constituency borders. Some 70,000 to 100,000 jobs—not just financiers at the top end of the institutions, but receptionists, caterers and all the people who serve the City and Canary Wharf—are at risk. The sector contributes more than 2 million jobs to the country and some 12% of taxation revenue for public expenditure, so it is really important that we do not throw the baby out with the bathwater, to which the plan to leave the single market will effectively lead.

Our hard-won rights for workers and women, and our protections for human rights, are seen and admired all over the world. We are putting those things and investment in our public services at risk. The decision will cost dearly, and will be deeply problematic and damaging to our economy. Some 44% of our exports are to the EU. The head of the World Trade Organisation even indicated that if we leave and end up on WTO terms, UK consumers will lose some £9 billion.

It is because of the damage that this change and the move away from the single market will do to my constituents, to our country's economy and to our rights that I cannot support triggering article 50. It is not in our interest as a country that is supposed to be outward-looking and internationalist, nor in the interest of future generations.

5.17 pm

David T. C. Davies (Monmouth) (Con): About 20 years ago, my political career was launched on the back of a failed referendum campaign, when I and many others failed to prevent the Welsh Assembly from being set up. I am reminded very much of those days at the moment because the campaign in Wales was also very divisive. All sorts of promises were made that have never actually been kept. It was a huge constitutional change for us. There were divisions, threats and altercations in Wales. When John Prescott, who was Deputy Prime Minister at the time, went to Newport town centre, one of his spin doctors ordered a young campaigner off the streets, saying, “I have the Deputy Prime Minister’s authority for doing this.” The resulting fracas made the third bong on “News at 10”. I will not reveal the identity of the person involved—[*Interruption.*] Yes, alright then, it was me.

As we looked upon the wreckage of that campaign, a great discussion took place in Cardiff. We said, “Only one in four people have voted for this Welsh Assembly”—it went through on a much narrower margin than the referendum that we have just had. We asked, “What are we going to do?” Some of us—I was probably one of the diehards—said, “Let’s carry on fighting it in Parliament, get back out there in the media and redo the whole campaign.” I did not think about the courts at the time but, then, we did not have any hedge funders behind us, otherwise I probably would have done.

There were wiser voices, such as those of: Lord Bourne, now the Communities and Local Government Minister; the Brexit Minister himself, my right hon. Friend the Member for Clwyd West (Mr Jones), who sits on the Front Bench and does such a good job for us; and the Secretary of State for Wales. They have all done very well. Those wiser people said, “We have to accept it. We don’t have to admit that we were wrong, but we have to admit that, on this occasion, the people have said one thing and we have to go along with it.” They were so right. I was wrong to say that we should have carried on fighting it because, as a result, we got involved with the national assembly advisory group, drew up the Standing Orders and put up candidates. We are now the second party in Wales, and we are close to becoming the first party there as a result of what took place. Look how well the Ministers I mentioned have done as a result. Who knows what might happen one day?

That is the reality of what we have before us now. People are talking about divisions. There were divisions all right during the referendum campaign. Those divisions need to end—we all agree on that. However, they will not end when so many people—they were in a minority—although acting for the best reasons and feeling they are doing the right thing continue to try to fight this campaign. They should stop fighting and become part of what is going to take place now, because the people of this country have spoken.

Lyn Brown (West Ham) (Lab): Is the hon. Gentleman honestly saying that he would have stopped fighting to come out of the European Union if the vote had gone the other way, and with such a poor majority? Let me tell him, I do not believe he would.

David T. C. Davies: The hon. Lady is a peacemaker, I am sure. She has given me a few tellings-off in her time. I think that if tried to do anything like that, she would

have a quiet, or even a not so quiet, word with me and put me in my place. We would have had to accept what the people of this country said, and that is what I am saying now—let us end the division.

I say this to Labour Members: look at what has happened in my political party. We were all over the place a few months ago—some fighting for remain, some wanting leave, some wanting this and that—and we have all got behind our Cabinet members and our leader. That is a lesson for this country. We have a first-rate Prime Minister, and tonight our Prime Minister is going to reflect the will of the British people. Yes, this is about bringing power back from Brussels to the people of this country, but it is also about going through the Lobby and recognising that that is what the people of this country want. I say to anyone who is thinking of not coming through the Lobby with us tonight: think about the will of the British people and be part of what is going to take place—this exciting new chapter in the history of this great country. Come with us tonight—come with the British people.

5.21 pm

Pete Wishart (Perth and North Perthshire) (SNP): I will start by putting my cards on the table. I loathe and detest this Tory Brexit. I despair of what this Tory Brexit would do to my beautiful country.

This is, as we know, to be the hardest of hard Brexits, with cuts yet unimaginable and consequences yet unconceived—and for what? If we were doing this for some lofty ideal or grand purpose, like maybe addressing global poverty or some of the huge issues of injustice around the world, that might make it just about palatable, but no—we are doing it because the UK does not like immigration. That is the cold, beating heart of this bad British Brexit, and it underpins absolutely everything concerning our departure from the EU. It takes precedence over everything else, and all other considerations are merely consequential. The fact is that we live in an interconnected, globalised world where the movements of people have never been so profound, sometimes fleeing from persecution, or perhaps exchanging skills and ideas. Yet we are asked to believe the myth that a Brexitised UK will beat back this historic tide like some sort of Farageous Canute. I actually laughed out loud when I heard all the guff about a global UK. A global UK is the last thing the Tories want to create—they are trying to create a drawbridge UK.

Look at the response from the rest of the world: when they are not laughing at us, they are simply taking pity on us. As the Foreign Secretary goes out of his way to insult the very people we have to negotiate with, they are thinking of nothing other than the hardest of conditions to deter anybody else from considering leaving. The negotiating position seems to be to threaten our EU partners by saying that we will indulge in even further economic self-harm if they dare look after their own interests. Apparently we are even considering turning the UK into some sort of offshore deregulated tax haven if the EU actually thinks about looking its own interests. That’ll show them, won’t it?

It is not just the fact of leaving the EU that concerns me, ghastly enough though that is: it is the new ideology—the new world view—that has hastily been designed to accommodate this new splendid isolation. I see a Brexitised Britain as a world of weird, ’50s nostalgia and antipathy

[Pete Wishart]

to foreigners—a reality that will feel very much like the pages of a *Daily Mail* editorial. People of Britain: work as if you live in the early days of a UKIP UK, because that is what is coming.

Scotland, of course, did not want any part of this, yet we have to be driven off the cliff edge with the rest of the United Kingdom. What we have now, though, is options. We have presented a plan to stop Scotland indulging in the worst of this madness. If that is not listened to, we have every right to reconsider our membership of this United Kingdom.

5.24 pm

Jeremy Lefroy (Stafford) (Con): When the results came through on 24 June, I must admit that my emotion was one of great sadness, and it continued for some time. I was sad not just, as the hon. Member for Cambridge (Daniel Zeichner) has said, because of the economic consequences, potential or not—I believe that in the medium to long term, this country has a stable and prosperous economic future—but because of the divisions created between us and our European partners and allies, as well as the divisions in our own country. It is absolutely vital that we come together and rebuild the social capital that was lost.

We have to do that by building on the decision we will take tonight. Whether we know that a decision is right or wrong, we can ensure that the next decisions we take are the best possible decisions for our country and people. That demands that we involve all the peoples of the United Kingdom, whether they are from Northern Ireland, England, Scotland or Wales. It also demands that we immediately reassure European Union citizens in this country of their rights here, just as we would expect other EU countries to reassure our own citizens. That is a matter of moral decency.

It is important that we fight very hard to retain those institutions that are not, in effect, part of the European Union, which we are leaving, but that are vital, technically and in so many other ways, for our general wellbeing and the health of our economy. I am referring to institutions such as Euratom and the European Medicines Agency.

It is vital that we all work incredibly hard. We—certainly in my party—have put the country in this position; it is our duty to get out there and ensure that we have the best possible arrangements. That does not mean writing newspaper columns saying how wonderful it is; it means getting out there and doing the hard work, treating people with respect and building up those relationships that have been perhaps more than a little bruised over the past few months.

It is also vital that this place—not the Government or the European Parliament alone—have the sovereignty to make a decision about our future relationship with Europe. Finally, I hope that we will conduct the debates with honesty and clarity, not with bombast.

5.27 pm

Tracy Brabin (Batley and Spen) (Lab): It is an honour to speak in this debate. Last Friday, celebrating my first 100 days as an MP, I spoke to a room of 50 dedicated activists and members at my constituency Labour party

meeting. I am proud that we were able to talk frankly and honestly about this vote. Many had spent months knocking on doors and delivering leaflets alongside my predecessor, Jo Cox, advocating that people should vote remain, while others in the room had voted another way.

Mary Creagh: I am sure that Jo Cox and her family will be in the thoughts of the whole House when we vote on the outcome of the referendum.

Tracy Brabin: Absolutely. I appreciate my hon. Friend's comments.

I voted to remain. As I spoke and listened to my friends and colleagues, it was difficult and occasionally emotional as I explained that I felt that it was my duty to respect democracy and vote in favour of triggering article 50. Batley and Spen voted 63% to leave. The people have spoken and I must listen. However painful this is now, we are leaving the European Union. It is my duty to listen to everyone, to move on from the labelling of people as leavers and remainers, and to get the best deal for everyone.

Batley and Spen was once a powerhouse of manufacturing. Men and women left school and went to work in the mills, but things move on and now we are celebrated for beds and biscuits. The mills are now shopping centres, offices and flats; in some cases, they have fallen into disrepair. Jobs for life have been replaced by the gig economy, and far too many of my constituents are on low pay and in insecure work. People have not seen a significant improvement in their standard of living for decades. They have been left behind by globalisation, and I have no doubt that financial insecurity and a sense of abandonment contributed to the leave vote. That said, my constituents did not vote to give this Government a blank cheque. They did not vote to lose jobs, to have their rights at work watered down or to lose maternity and paternity pay, human rights or LGBT rights.

There are lessons to be learned from the creative industries, in which I formerly worked, and their voice must be heard in the upcoming negotiations. In evidence given to the Culture, Media and Sport Committee in October 2016, Directors UK told us that the UK is the third largest supplier of films and the second largest producer of television in the world. In the fast-paced area of video games, we are constantly at the cutting edge. The creative economy accounts for one in every 11 jobs. However, it is fair to say that a vote for exiting the EU was not what the industry at large wished for. A survey conducted by the Creative Industries Federation ahead of the referendum found that 96%—

Alison McGovern: Does my hon. Friend agree that the point she is making is that the creative industries are not just about here, but about the places that we represent in the north, which are leaders in this area?

Tracy Brabin: I thank my hon. Friend for that point. It is absolutely true that the creative industries are among our biggest expanding industries locally, and we must support them at every opportunity. If we lose free movement of labour, we could easily lose a pipeline of highly skilled creatives. If that happens, we must develop a domestic training and education system that fills the skills gap in the creative industries.

Of course, the time to debate such details will come later. First we must vote to move the process on, not with angry denial or blind optimism but on a mission to be vigilant about the rights of those who have the least and those who support people in the greatest need.

5.31 pm

Richard Graham (Gloucester) (Con): It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Batley and Spen (Tracy Brabin). On this Bill, we have both come to a similar decision. In the run-up to the referendum, I believed that the considerable short-term risks of leaving the European Union outweighed the unquantifiable future benefits, but I underestimated the deep mistrust of the European Union. The people have decided to leave. I must respect that decision, and I will support this Bill.

The hard work now begins. For example, how do we access the benefits of free trade and the inspection-free transfer of goods from outside EU structures such as the single market and the customs union? Some believe that nothing is possible, and that the alternative to working for success is to hope that things go badly—even to will it—to be ceaselessly critical and, ultimately, to achieve only an echo of Private Frazer's lament, "We're all doomed." Although none of us has perfect foresight, I am absolutely confident that we will have much greater success in lining up future free trade agreements than some Members have suggested.

The negotiations will begin soon. In my view, we need an agreement in which we are generous to Europeans living here, enthusiastic in our continuation of academic and research co-operation, and resolute in our solidarity with Europe on defence and security. In that agreement, we must be practical about ways of controlling immigration but welcoming to skills, tourists and entrepreneurs; we must be free of the European Court of Justice, but never compromise on standards or the rule of law; and we must be adventurous in pursuing our own trade deals, but never underestimate the importance of free trade and easy customs clearance in all that we do with Europe. That is what I hope the Government's White Paper will lay out. I hope that it will bring our one nation of diverse parts together. Whatever our concerns about the journey, we should start positively, not cynically.

5.33 pm

Melanie Onn (Great Grimsby) (Lab): I start by paying tribute to Gina Miller, a courageous woman who fought for our constitution, our laws and our values. She found herself and her family subject to a hideous campaign from the media and the public, for the crime of simply being a democrat. She prevented an ill-equipped Government from over-reaching themselves and forcing through their own vision of Brexit without the views of parliamentarians being heard. She has acted fearlessly and without reward, and parliamentarians and democrats across the country all owe her a huge

Hon. Members will know that I introduced a Bill to safeguard in primary legislation all the workers' rights derived from European Union legislation after the withdrawal of the UK from the EU. Unfortunately, it was blocked, and we had over four hours of discussion about favourite radio programmes in relation to a handout Bill, so I hope that the Government tune in this time.

I realise that days next week have been allocated to discuss amendments in groups, but as I understand it, there is no guarantee that mine will be discussed. I therefore want to highlight them now to demonstrate their importance during the negotiations. People in this country deserve to know that their rights at work will not be thrown away.

Mr Ben Bradshaw (Exeter) (Lab): Does not my hon. Friend's point show, as does the fact that hon. Members are now restricted to just three minutes per speech, how outrageous it is that the Government are allocating just three days for detailed scrutiny of the most important Bill this country has faced in our lifetimes?

Melanie Onn: The Bill is certainly very difficult and there are lots of complex issues. I am sure that many Members on both sides of the House would appreciate having longer to discuss these issues.

New clause 9 would require the Government to produce a plan to ensure that EU workers' rights will be maintained in United Kingdom law before withdrawal from the EU. I wonder whether we will see such a plan in tomorrow's White Paper. New clause 10 would make provision for EU workers' rights to continue in force in the UK on exit day, subject only to changes made by primary legislation. New schedule 1 would place in primary legislation each EU directive on workers' rights.

The amendments are front and centre of many working people's concerns about an increasingly unstable labour market. There are protections against discrimination, and for the rights to rest breaks, paid holiday and leave for working parents. These protections have become the accepted minimums for reasonable employers and have been woven into the fabric of the employment relationship. On the steps of Downing Street in July, the Prime Minister referred to those who have a job, but do not always have job security. They are the millions of agency workers in the care sector, the retail industry, the security industry and in our factories. They rely on these protections to enjoy the same wages and holiday entitlements as permanent workers, and in turn they get equal access to facilities, vacancies and amenities.

Some have been reassured by the Government that Brexit will not undermine workers' rights, but the comments made by my hon. Friend the Member for Walthamstow (Stella Creasy) demonstrate that that is not the case. If it is the case, however, I look forward to my amendments being added to this Bill, if only to add just a little more detail.

Despite being on the other side of the debate, I accept that the British public voted for Brexit, but I urge the Government to recognise that they did not vote for more insecure contracts, less safe workplaces or anything less than they currently have by way of protection in their jobs.

5.37 pm

Kevin Hollinrake (Thirsk and Malton) (Con): I would like to take this opportunity to send my condolences, and I am sure those of many colleagues, to the family of one of my constituents who has passed away today—a great Yorkshireman, Sir Ken Morrison of Morrison Supermarkets. Our thoughts are with his family.

[Kevin Hollinrake]

It is a great pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Melanie Onn). I absolutely support her call for the protection of workers' rights, as do many of my Conservative colleagues.

I have listened carefully to many fine speeches during the past two days, and none was finer than that of my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Rushcliffe (Mr Clarke), who articulated so well the benefits of peace and prosperity that we have secured through our membership of the European Union. I must say, however, that I disagree with his conclusion, because I feel it is incumbent on me to vote to invoke article 50. Quite reasonably, the public believe that we as politicians have not been listening to their fears regarding sovereignty, democratic accountability and, most of all, immigration. I believe it would be disastrous if we did not support the public's wish to leave the European Union.

In business, people often have to take a certain route, probably against their better judgment. The most important thing that they should always do in such circumstances is not to worry too much about whether they have made the best decision, but make the best of the decision they have made.

I have listened to SNP Members who have spoken about wanting a meaningful vote. By that, I think they mean a veto—as one of my hon. Friends said—over whether we should actually leave the European Union at all. If that is what they mean by a meaningful vote, I cannot think of a more effective device for getting us the worst possible deal from these negotiations.

Mrs Anne Main (St Albans) (Con): Does my hon. Friend agree that the British public were told there would be no second-guessing or second bites at the cherry? This was not a bargaining position, but a vote on a decision to be made and taken by the Government.

Kevin Hollinrake: Absolutely. I could not agree more with my hon. Friend. It is a shameful device to try to keep us in the European Union via the back door. A no vote by Parliament would lead us to remaining and that is in the interests of the negotiators in the European Union. We need to show confidence.

There is still time for the European Union to listen to the fears of other countries. The United Kingdom has made its decision, but other countries have concerns. In France, Netherlands, Germany and Italy, there is great discontent with many of the EU's rules, regulations and restrictions. It is so important that we get not only the best possible deal for the United Kingdom, but the right deal for the European Union. The EU needs to see the shifting sands and listen to people's fears while there still is a European Union. I believe that the fragmentation of the EU would be the biggest economic and national security risk we could possibly face. It is time for Brussels to listen to the people and reform before it is too late.

5.41 pm

John Nicolson (East Dunbartonshire) (SNP): I am often asked by English Members why it is that I support pulling Scotland out of the UK but keeping it in the European Union. It is a good question, because Scotland is no stranger to the idea of sacrificing a degree of

independence for interdependence. Indeed, that is the argument that underpins Unionism. When Scotland surrendered its national Parliament in 1707, it was to join a prototype European Union: the United Kingdom. Two countries which had been at war for centuries pooled sovereignty, allowed the free movement of people and created a common trading area, locking our economies together with the aim of ending conflict. The price was complete Scottish independence.

Across the North sea, there is a very similar country: Denmark. Both countries have populations of about 6 million. They are largely urban, but with significant rural populations. Both have large coastlines. However, when Denmark chose to sacrifice some sovereignty upon joining the EU, it retained much that we have lost, or will soon lose, in the UK. Denmark finds itself today in the single market and a member of the customs union, and it is able to enjoy all the benefits they bring. Denmark also remains in control of its own defence policy, its own foreign policy and its own fiscal policy. There, in a nutshell, is the difference. Within the UK, Scotland controls none of those.

James Cartlidge: The hon. Gentleman is making a very good speech. On controlling economic policy, I am intrigued. Given that the SNP advocates independence if it does not get its way on this issue, can he confirm whether the SNP believes his country should then join the euro?

John Nicolson: No, I believe Scotland should hold a referendum whether we get our own way on this or not. I believe in independence whatever the outcome of the vote tonight. [Interruption.] An hon. Member with an incredible degree of prescience announces that we lost the referendum. I am not sure whether that takes our debate very much further, but I am happy to acknowledge, sir, that we did indeed lose the referendum. We will win the next one, however.

During Scotland's referendum on independence, it looked like some of this might change. The Prime Minister assured Scotland that we were a family of nations. Membership of the EU was sold to the Scottish electorate as one of the defining benefits of remaining within the United Kingdom, which must be a cruel irony on the day that we are debating this.

I am intrigued by what the Prime Minister means when she says that we are equal partners. What kind of equality is it when England, 10 times our size, attempts to compel us against our will? That is not equality as I understand it.

Joanna Cherry: My hon. Friend is putting the Prime Minister right on a couple of matters. Would he also care to put her right on her oft-repeated mistake in seeming to suggest that the SNP wants to take Scotland out of the EU, and then perhaps some of the scribblers on the Government Back Benches could pass it on to her?

John Nicolson: Members will be flabbergasted to learn that I agree with my hon. and learned Friend. We see a key part of our future lying in the EU.

The Prime Minister, mentioned there with such great affection, chose to visit Edinburgh on her first trip to Scotland, and it was a visit full of visual symbolism.

She called on the First Minister, and while they did not hold hands, the Prime Minister said all the right things, including that she was willing to listen to options on Scotland's future relationship with the EU. Well, what is the point of listening if everything said falls on deaf ears? It is not consultation.

My colleagues, my constituents and people throughout our country want to be part of an outward-looking, cosmopolitan Scotland. We want to be part of a union that is a community of nations and which respects diversity and autonomy. Members on the Conservative Benches profess to love the Union that binds Scotland and England, but the union that is dying is not the EU, with its long queue of candidate countries, but the UK. Margaret Thatcher may have begun the dismemberment, but historians will, I suspect, judge that today Conservative Members delivered the coup de grâce—as our continental partners would say.

5.46 pm

Ben Howlett (Bath) (Con): It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for East Dunbartonshire (John Nicolson), who is a passionate advocate of Scottish issues. It is a pleasure also to see that you have recovered from the curried nut incident last night, Madam Deputy Speaker.

I am afraid that this is a speech I never wanted to give and a Bill I never wanted to see, but I feel compelled to speak in this historic debate. Having listened to the debate over the last two days, and harking back in particular to the speech of my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Rushcliffe (Mr Clarke) and his quote from Edmund Burke, I know that the decision I take must be in the interests of my country—for us to do anything else would lead to unimaginable consequences. My hon. Friend the Member for Wellingborough (Mr Bone) was also quite right that we have to put country first, constituency second and party last. That is why I have come to the decision I have on the Bill.

Hon. Members will know that I campaigned passionately on behalf of the remain campaign, and the majority of Bath residents—70%—voted, like me, to remain inside the EU. I have not changed my views, and rest assured I will continue to advocate them. Like other hon. Members, I have received thousands of emails and letters, from those on both sides of the debate, on whether I should vote to trigger article 50 and allow the Government to begin the formal negotiations. However, the referendum campaign was fought, the vote was held, the turnout was high and the public gave their verdict. The country voted to leave the EU, and it is the democratic duty of this sovereign Parliament and Government to ensure we do just that.

Had the result been in reverse, I would have hoped that the leave campaign respected the democratic decision of the British people in exactly the same way. It is incumbent on us all to come together as one nation to seek the best possible deal with the EU—a new partnership between an independent, self-governing, global Britain and our friends and allies in the EU. I have called consistently for a White Paper, which I am pleased will be published tomorrow, as I want to ensure that my constituents and, in particular, my businesses, which have been somewhat ignored in our debates, can more systematically feed in their views.

If we are to leave the EU, we must not delay any further. To do so would frustrate our European friends and allies and probably weaken our negotiating hand. I would like clarity soon from the Government about the final vote. Given that the Supreme Court ruled to ensure the introduction of this Bill, I wonder how it would rule if the Government used the prerogative to approve no deal.

I will vote to trigger article 50 tonight, and I implore all Members to do the same.

5.49 pm

Gavin Newlands (Paisley and Renfrewshire North) (SNP): Given the time available, I shall restrict my brief remarks to two issues that are impacted by Brexit: EU nationals; and the single market in aviation, which is an important issue in my constituency.

The 3 million EU nationals and their families living in the UK are understandably extremely concerned. Instead of getting straight answers from the UK Government, EU nationals living in the UK have heard only empty rhetoric and weasel words from the Tories. Johanna Kettunen is one of my caseworkers in my constituency office. Born in Finland, she has lived in Scotland for over seven years, studying at Glasgow University, and she has made Scotland her home. She is extremely upset that she is being used as a bargaining chip by this callous Government in a Tory Brexit game that few in Scotland wanted to play in the first place.

As with many other Members, a large number of my constituents have been getting in touch with me to allay their fears that Brexit might rip their families apart. This is a clear indication that the ongoing uncertainty about EU immigration and the right to remain are already harming the UK, and it will continue for as long as the Tories refuse to confirm the right of EU nationals to stay in the UK.

Article 50 and exiting the EU will impact not only on EU nationals, but on businesses across these islands. One sector that has not been given the attention it deserves throughout the Brexit debate is the aviation sector. This vital part of the economy contributes £1 billion a week to UK gross domestic product and £9 billion in taxation. The UK has the third largest aviation sector in the world, which is largely the result of the European single aviation market and the open skies agreement between the US and the EU.

By leaving the EU and the EEA, the UK walks away from these hugely important agreements—agreements that account for a clear majority of UK aviation traffic. Regional airports are vital for connectivity within Scotland, but the Tories' reckless gamble with our EU membership has caused serious uncertainty for these airports, which could cause a serious detrimental impact on the Scottish economy.

In contrast, the SNP Scottish Government are working hard to ensure Scotland's aviation sector is a success, despite Brexit, committing to halve air passenger duty by the end of 2021. So, not for the first time, we know what the Scottish Government plan to do with the powers within their remit, but what of the UK Government?

Will the Minister tell us in his summing-up whether the UK plans to remain part of the European aviation single market? If not, can he guarantee that transitional

[Gavin Newlands]

arrangements will be agreed to ensure that UK airlines and airports are not put at any competitive disadvantage as regards their European counterparts? Will he further assure us that the UK will remain part of the open skies agreement with the United States? The 5,200 people in Renfrewshire in and around Glasgow airport, and the 1 million across the UK whose jobs rely on a thriving aviation sector are watching and expect an answer.

The Prime Minister needs to act now and give UK businesses and EU citizens living in the UK a cast-iron guarantee that their status and rights will be protected. If she does not, she will leave us no choice but to offer a different path to those living and working in Scotland through “voting yes”—yes to be an outward-facing member of the international family of nations; yes for our children’s future; yes for Scotland; yes to independence.

5.52 pm

Dr Roberta Blackman-Woods (City of Durham) (Lab): I agreed with the right hon. Member for North East Bedfordshire (Alistair Burt) when he said that this was a debate he hoped would never happen, and a vote he hoped would never happen. I am a strong remainer, and I campaigned hard for us to stay in the EU. I still think our future would be better within it, but I recognise the result of the British people who voted for Brexit. I also recognise, however, that my Durham constituency, in line with many university cities, voted strongly to remain.

I was worried about the result on 23 June. The north-east has only 1.6% of the population who are foreign-born, and hardly any of them live in Durham, yet in the campaign immigration was the most commonly cited reason for voting leave. It arose because people felt that their views were not being taken into account and that their access to jobs and services was diminishing—not least because of the austerity policies of other parties, which took vital resources out of our most impoverished communities.

I think that we failed to address those concerns in this House. We obviously have to tackle xenophobia and racism, and we have to change our immigration policies. I hope we find a way of doing that without simply withdrawing from the single market, which will create as many problems as it solves. We have also had four decades of negative press about Europe, and it was impossible to overturn it within a few months and make the positive case not only for the EU but for upholding human rights and active participation in global institutions that do so much to maintain peace and to create prosperity in the world. I hope we shall continue to take the international, outward-looking approach that is necessary, and reject the policies of Trump and isolationism.

I was very pleased that my constituents voted to remain, because the impact of Brexit on the north-east will be huge. We have a positive balance of trade, with 58% of our exports going to Europe, but we have no idea whether that will continue if trade barriers arise. We need to hear more from the Government about what will happen to our automotive industries, our universities, our advanced manufacturing, and businesses that are receiving money from the European social fund and the European regional development fund. That would help to create some stability. Our young people, most of

whom voted to remain, also need to hear how the Government will deliver a more prosperous country. That is why I think we should adopt Labour’s amendments, and ensure that we have a vote on the final Brexit deal.

I know that my constituents voted to remain, but I recognise that the country voted for Brexit, and I shall abstain in this evening’s vote.

5.55 pm

Stephen Doughty (Cardiff South and Penarth) (Lab/Co-op): Last summer I walked through the fields of the Somme and along the beaches of Normandy. Doing that, one cannot but ask oneself, “How did we get here?” History teaches us that it was the result of a failure of institutions, economics and relationships, and the rise of populism and nationalism. Because of that, I was, and still am, inspired by Europe and what it has achieved, for all its faults, many of which were rightly mentioned during the referendum. To the eastern European states during the cold war, it represented an alternative to the ethnic slaughter in the Balkans, and presented opportunities for hope.

I understand and respect the vast majority of those who voted to leave the European Union, many of whom were members of my own family and people in my own constituency. However, my constituents voted overwhelmingly to remain. Because of my constituents, because of my conscience and because of the facts that I see before me, I shall vote against the triggering of article 50, for the amendment, and also against the programme motion. The debate has been far too curtailed. No doubt the Bill will proceed to a Committee stage, and I shall also seek to amend it then. The result will reflect the referendum. I shall do that not out of disrespect, but out of duty: a duty to stand up for my constituents, to stand up for the 48%, and to stand up in this sovereign Parliament and challenge the Government and their approach.

The Government have no plan, unlike the First Minister of Wales, who has set out a cross-party plan. They have provided no guarantees that Wales will not be left worse off, and no guarantees of the unfettered access to the single market that is so crucial to businesses and jobs in my constituency. They have provided no assurances that powers will not be taken away from Wales, or that our rights will not be removed. They have given no reassurances to EU citizens living and working in our public services in my constituency.

We are told to be optimistic. I have no doubt that the British and Welsh people will find their way through, however difficult things become—we have done that so many times before—but I must be honest. I fear that the concerns that people rightly express about immigration are far from being resolved, and will not be resolved by our leaving the European Union. I fear that many who felt left behind will continue to feel left behind while we have a Government who are advocating a bargain basement, tax haven, race to the bottom economy, and are running across to the United States and throwing themselves before President Trump. I fear that the poorest will continue to suffer, and what then? Who will be blamed next?

The Prime Minister said today that she was a leader, but the truth is that she is a follower. She is following the siren calls of a select group on her own Benches to a

hard, reckless Brexit. Instead of trying to bring the country together, she is now following the lead of a President whose values she does not share in a desperate scramble to make up for the gambles of her predecessor. We are at a turning point—that is certain—but whatever the result of the referendum, there is not only one route forward. We have a choice when it comes to where we head in the future, and we must think very hard about that choice.

5.58 pm

Drew Hendry (Inverness, Nairn, Badenoch and Strathspey) (SNP): The hon. Member for Nottingham North (Mr Allen), who is not in the Chamber at the moment, spoke about the future. The Bill will have huge impacts on future generations, affecting the prosperity of our children and our young men and women. That is thrown into particularly sharp focus in the highlands. For generations, young people left the highlands to seek further education and to seek their future, until we had a Scottish Parliament and benefited from the engagement of the European Union.

The University of the Highlands and Islands is celebrating 20 years of EU co-operation, which has allowed us to have that much-needed symbol in the Highlands—a physical university campus in Inverness. Among other things, our co-operation with Europe has helped to reverse the decline that I mentioned. So, too, have EU nationals, and I was struck by the words of the hon. Member for Hampstead and Kilburn (Tulip Siddiq), because I agree that these people who come to our country to add to it are our friends and neighbours, and they deserve to be treated as such.

However, with the direction that the UK Government are taking, that all changes. The UK is scrabbling about for deals—any deals—with no stone unturned, no matter who is underneath it. Holding hands with Trump, legitimising his symbolic exclusion, his walls and his rising xenophobia, and shaking hands with Erdogan—all this is clearly saying that it is weapons before weans, dogma before doctorates. The alternative to a rock-hard Brexit is a change of course, if not for the UK, then for our universities, for people who will be put in a really difficult position, such as those in Gibraltar, and, of course, for Scotland, where 62% of people and 100% of council areas voted to remain. There is a choice for this Parliament.

Roger Mullin (Kirkcaldy and Cowdenbeath) (SNP): Has my hon. Friend noticed a shiver running along the Labour Front Bench looking for a spine to run up?

Drew Hendry: I thank my hon. Friend for his contribution. I hope Labour Front Benchers and other Labour Members will follow the example of some of those I have referenced tonight and vote against article 50.

If there are exceptions on borders for Ireland, and exceptions for Nissan and the City, this is a matter of choice—it does not have to be a rock-hard Brexit. People in the highlands and elsewhere in Scotland want hope for the future. They want future conditions to reflect our nation: they want a big-hearted, open-minded, co-operative future where all who contribute to a better society, wherever they come from, are valued. They

want an enlightened future, not an insular little Britain hand in hand with those who would drag us into the darkness.

6.2 pm

Owen Smith (Pontypridd) (Lab): I will vote against triggering article 50 tonight as a patriot who believes in Britain, and as a democrat who believes profoundly in parliamentary democracy. I will do it in the interests of my children, my constituents and my country, and in support of my convictions, because I do not believe that the Brexit course we are set on will make Britain a more prosperous, fairer, more equal and more tolerant country. To the contrary, it will make our politics meaner and our country poorer.

Despite all the optimism and jingoism we have heard from those on the Government Benches in the last two days of debate—there have been many terrific and many difficult speeches—I cannot credit the notion that the best way to make Britain a successful global trading nation is to withdraw from the most sophisticated global market the world has ever created. I cannot believe, standing here in London, in the heart of the most global, cosmopolitan trading city the world has ever seen, that we will enhance our chances of improving our economy by cutting off this city from the other great cities around Europe.

I cannot believe that our economy will improve, and I cannot believe that the constituents I represent will be well served. In fact, if the hard Brexit—the rock-hard Brexit—proposed by the Prime Minister comes to pass, I am convinced that it will be constituents such as mine, in working-class communities in this country, who will be hit hardest. And if the alternative version that she is threatening Europe with comes about, they will be hit harder still.

However, the biggest reason why I will vote against article 50 tonight is not the economy—we have made too much of that—but the values that are in jeopardy in our country and across the world. We are a liberal, plural, tolerant, European enlightenment economy and society, and the great British values that Labour has spoken for for so long are at risk today. This Brexit vote began with immigration. The man in charge of leave said it was their baseball bat, which they simply needed to pick up to win the vote. It has ended with the right hon. and learned Member for Rushcliffe (Mr Clarke) saying that the Tory party is now an anti-immigrant party, and with the Prime Minister hand in hand with a racist President of the United States. Are those my values, or are my values those of Angela Merkel, who had to ring up the President to tell him he was wrong? I know where I think this country stands on that issue, and I know that, unless we think again, we are going down a very, very dangerous path.

6.5 pm

Liz Saville Roberts (Dwyfor Meirionnydd) (PC): I want to make a few brief points about this Bill. Of course, Wales is a net beneficiary of the EU, receiving £245 million, or £79 per person, more than we pay in. In rural constituencies such as mine, that funding makes an impact way beyond what this figure implies. For rural communities, the common agricultural policy is the most important financial contribution that the EU

[Liz Saville Roberts]

makes, yet the Conservative party stands ready to switch off these vital support mechanisms that are essential to our already struggling isolated communities, with no indication of how it will make good the damage, or even whether it intends to.

I shall spend a few sentences exploring the increasingly divisive and much-misused word “freedom”. It was its antonym, “control”, that dominated the leave campaign’s market-tested propaganda, but it was an almost messianic pursuit of this most emotive of concepts, freedom, that drove us to break free from Brussels. *[Interruption.]* “Freedom to” and “freedom from” are the opposing and disputed understandings of liberty that have arguably underpinned the political divide for centuries. However, if we strip away much of the leave campaign’s divisive and reprehensible rhetoric, we find that it is its dogmatic belief in a freedom from Brussels that catalyses its distrust of the EU. In its polarised, simplistic view, now that we are free from the Eurocrats, once again the sun will never set on our shores. *[Interruption.]*

Lyn Brown: May I just say to the hon. Lady that I think it is a great discourtesy that she is not being listened to by some in this Chamber, because I find her speech very good indeed?

Liz Saville Roberts: I am most grateful for that intervention. We do not have many days to discuss this, and there are many of us who have waited in this Chamber all the while to do so, as we were required to. The least we can do is listen to each other’s contributions.

From what are we truly free? From workers’ rights and employment protections; from greater unity with our friends and neighbours; from free trade; and from progress. In reality, our so-called freedom from the EU will undermine our freedom—our freedom to achieve our potential. Our businesses will no longer have the freedom to export and import the goods we rely on. Our children will face greater challenges if they are to work and live in the countries that we have had the unfettered freedom to enjoy. The freedom to take back control? We have gained nothing but the illusion of control.

My party will always work in the national interest of Wales. My colleagues and I will therefore vote against this Bill on the grounds that this Government have failed to ensure Wales’s national best interests. Our economy and the role of devolved legislation are disregarded in this Bill. I am confident that the people of Wales did not vote for poverty and did not vote for our economy to bear the brunt of Brexit.

6.8 pm

Tommy Sheppard (Edinburgh East) (SNP): One of the more bizarre aspects of the discussion that has taken place since the referendum is the way in which the people who won the referendum have tried to explain what it means by reference to the arguments of those who lost the referendum. Thus we are told that, even though it was not on the ballot paper, the vote is a vote to leave the single European market because David Cameron suggested that it might be. I did hear David Cameron suggest that, but I also heard the leave campaign accuse him of hyperbole and mendacity every time he did so, and say that it was not true.

There is a real possibility in this country that the political right might hijack that mandate from 23 June last year and use it to reconfigure our society and economy in a way that most right-minded people in this country would find abhorrent. What stands between them and that outcome is this Parliament. That is why it is so important that we should not give this Government a blank cheque—carte blanche to do as they will, as they try to interpret what happens next. That is why we should vote for the reasoned amendment tonight and say that we will not fire the starting pistol until the Government have explained to us the consequences of making that decision.

I very much welcome the support of other parties and of many Labour Members, but I want, in the dying moments of this debate, to implore those on the Labour Front Bench to reconsider their attitude and not to give the Tory Government a blank cheque on this matter. That is not the historical responsibility of the Opposition. It is not the democratic requirement of the Opposition. Please do not do it.

Kirsten Oswald (East Renfrewshire) (SNP): As I have been sitting here, I have heard from yet another worried EU national in my constituency. Does my hon. Friend agree that this Government, who seem to be well behind the curve on everything at the moment, really need to sort this out, to treat our European friends and neighbours with dignity and respect, and to listen to the Scottish Government?

Tommy Sheppard: I completely agree. That is another fine example of why we should not get on the bus until we know what the destination is. We on these Benches are determined not to do that, but we are also determined to argue about what the destination should be.

My colleagues have talked about the Scottish Government’s report on Scotland’s place in Europe post-Brexit, and I recommend that colleagues in the Chamber spend 15 or 20 minutes reading it. It might just surprise them. It has been published by a Government who believe in an independent Scotland and in an independent nation within the European Union, yet the document argues for neither of those things. It is a massive compromise, an olive branch, and an attempt to create good will and to say that we must try to find unity and consensus in this post-Brexit world. What that means, however, is that one size does not fit all in a country of this size. It means that there should be differential arrangements in Scotland for what happens next, for two simple reasons. First, the consequences of Brexit will be materially different in Scotland. Secondly, the attitude of the people and the electorate in Scotland is different. This Government can do this; they can accommodate the wishes of the Scottish Government and the Scottish people and achieve a situation in which there is some sort of sense to things, post-Brexit, and in which the views of the people of Scotland are respected.

Colleagues have mentioned the fact that this debate is not without context in Scotland. In 2014, at the time of the Scottish referendum, we were promised two things. First, we were told that the best way to keep our European passports was to vote to stay in the United Kingdom. Secondly, we were promised that a vote to stay in the United Kingdom would mean that the views of Scotland would not be diluted or absorbed into those of our bigger neighbour to the south, but would

be respected. The Government say that Brexit means Brexit. Let us see, in the months to come, whether respect means respect.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Madam Deputy Speaker (Natascha Engel): Order. I rarely get to do this, so I am going to really enjoy it: I am going to raise the time limit for the last few speeches to four minutes.

6.12 pm

Tom Brake (Carshalton and Wallington) (LD): Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker—perfect timing.

I hope that I am wrong, but I believe that the decision that the country took on 23 June will result in the biggest self-inflicted wound since our disastrous intervention in Iraq. That wound is festering and it will leave the UK permanently economically weaker, even after it has healed. I believe that, when Members of Parliament believe that a course of action is going to be a catastrophe, they have a duty to harry, assail and oppose the Government, not to acquiesce.

I respect those who voted to leave. They had, and have, genuine grievances about a lack of jobs or education prospects, and concerns about the changes they see in our society, including concerns about immigration. The Brexiteers claimed that leaving the EU would address those concerns by stopping the cancellation of urgent hospital operations—paid for, presumably, by the tsunami of cash that was going to come to the NHS post-Brexit—improving teacher shortages in our schools and boosting housing supply. It will not do any of those things. In fact, it will make them worse. I doubt that even the leave campaign's most prominent pledge, to reduce immigration substantially, will be achieved. Why would it be? After all, the Prime Minister has spent many years seeking to reduce the level of non-EU immigration, and nothing changed there.

What leaving the EU will do with certainty is diminish us as a nation and reduce our influence and international standing. That has already happened. Brexit has forced our Prime Minister, a born-again hard-line Brexiteer, to line up with Trump—indeed, to walk hand in hand with him. While European leaders and Canada condemned his Muslim ban, our Prime Minister's initial response was to say, "Not my business." Worse, she immediately offered him, with indecent haste, a state visit—far quicker than any other US President—which I am sure had absolutely nothing to do with her desperation to secure a trade deal, any deal, with the protectionist Trump.

In "The Art of the Deal", Trump says:

"The worst of times often create the best opportunities to make good deals."

To translate that for Conservative Members, the worst of times for the UK create the best opportunity for a good deal for the US.

Jobs are at risk. Six months after the vote, there is still no analysis of how many jobs will be lost after we come out of the single market.

David T. C. Davies: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Tom Brake: I will not give way.

The Liberal Democrat position is very clear: the people voted for departure, not the destination. Now the Government must give them a chance to vote on the destination. If that guarantee were forthcoming tonight, I would vote with the Government.

6.16 pm

Kirsty Blackman (Aberdeen North) (SNP): I really appreciate the extra minute, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Order Paper says that we will just be voting on the Bill but, actually, we will be voting on consigning the UK to a red, white and blue Brexit. Anyone who thinks that, by reasonable argument, they can influence this Tory Government to do reasonable things is deluded. It has not happened yet, and it is not going to happen in future. Anyone who votes in favour of triggering article 50 will be consigning us to a red, white and blue Brexit and a future shaped by the Conservative party. I could not do that in good conscience, and I cannot believe that other Opposition Members could.

In 20 years' time, when my children are young adults, young people will not be able to travel easily to EU countries. They will not be able to marry people from EU countries for fear that they will not be allowed to live together in the same country. They will not be able to afford the living standards that we have now. There will be an erosion in food quality, for example, because we will have to compromise on our standards in order to have trade deals with countries like America.

We are going to lose farming in communities, such as those in Wales and Scotland, that currently rely heavily on it, that receive a huge amount of EU common agricultural policy money and that rely on the current high standards and the inability of countries to export cheap foreign produce. We are going to lose that.

In 20 years' time, when my kids are young adults, we will still be negotiating trade deals. The Government do not have the capacity and the civil service does not have the skills to negotiate in a short period of time all the trade deals that we need—trade deals take a long time. The economy will be scuppered. We will see high levels of inflation. We will see people struggling to maintain living standards.

The Resolution Foundation published a paper today saying that, in 2021, the lowest earning quarter of households will earn 5% to 15% less than today; the highest earning quarter of households will earn 4% more. This is a Tory Brexit, and that is only four years in the future. Things will be even worse in 20 years' time. Productivity will tank further. Productivity in the UK is rubbish, and there is a clear link between open markets, having links with other countries and increased productivity. My children will therefore have to work more hours than I have had to work in order to earn the same wages.

Dr Paul Monaghan (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (SNP): Does my hon. Friend agree that Brexit is an economic catastrophe waiting to happen?

Kirsty Blackman: I absolutely agree with what my colleague says. Too many Members in this House have not done their homework on this, and see the positives for the elite few but do not see the return to the '80s and to the decimation we saw during the Thatcher years. They do not see that future, but it is what is coming. That is where we are heading. The plans from the Tory

[Kirsty Blackman]

Government are for low taxes—for some sort of tax haven—but no country that is a tax haven spends as much on public services as we do; they all spend very small amounts on public services. Are the Tories suggesting that is the way we should go? What is going to happen to our NHS if that is the way we go?

The other thing about this, which the great repeal Bill will show, is that it is a Government power grab. We have been protected from the worst excesses of these right-wing Governments by the European Union. For example, it has protected our workers' rights, our equality rights and our climate change laws. Now, however, the Tory Government and the unelected Lords are going to be able to dictate to this country all of the law, and we are not even going to get the benefits they said we would. They said we would suddenly be exempt from state aid rules, but we will not. That is not what happens, as the WTO has rules on state aid, and so do any links with European trading partners.

The worst thing of all is that in 20 years' time, when my children are young adults, we will be a less tolerant and more xenophobic society, because instead of tackling the discrimination and prejudice, this House has pandered to it.

6.21 pm

Ms Tasmina Ahmed-Sheikh (Ochil and South Perthshire) (SNP): We have here a referendum that Scotland did not want, a Government that Scotland did not vote for and a result that does not reflect the wishes of the people of Scotland. This Government, whose stated policy was to keep us in the single market, are taking us towards the Brexit door at breakneck speed. Government Members have been waxing lyrical over the past couple of days about this wonderful opportunity we have had to debate this issue—since yesterday—but I remind them that they had to be taken to court to give us this opportunity, they spent an awful lot of money trying to prevent this debate from happening in the first place and they had to be forced into coming up with a White Paper. Suffice it to say, the Government are not handling Brexit very well at all.

As with the disastrous policy to pursue the ideologically driven austerity at all costs, this Government are pursuing Brexit at all costs. As many of my SNP colleagues have said, we were told during our referendum that Scotland should vote to keep Scotland in the EU. The people of Scotland have not forgotten the promises made, and the other side are going to have to come up with some answers. When David Cameron gave his first keynote speech of the campaign some two years ago, he talked of the UK having one of the most stable currencies in the world and said that that stability was “hugely attractive for investors”. He spoke about us having “real clout” in Europe. If David Cameron was right, we have gone from being a country at the centre of Europe to one at its periphery, and from demonstrating solidarity with our great allies in France, Germany and beyond, to begging for scraps from the table of President Trump. That is a distasteful downward spiral if ever there was one.

It is not simply that we are seeking to walk away from the table; many Government Members seem intent on burning our bridges on the way out. They seem to have forgotten the language they have used through this

entire debate about the EU nationals; they think those people are a drain on this country, yet they want to do deals with their Governments. For goodness' sake, what sort of negotiations are they going to enter into on that basis?

Tonight, I will therefore be joining my excellent SNP colleagues and some Labour Members in voting against this Bill. I will do so because that is what the majority of my constituents want, because Scotland was promised continued EU membership if we remained in the UK and because this Government are attempting to leave the EU in a haphazard and reckless way, without regard to the constitutional, social or economic consequences. We are not prepared to let them take Scotland over that cliff with them.

6.24 pm

Rebecca Pow (Taunton Deane) (Con): First, may I offer you my congratulations, Madam Deputy Speaker, on juggling what has been an excessively busy day in this place?

I am proud to follow so many passionate and eloquent speakers from both sides of the House, although I do not necessarily agree with them all. As my constituents from Taunton Deane, in glorious Somerset—home to that famous road, the A358, the Wellington monument and Somerset county cricket club—know, I campaigned to remain, but the majority of my constituents voted to leave, by 52% to 48%. Since then, I have been clear that I will stand by the views of the people and work to make the very best of this brave new opportunity.

Oliver Dowden (Hertsmere) (Con): Does my hon. Friend agree that it is important that we respect the June vote, as she is correctly doing?

Rebecca Pow: I thank my hon. Friend for that intervention. The point I am making is that I respect the vote. It is important that we demonstrate that we are abiding by the wishes of the people. We would be poor parliamentarians indeed if we did not stick to what we promised. To that end, I shall be supporting this historic Bill, which will set in train the triggering of article 50 and our subsequent withdrawal from the EU.

I wish to express my respect for all those who voted remain. I appreciate and acknowledge their concerns, and want to convince them that I will be doing my very best, as will other colleagues in the House, to ensure a good outcome.

Some fine words have been spoken in this debate, not least by my hon. Friend the Member for North East Somerset (Mr Rees-Mogg), who waxed lyrical about a return to the happy constitutional system that was known in this country until 1972. It is time to put our shoulders to the wheel and make this work.

I have heard with interest the Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union single out one or two specific industries—particularly the finance and motor industries—for fair treatment. I urge that the same fair treatment be given to the all-important agricultural and environment sectors. As 25% of all businesses in the UK are in the farming, food and drinks sectors, that is vital.

Victoria Atkins (Louth and Horncastle) (Con): Does my hon. Friend agree that as well as making sure that agriculture is central to our negotiations, we must acknowledge that food standards are critical too?

Rebecca Pow: A whole raft of standards are critical as we leave Europe. We should embrace and harness the standards that have already been set and, indeed, tailor and improve them for our nation to make them much more suitable for the way we want to operate.

The agriculture and food industries are especially important in the south-west, where farm-related businesses turn over £2.7 billion a year—more than any other area in the country—and agriculture employs 80,000 people. In reformulating our life after the EU, we must consider very carefully how we are going to move forward after leaving the common agricultural policy. There are opportunities to develop a better framework and to develop an agriculture industry that is inextricably linked to the environment in a sustainable way. After all, we all depend on the environment for our air, water and food. We must build that into our industrial strategy and closely link it with our 25-year food and farming plans. Indeed, we have to make it work not only for the economy but for the rural social fabric so that we have a world that works better for everybody.

I urge the Secretary of State to harness the shared environmental legislation we already have from the EU, take it on board and adapt it so that it works better for us. We must keep to our climate change commitments—I am delighted that the Prime Minister has already spoken out on that issue—and, as my hon. Friend the Member for Louth and Horncastle (Victoria Atkins) mentioned, maintain our high standards of food security and welfare, along with our nuclear standards. We must also consider how we deal with seasonal workers so that our industries can continue to move forward.

With understanding, co-operation and consideration, and by demonstrating that we are listening to people—not only in Taunton Deane but throughout the nation—I am optimistic that we can build a better future for generations to come. To that end, I shall be voting with the Government to trigger article 50.

6.29 pm

Mr John Baron (Basildon and Billericay) (Con): Ours is a representative democracy—in fact I would go so far as to say a great representative democracy. The reason why this place will, and should, support the article 50 Bill is that, before the referendum, we made a contract with the British people that this place would abide by the result. I ask all Members who are thinking of voting against Second Reading to give that due regard. It was a commitment made by the Government, and agreed to by many on the Opposition Benches.

I very much look forward to supporting article 50 tonight, and then, following negotiations of up to two years, the Prime Minister getting as good a deal as possible. If this place says that it is not a good deal, World Trade Organisation rules hold no fear for many of us on these Benches. No deal is better than a bad deal.

May I now focus on a couple of inconvenient truths? To those on the Labour Benches, I suggest that all the talk of parliamentary democracy and scrutiny is fine, but, to those who were here in 2008, I have to say that I do not remember too much scrutiny when the Government of the day passed the Lisbon treaty. It was done very quickly. In fact, the Prime Minister of the day was not even present in the debate. Therefore, for all the talk of

parliamentary scrutiny, we sacrificed large chunks of our sovereignty that day, and it is a great shame that Labour Members are now suggesting that they are the guardians of parliamentary democracy, when they were pretty thin on the ground when it came to the Lisbon treaty.

Rehman Chishti (Gillingham and Rainham) (Con): I pay tribute to all the work that my hon. Friend has done on the campaign. He talks about democracy. Some say that this electoral result was too close, but does he agree that, if Members of Parliament had won their parliamentary seats by one vote, not a single one of them would have turned the seat down? They would have come here and taken their seats. In the same way, they should accept this result because the public has now decided and we should enact this legislation.

Mr Baron: I very much agree with my hon. Friend. With a first-past-the-post system, it is very clear that one abides by the result.

Mark Pawsey: On the point about abiding by the result, will my hon. Friend, who has been a strong leaver, recognise the challenges that colleagues on the Opposition Benches face in walking through the Lobby with us today and appreciate the efforts that they have taken to honour the wishes of their constituents?

Mr Baron: Absolutely. I completely agree with my hon. Friend. This will not be an easy decision for Labour, but, at the end of the day, a contract was made and that should be respected.

May I, very gently, point a finger at Scottish National party Members? For all their talk about wishing to remain in the EU, the bottom line is that had they won their independence referendum, they would have left the EU. The EU made that very clear. What is more, there was no automatic right of re-entry, and they would have had to take on the euro in that process. For all the talk about being good Europeans, if it had been left to them, Scotland would have left the EU.

In the time that is allowed, let me point out a few more inconvenient truths. I have heard it said many times on the Opposition Benches that we will become a more intolerant country. Immigration has been raised by several speakers with regard to our leaving the EU. I suggest to them that, by leaving the EU, we will no longer discriminate against the rest of the world, which the present immigration policy does. The SNP in particular may not like it, but it is a fact that we cannot stop anybody coming in from Europe, but that we do stop the rest of the world coming into the UK, because no country in the western world has a non-existent immigration policy. For all the talk on the Opposition Benches, by leaving the EU, whatever criteria we choose to guide our immigration policy, it will be fair to the whole world, not just to a particular region. No region will be discriminated against, and that is the point. Whatever the criteria, there will be fairness. No one will be discriminated against based on where they come from.

There is a further inconvenient truth that has hardly been touched on in the debate. Hon. Members suggest that we will suddenly become an economic backwater by leaving the EU. From looking at growth rates across the western world, I can assure the House that the EU remains in the global economic slow lane, with shamefully

[Mr Baron]

high youth unemployment rates to match. There is a world out there growing much faster than the EU. We need to embrace that future.

I very much look forward to our winning the vote tonight. I ask the Prime Minister to do what she can to negotiate as good a deal as she can, but not to be afraid to fall back on World Trade Organisation rules if a bad deal is on the table. There is a very bright future ahead of us.

6.36 pm

Jenny Chapman (Darlington) (Lab): This has been an important debate, with MPs from every region and nation, from towns and cities, and from rural, coastal, industrial and agricultural communities having their say. There have been so many contributions of quality that it would be impossible to mention them all. This is how Parliament is meant to work; Members are sent here to speak for their constituents and settle, if not always agree, on a way forward.

We MPs usually listen to the arguments, take account of the impact of a decision on our constituents, apply the values of our party and our hearts, and vote accordingly. As my hon. Friend the Member for Ilford North (Wes Streeting) said in his outstanding speech, this decision is different as it follows a referendum, in which 52% voted to leave the European Union. It was a close vote, but a clear decision. As we accept the outcome of the referendum, we must consent to allow the process of leaving the European Union to begin, and we will hold this Government to account every step of the way.

Our challenge to the Government, through our amendments, is to enable this House to have proper scrutiny, to publish regular reports, to allow British MPs the same oversight as Members of the European Parliament and to secure the position of EU nationals living in this country, as a matter of urgency.

Alex Salmond: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Jenny Chapman: I will in a minute.

Most important of all, our amendments would allow this House a meaningful vote on our withdrawal agreement at the proper time.

Alex Salmond: Given the many points that have been made across the Opposition Benches on the need for the Bill to be amended, will the hon. Lady and her Front Bench friends be voting against the restrictive programme motion?

Jenny Chapman: I want this Bill to proceed. Our amendments, which we will discuss next week, are all reasonable requests. Many Government Members have spoken in support of a parliamentary vote, and I appeal to all those who have spoken in that way, and who share our desire for a constructive and open process, to consider voting in support of our amendments next week.

We are an outward-looking, internationalist, pro-European party, and that will never, ever change. Let our determination to collaborate with, to stand alongside, and to work with our European partners never be in doubt. These are British values. The vote to leave the European Union, as well as leading to a changing mood in other countries, has deepened the sense that the

values we hold most dear are under threat: tolerance, openness, co-operation, and solidarity. It is true that the rise of the far right in Europe and the rise of populism in the US have left many of us who believe in those values with an overwhelming sense that the political tide is against us—that xenophobia, fear and isolationism are drowning out our values of inclusion, hope and tolerance. It is more important than ever to stand firm beside those values. Bigotry, fanaticism and narrow-mindedness should have no place in our politics.

Very few Members of this House do not feel any trepidation whatsoever about the future. To deny the complexity—the risks to our manufacturing and service sectors, the disruption and uncertainty—that doubtless lies ahead is to hide from the truth: a truth that, if confronted honestly, can be dealt with and overcome. It is precisely because this process is so complex that we all need to contribute to resolving the issues we now confront. Pretending that these challenges do not exist is negligent.

The Labour party will not neglect its duty to challenge the Government when we think they are getting Brexit wrong. I say this to the Prime Minister: the best Brexit will never come via a cliff edge, however much some of her Back Benchers might wish it. This must be a deal worthy of the consent of this House. If she and her negotiators fail to achieve a deal worthy of our country, they will not achieve our consent. The Prime Minister must deliver the deal that she claims she can, with impediment-free trade, tariff-free trade, and a form of customs union membership allowing British businesses all the benefits they currently enjoy—a deal that delivers for British workers and British industry, and protects our safety and security.

That is a good starting point, but for the Labour party that aspiration is not enough. The Britain that the Labour party wants to build is confident of its place in the world. We want a Britain where, though outside the EU, we can protect British jobs by securing a deep trade deal with the EU. Let us remember that whatever deals we reach with other nations in the future, an agreement with our closest neighbours will always be the most important deal we do, where we protect British citizens by maintaining co-operation on justice and security, and protect British jobs by securing a good transitional deal.

The Labour party will use every means possible to bring about the best Brexit for Britain. We will fight for a future where business and industry thrive—especially, as my hon. Friends the Members for Batley and Spen (Tracy Brabin), for City of Durham (Dr Blackman-Woods), for Sedgefield (Phil Wilson) and for Wirral South (Alison McGovern) said, in our proud regions. We are the country of Brunel, Rosalind Franklin, Alan Turing, Michael Faraday, and Tim Peake. Our engineers, scientists, academics and creatives need to flourish in this workshop of the world. Labour will work to ensure that, after Brexit, our future as an ingenious, innovative, imaginative and inspiring nation grows and is never diminished.

The British people voted to take back control over their lives, and the Labour party understands the anger expressed through the vote to leave. Their reasons include low pay, lack of opportunity, insecure work, uncertain futures and a feeling of being remote from decision making in Brussels. To all who voted for those reasons, I

say: we hear you. Labour will stand up throughout the Brexit negotiations for those who may have voted to leave but who did not vote to be poorer.

We will stand up, too, for those who voted to remain: 48% of voters cannot be marginalised or ignored. Many, although they accept the outcome of the referendum, do not see a prosperous future.

Tim Farron *rose*—

Jenny Chapman: Much as the hon. Gentleman would love to rerun the political battle we have just enjoyed, the political battle now centres on the terms on which we leave and the country we aspire to become. Labour is ready to take on those who offer empty reassurance based on nothing but their own dogmatic conviction.

Brexit must work for all our communities, especially the most disadvantaged. My party will step up and make sure that the Government fulfil their duty. As a former President of the United States, Franklin D. Roosevelt, said to the Democrats:

“Ours must be a party of liberal thought, of planned action, of enlightened international outlook, and of the greatest good to the greatest number of our citizens.”

That is how we must proceed—not for the 52% or the 48%, but for 100% of the people of Britain.

6.47 pm

The Minister of State, Department for Exiting the European Union (Mr David Jones): May I start by paying tribute to all the right hon. and hon. Members who have contributed to what my hon. Friend the Member for Sleaford and North Hykeham (Dr Johnson), in her excellent maiden speech, rightly called an historic debate? Members on both sides of the House, supporters of both leave and remain, have spoken with passion and sincerity, and there have been some outstanding contributions. Several times over the past two days we have seen this House at its very best. A wide range of issues have been raised during the debate. I will seek to address them in the time available to me, but I hope that hon. Members will forgive me if I do not address every single point made by every single speaker.

Let me be clear: what we are considering is the most straightforward Bill possible. The Bill is necessary to implement the referendum result and respect the judgment of the Supreme Court; it is positively not a vehicle for determining the terms of the broader negotiations that will follow. The Bill follows one of the largest democratic exercises in this country's history. As pointed out by many hon. Members, an issue that has been central to political debate in this country for decades was finally put to the people of the United Kingdom, and the people made their decision.

We have heard repeatedly from hon. Members on both sides of this debate, on both sides of the House, that they fully respect and accept the referendum's outcome. Today is an opportunity for all of us to demonstrate that respect by supporting this small but important Bill.

Ian Blackford (Ross, Skye and Lochaber) (SNP) *rose*—

Mr Jones: Given the time I have available, I will not give way; I hope the hon. Gentleman will forgive me.

A number of themes that I would like to touch on emerged in the debate. The first is the referendum itself. Parliament voted overwhelmingly to put this historic question to the people, and we must trust the people's decision. There must be no attempt to remain inside the EU, no attempt to rejoin it through the back door and no second referendum, as a few hon. Members have urged. This country has voted to leave the European Union, and it is the duty of the Government and of this House to make sure we do precisely that.

Wes Streeting (Ilford North) (Lab): Will the Minister give way?

Mr Jones: In the time available, I cannot.

Secondly, I would like to touch on engagement with the devolved Administrations, which has figured strongly in this debate. Before and throughout the referendum campaign, it was clear that the outcome would apply to the whole United Kingdom, and that is what we are committed to delivering. We are committed to securing the best deal for the whole United Kingdom, in the interests of all its constituent nations and regions. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has made clear her determination to uphold and strengthen the Union, and we will continue to engage with the devolved Administrations through the established Joint Ministerial Committees. We understand that there are unique and diverse interests across the UK.

Ian Blackford: Will the Minister give way?

Mr Jones: I do not know why the hon. Gentleman does not understand; I am not taking his intervention.

In particular, we are wholly committed to the Belfast agreement and its successors. We will work with the Irish Government to maintain the common travel area on the island of Ireland and not return to the borders of the past. We have received, and we are grateful for, the submissions from the Scottish and Welsh Governments, which are being considered.

That said, the Supreme Court was clear in its judgment that triggering article 50 is a reserved matter for this Parliament, and that the devolved legislatures do not have a veto. But we have been clear that we will work very carefully to ensure that as powers are repatriated from Brussels back to Britain, the right powers are returned to Westminster and the right powers are passed to the devolved Administrations of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Many hon. Members raised the question of the status of EU citizens living and working in the United Kingdom. Let us be clear: this Government value and appreciate the role that they play in our economy and in our communities, and we are determined to provide as much certainty as we can, as soon as we can. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has been clear that guaranteeing UK citizens' rights in the EU, and EU citizens' rights in the UK, is one of our immediate objectives in the upcoming negotiations. Indeed, we stand ready to reach such a deal right now if the other countries of the European Union agree. To the EU citizens who are living, studying and working in the UK I say, “You will still be welcome in this country, as we trust our citizens will continue to be welcome in yours.”

Clive Efford (Eltham) (Lab): On a point of order, Mr Speaker.

Mr Speaker: I hope it is a point of order, rather than a point of frustration.

Clive Efford: What is the point in the Minister coming here, reading out a pre-written statement to the House and not listening to interventions from hon. Members who have legitimate questions to ask of the Government?

Mr Speaker: These debates will run for a long time to come, but that is not a matter for the Chair.

Mr David Jones: Moving on to the forthcoming negotiations, I want to repeat that although we are leaving the EU, we are not turning our back on Europe. We will be seeking a broad new partnership with the EU outside the single market, including a bold and ambitious free trade agreement. We will maintain strong relationships with our European partners as we work together on issues such as security, justice and migration.

Ian Blackford: Will the Minister give way on that point?

Mr Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is an excitable Zebedee. It has been made abundantly clear to him that the Minister is not giving way.

Mr David Jones: We have made clear commitments to protect workers' rights, and will ensure that they keep pace with the changing labour market. Let me be as clear as it is possible to be: all the workers' rights that are enjoyed under EU legislation will be preserved by the great repeal Bill and brought across into UK law. Let me also say that we have no plans to withdraw from the ECHR.

Let me deal with the question of Euratom. Euratom and the EU share a common institutional framework, including the European Court of Justice, a role for the Commission and decision making in the Council, making them uniquely legally joined. Triggering article 50 therefore also entails giving notice to leave Euratom. The nuclear industry is of key strategic importance to the UK, and we have been clear that this does not affect our intention to maintain close and effective arrangements relating to civil nuclear co-operation, safeguards and safety with Europe and the rest of the world.

Let me move on to the role of Parliament. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister set out our plan for the United Kingdom's withdrawal in her speech at Lancaster House, and she has confirmed that Parliament will have its say on the final deal we achieve with the European Union by putting that deal to a vote of both Houses. There has already been extensive scrutiny in both Houses, and we will publish our White Paper tomorrow, before Committee. The White Paper, however, is entirely separate from this Bill, which simply gives the Government the power to trigger the process of exit from the EU, in accordance with the instructions that we have received from the people of this country.

There has also been much debate over the past two days about the many opportunities that leaving the UK—[*Interruption*—that leaving EU affords the UK. As my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has said, we will be an outward-facing, bold and global country, seeking ambitious trade deals, forging new friendships and consolidating existing partnerships, and we will remain a tolerant and open country. The triggering of article 50 will start the process of our withdrawal from

the European Union, and during that process, the House will have plenty of opportunities to debate and play a crucial role in scrutinising the great repeal Bill and related Bills to come. My right hon. Friend has set out a detailed plan for building a new partnership between an independent United Kingdom and the European Union in the years to come.

Let me say how much I agree with the hon. Member for Darlington (Jenny Chapman): the people have made their decision, and now we must strive for an outcome that, as she said, works not just for the 52% or the 48%, but for the 100%. All of us in this House must work together in the national interest, but let me repeat that tonight we are not voting on the outcome, nor on the wider issues, but simply to start the process. It is absolutely essential that Parliament moves quickly, under the timetable that this House voted for in December, to trigger article 50 by the end of March.

In short, this is a straightforward Bill that delivers on the promise made to the people of the United Kingdom to honour the outcome of the referendum. We must trust the people, and I commend this Bill to the House.

Question put, That the amendment be made.

The House divided: Ayes 100, Noes 336.

Division No. 134]

[6.58 pm

AYES

Ahmed-Sheikh, Ms Tasmina	Ferrier, Margaret
Alexander, Heidi	Gapes, Mike
Ali, Rushanara	Gethins, Stephen
Allen, Mr Graham	Gibson, Patricia
Arkless, Richard	Grady, Patrick
Bardell, Hannah	Grant, Peter
Berger, Luciana	Gray, Neil
Black, Mhairi	Hayes, Helen
Blackford, Ian	Hendry, Drew
Blackman, Kirsty	Hermon, Lady
Boswell, Philip	Hillier, Meg
Bradshaw, rh Mr Ben	Hosie, Stewart
Brake, rh Tom	Kerevan, George
Brennan, Kevin	Kerr, Calum
Brock, Deidre	Kyle, Peter
Brown, Alan	Lammy, rh Mr David
Brown, Lyn	Law, Chris
Bryant, Chris	Lucas, Caroline
Cameron, Dr Lisa	MacNeil, Mr Angus Brendan
Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair	Maskell, Rachael
Chapman, Douglas	Mc Nally, John
Cherry, Joanna	McDonald, Stewart Malcolm
Clarke, rh Mr Kenneth	McDonald, Stuart C.
Clegg, rh Mr Nick	McDonnell, Dr Alasdair
Clwyd, rh Ann	McGarry, Natalie
Coffey, Ann	McKinnell, Catherine
Cowan, Ronnie	McLaughlin, Anne
Coyle, Neil	Monaghan, Carol
Crawley, Angela	Monaghan, Dr Paul
Creagh, Mary	Moon, Mrs Madeleine
Creasy, Stella	Mullin, Roger
Day, Martyn	Murray, Ian
Docherty-Hughes, Martin	Newlands, Gavin
Donaldson, Stuart Blair	Nicolson, John
Doughty, Stephen	O'Hara, Brendan
Dowd, Jim	Olney, Sarah
Durkan, Mark	Oswald, Kirsten
Eagle, Maria	Paterson, Steven
Ellman, Mrs Louise	Pound, Stephen
Farrelly, Paul	Pugh, John
Farron, Tim	Ritchie, Ms Margaret

Robertson, rh Angus
Salmond, rh Alex
Saville Roberts, Liz
Sheppard, Tommy
Smith, Jeff
Smith, Owen
Stephens, Chris
Stevens, Jo
Thewliss, Alison
Thomson, Michelle
Timms, rh Stephen

Weir, Mike
Whiteford, Dr Eilidh
Whitford, Dr Philippa
Williams, Hywel
Williams, Mr Mark
Wishart, Pete
Zeichner, Daniel

Tellers for the Ayes:
Marion Fellows and
Owen Thompson

NOES

Adams, Nigel
Afriyie, Adam
Aldous, Peter
Allan, Lucy
Allen, Heidi
Amess, Sir David
Andrew, Stuart
Ansell, Caroline
Argar, Edward
Atkins, Victoria
Austin, Ian
Bacon, Mr Richard
Baker, Mr Steve
Baldwin, Harriett
Barclay, Stephen
Baron, Mr John
Barwell, Gavin
Bebb, Guto
Bellingham, Sir Henry
Benyon, Richard
Beresford, Sir Paul
Berry, James
Bingham, Andrew
Blackman, Bob
Blackwood, Nicola
Blunt, Crispin
Bone, Mr Peter
Borwick, Victoria
Bottomley, Sir Peter
Bradley, rh Karen
Brady, Mr Graham
Brazier, Sir 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, rh Alun
Campbell, Mr Gregory
Campbell, Mr Ronnie
Carmichael, Neil
Carswell, Mr Douglas
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
Courts, Robert
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
Davis, rh Mr David
Dinenage, Caroline
Djanogly, Mr Jonathan
Dodds, rh Mr Nigel
Donaldson, rh Sir Jeffrey M.
Donelan, Michelle
Dorries, Nadine
Double, Steve
Dowden, Oliver
Drax, Richard
Drummond, Mrs Flick
Duddridge, James
Duncan, rh Sir Alan
Duncan Smith, rh Mr Iain
Dunne, Mr Philip
Elliott, Tom
Ellis, Michael
Ellison, Jane
Ellwood, Mr Tobias
Elphicke, Charlie
Eustice, George
Evans, Graham
Evans, Mr Nigel
Evennett, rh David
Fabricant, Michael
Fallon, rh Sir Michael
Fernandes, Suella
Field, rh Frank
Field, rh Mark
Foster, Kevin
Fox, rh Dr Liam
Francois, rh Mr Mark
Frazer, Lucy
Freeman, George
Freer, Mike
Fuller, Richard
Fysh, Marcus
Garnier, rh Sir Edward
Garnier, Mark
Gauke, rh Mr David
Ghani, Nusrat
Gibb, rh Mr Nick
Gillan, rh Mrs Cheryl
Glen, John
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, rh Ben
Gyimah, Mr Sam
Halfon, rh Robert
Hall, Luke
Hammond, rh Mr Philip
Hammond, Stephen
Hancock, rh Matt
Hands, rh Greg
Harper, rh Mr Mark
Harrington, Richard
Harris, Rebecca
Hart, Simon
Hayes, rh Mr John
Heald, rh Sir Oliver
Heappey, James
Heaton-Harris, Chris
Heaton-Jones, Peter
Henderson, Gordon
Herbert, rh Nick
Hinds, Damian
Hoare, Simon
Hoey, Kate
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, rh Boris
Johnson, Dr Caroline
Johnson, Gareth
Johnson, Joseph
Jones, Andrew
Jones, rh Mr David
Jones, Mr Marcus
Kawczynski, Daniel
Kennedy, Seema
Kinahan, Danny
Kirby, Simon
Knight, rh Sir Greg
Knight, Julian
Kwarteng, Kwasi
Lancaster, Mark
Latham, Pauline
Leadsom, rh Andrea
Lee, Dr Phillip
Lefroy, Jeremy
Leigh, Sir Edward
Leslie, Charlotte
Letwin, rh Sir Oliver

Lewis, rh Brandon
Lewis, rh Dr Julian
Liddell-Grainger, Mr Ian
Lidington, rh Mr David
Lilley, rh Mr Peter
Lopresti, Jack
Lord, Jonathan
Loughton, Tim
Mackinlay, Craig
Mackintosh, David
Main, Mrs Anne
Mak, Mr Alan
Malthouse, Kit
Mann, Scott
Marris, Rob
Mathias, Dr Tania
May, rh Mrs Theresa
Maynard, Paul
McCartney, Jason
McCartney, Karl
McLoughlin, rh Sir Patrick
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
Norman, Jesse
Nuttall, Mr David
Offord, Dr Matthew
Opperman, Guy
Osborne, rh Mr George
Paisley, Ian
Parish, Neil
Patel, rh Priti
Paterson, rh Mr Owen
Pawsey, Mark
Penning, rh Mike
Penrose, John
Percy, Andrew
Perry, Claire
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, Gavin
Robinson, Mary
Rosindell, Andrew
Rudd, rh Amber
Rutley, David
Sandbach, Antoinette
Scully, Paul
Selous, Andrew
Shannon, Jim
Shapps, rh Grant
Sharma, Alok
Shelbrooke, Alec
Simpson, David
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 Dame Caroline
Spencer, Mark
Stephenson, Andrew
Stevenson, John
Stewart, Bob
Stewart, Iain
Stewart, Rory
Streeter, Mr Gary
Stride, Mel
Stringer, Graham
Stuart, Graham
Sturdy, Julian
Sunak, Rishi
Swayne, rh Sir Desmond
Swire, rh Sir Hugo
Syms, Mr Robert
Thomas, Derek

Throup, Maggie
Timpson, Edward
Tolhurst, Kelly
Tomlinson, Justin
Tomlinson, Michael
Tracey, Craig
Tredinnick, David
Trevelyan, Mrs Anne-Marie
Truss, rh Elizabeth
Tugendhat, Tom
Turner, Mr Andrew
Tyrie, rh Mr Andrew
Vaizey, rh Mr Edward
Vara, Mr Shailesh
Vickers, Martin
Villiers, rh Mrs Theresa
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
Wilson, Mr Rob
Wilson, Sammy
Wollaston, Dr Sarah
Wragg, William
Wright, rh Jeremy
Zahawi, Nadhim

Tellers for the Noes:
Gavin Williamson and
Jackie Doyle-Price

Brine, Steve
Brokenshire, rh James
Brown, rh Mr Nicholas
Bruce, Fiona
Buckland, Robert
Burden, Richard
Burgon, Richard
Burnham, rh Andy
Burns, Conor
Burns, rh Sir Simon
Burrowes, Mr David
Burt, rh Alistair
Byrne, rh Liam
Cairns, rh Alun
Campbell, rh Mr Alan
Campbell, Mr Gregory
Campbell, Mr Ronnie
Carmichael, Neil
Carswell, Mr Douglas
Cartlidge, James
Cash, Sir William
Caulfield, Maria
Chalk, Alex
Champion, Sarah
Chapman, Jenny
Chishti, Rehman
Chope, Mr Christopher
Churchill, Jo
Clark, rh Greg
Cleverly, James
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coaker, Vernon
Coffey, Dr Thérèse
Collins, Damian
Colvile, Oliver
Cooper, Julie
Cooper, Rosie
Cooper, rh Yvette
Corbyn, rh Jeremy
Costa, Alberto
Courts, Robert
Cox, Mr Geoffrey
Crabb, rh Stephen
Crausby, Sir David
Crouch, Tracey
Cruddas, Jon
Cryer, John
Cummins, Judith
Cunningham, Alex
Cunningham, Mr Jim
Dakin, Nic
Danczuk, Simon
David, Wayne
Davies, Byron
Davies, Chris
Davies, David T. C.
Davies, Glyn
Davies, Dr James
Davies, Mims
Davies, Philip
Davis, rh Mr David
De Piero, Gloria
Dinenage, Caroline
Djanogly, Mr Jonathan
Dodds, rh Mr Nigel
Donaldson, rh Sir Jeffrey M.
Donelan, Michelle
Dorries, Nadine
Double, Steve
Dowd, Peter
Dowden, Oliver
Drax, Richard

Dromey, Jack
Drummond, Mrs Flick
Duddridge, James
Dugher, Michael
Duncan, rh Sir Alan
Duncan Smith, rh Mr Iain
Dunne, Mr Philip
Eagle, Ms Angela
Efford, Clive
Elliott, Julie
Elliott, Tom
Ellis, Michael
Ellison, Jane
Ellwood, Mr Tobias
Elmore, Chris
Elphicke, Charlie
Esterson, Bill
Eustice, George
Evans, Chris
Evans, Graham
Evans, Mr Nigel
Evennett, rh David
Fabricant, Michael
Fallon, rh Sir Michael
Fernandes, Suella
Field, rh Frank
Field, rh Mark
Fitzpatrick, Jim
Flelo, Robert
Fletcher, Colleen
Flint, rh Caroline
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Kevin
Fovargue, Yvonne
Fox, rh Dr Liam
Francois, rh Mr Mark
Frazer, Lucy
Freeman, George
Freer, Mike
Fuller, Richard
Furniss, Gill
Fysh, Marcus
Gardiner, Barry
Garnier, rh Sir Edward
Garnier, Mark
Gauke, rh Mr David
Ghani, Nusrat
Gibb, rh Mr Nick
Gillan, rh Mrs Cheryl
Glen, John
Glindon, Mary
Goodman, Helen
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
Greenwood, Margaret
Grieve, rh Mr Dominic
Griffith, Nia
Griffiths, Andrew
Gummer, rh Ben
Gwynne, Andrew
Gyimah, Mr Sam
Haigh, Louise
Halfon, rh Robert
Hall, Luke
Hamilton, Fabian

Question accordingly negated.

Question put forthwith (Standing Order No. 62(2)).
That the Bill be now read a Second time.

The House divided: Ayes 498, Noes 114.

Division No. 135]

[7.12 pm

AYES

Abrahams, Debbie
Adams, Nigel
Afriyie, Adam
Aldous, Peter
Allan, Lucy
Allen, Heidi
Amess, Sir David
Anderson, Mr David
Andrew, Stuart
Ansell, Caroline
Argar, Edward
Ashworth, Jonathan
Atkins, Victoria
Austin, Ian
Bacon, Mr Richard
Bailey, Mr Adrian
Baker, Mr Steve
Baldwin, Harriett
Barclay, Stephen
Baron, Mr John
Barron, rh Sir Kevin
Barwell, Gavin

Bebb, Guto
Beckett, rh Margaret
Bellingham, Sir Henry
Benn, rh Hilary
Benyon, Richard
Beresford, Sir Paul
Berry, James
Betts, Mr Clive
Bingham, Andrew
Blackman, Bob
Blackwood, Nicola
Blenkinsop, Tom
Blomfield, Paul
Blunt, Crispin
Bone, Mr Peter
Borwick, Victoria
Bottomley, Sir Peter
Brabin, Tracy
Bradley, rh Karen
Brady, Mr Graham
Brazier, Sir Julian
Bridgen, Andrew

Hammond, rh Mr Philip
 Hammond, Stephen
 Hancock, rh Matt
 Hands, rh Greg
 Hanson, rh Mr David
 Harman, rh Ms Harriet
 Harper, rh Mr Mark
 Harrington, Richard
 Harris, Carolyn
 Harris, Rebecca
 Hart, Simon
 Hayes, rh Mr John
 Hayman, Sue
 Heald, rh Sir Oliver
 Healey, rh John
 Heappey, James
 Heaton-Harris, Chris
 Heaton-Jones, Peter
 Henderson, Gordon
 Hendrick, Mr Mark
 Hepburn, Mr Stephen
 Herbert, rh Nick
 Hinds, Damian
 Hoare, Simon
 Hodgson, Mrs Sharon
 Hoey, Kate
 Hollern, Kate
 Hollingbery, George
 Hollinrake, Kevin
 Hollobone, Mr Philip
 Holloway, Mr Adam
 Hopkins, Kelvin
 Hopkins, Kris
 Howarth, Sir Gerald
 Howell, John
 Howlett, Ben
 Huddleston, Nigel
 Hunt, rh Mr Jeremy
 Hurd, Mr Nick
 Hussain, Imran
 Jackson, Mr Stewart
 James, Margot
 Jarvis, Dan
 Javid, rh Sajid
 Jayawardena, Mr Ranil
 Jenkin, Mr Bernard
 Jenkins, Andrea
 Jenrick, Robert
 Johnson, rh Alan
 Johnson, rh Boris
 Johnson, Dr Caroline
 Johnson, Diana
 Johnson, Gareth
 Johnson, Joseph
 Jones, Andrew
 Jones, rh Mr David
 Jones, Gerald
 Jones, Graham
 Jones, Helen
 Jones, Mr Kevan
 Jones, Mr Marcus
 Jones, Susan Elan
 Kane, Mike
 Kawczynski, Daniel
 Keeley, Barbara
 Kendall, Liz
 Kennedy, Seema
 Kinahan, Danny
 Kinnock, Stephen
 Kirby, Simon
 Knight, rh Sir Greg
 Knight, Julian

Kwarteng, Kwasi
 Lancaster, Mark
 Latham, Pauline
 Lavery, Ian
 Leadsom, rh Andrea
 Lee, Dr Phillip
 Lefroy, Jeremy
 Leigh, Sir Edward
 Leslie, Charlotte
 Letwin, rh Sir Oliver
 Lewell-Buck, Mrs Emma
 Lewis, rh Brandon
 Lewis, Clive
 Lewis, Mr Ivan
 Lewis, rh Dr Julian
 Liddell-Grainger, Mr Ian
 Lidington, rh Mr David
 Lilley, rh Mr Peter
 Long Bailey, Rebecca
 Lopresti, Jack
 Lord, Jonathan
 Loughton, Tim
 Lucas, Ian C.
 Lynch, Holly
 Mackinlay, Craig
 Mackintosh, David
 Mactaggart, rh Fiona
 Madders, Justin
 Mahmood, Mr Khalid
 Mahmood, Shabana
 Main, Mrs Anne
 Mak, Mr Alan
 Malhotra, Seema
 Malthouse, Kit
 Mann, John
 Mann, Scott
 Marris, Rob
 Marsden, Gordon
 Matheson, Christian
 Mathias, Dr Tania
 May, rh Mrs Theresa
 Maynard, Paul
 McCabe, Steve
 McCartney, Jason
 McCartney, Karl
 McDonagh, Siobhain
 McDonald, Andy
 McDonnell, rh John
 McFadden, rh Mr Pat
 McGinn, Conor
 McGovern, Alison
 McInnes, Liz
 McLoughlin, rh Sir Patrick
 McMahon, Jim
 McPartland, Stephen
 Meale, Sir Alan
 Menzies, Mark
 Mercer, Johnny
 Merriman, Huw
 Metcalfe, Stephen
 Miliband, rh Edward
 Miller, rh Mrs Maria
 Milling, Amanda
 Mills, Nigel
 Milton, rh Anne
 Mitchell, rh Mr Andrew
 Mordaunt, Penny
 Morden, Jessica
 Morgan, rh Nicky
 Morris, Anne Marie
 Morris, David
 Morris, Grahame M.

Morris, James
 Morton, Wendy
 Mowat, David
 Mundell, rh David
 Murray, Mrs Sheryll
 Murrison, Dr Andrew
 Nandy, Lisa
 Neill, Robert
 Newton, Sarah
 Nokes, Caroline
 Norman, Jesse
 Nuttall, Mr David
 Offord, Dr Matthew
 Onn, Melanie
 Onwurah, Chi
 Opperman, Guy
 Osamor, Kate
 Osborne, rh Mr George
 Owen, Albert
 Paisley, Ian
 Parish, Neil
 Patel, rh Priti
 Paterson, rh Mr Owen
 Pawsey, Mark
 Pearce, Teresa
 Penning, rh Mike
 Pennycook, Matthew
 Penrose, John
 Percy, Andrew
 Perkins, Toby
 Perry, Claire
 Phillips, Jess
 Phillipson, Bridget
 Philp, Chris
 Pickles, rh Sir Eric
 Pincher, Christopher
 Poulter, Dr Daniel
 Pow, Rebecca
 Powell, Lucy
 Prentis, Victoria
 Prisk, Mr Mark
 Pritchard, Mark
 Pursglove, Tom
 Quin, Jeremy
 Quince, Will
 Qureshi, Yasmin
 Raab, Mr Dominic
 Rayner, Angela
 Redwood, rh John
 Reed, Mr Steve
 Rees, Christina
 Rees-Mogg, Mr Jacob
 Reeves, Rachel
 Reynolds, Emma
 Reynolds, Jonathan
 Rimmer, Marie
 Robertson, Mr Laurence
 Robinson, Gavin
 Robinson, Mr Geoffrey
 Robinson, Mary
 Rosindell, Andrew
 Rotheram, Steve
 Rudd, rh Amber
 Rutley, David
 Ryan, rh Joan
 Sandbach, Antoinette
 Scully, Paul
 Selous, Andrew
 Shah, Naz
 Shannon, Jim
 Shapps, rh Grant
 Sharma, Alok

Sheerman, Mr Barry
 Shelbrooke, Alec
 Sherriff, Paula
 Simpson, David
 Simpson, rh Mr Keith
 Skidmore, Chris
 Skinner, Mr Dennis
 Smeeth, Ruth
 Smith, rh Mr Andrew
 Smith, Cat
 Smith, Chloe
 Smith, Henry
 Smith, Julian
 Smith, Nick
 Smith, Royston
 Smyth, Karin
 Soames, rh Sir Nicholas
 Solloway, Amanda
 Soubry, rh Anna
 Spellar, rh Mr John
 Spelman, rh Dame Caroline
 Spencer, Mark
 Starmer, Keir
 Stephenson, Andrew
 Stevenson, John
 Stewart, Bob
 Stewart, Iain
 Stewart, Rory
 Streeter, Mr Gary
 Streeting, Wes
 Stride, Mel
 Stringer, Graham
 Stuart, rh Ms Gisela
 Stuart, Graham
 Sturdy, Julian
 Sunak, Rishi
 Swayne, rh Sir Desmond
 Swire, rh Sir Hugo
 Syms, Mr Robert
 Tami, Mark
 Thomas, Derek
 Thomas, Mr Gareth
 Thomas-Symonds, Nick
 Thornberry, Emily
 Throup, Maggie
 Timpson, Edward
 Tolhurst, Kelly
 Tomlinson, Justin
 Tomlinson, Michael
 Tracey, Craig
 Tredinnick, David
 Trevelyan, Mrs Anne-Marie
 Trickett, Jon
 Truss, rh Elizabeth
 Tugendhat, Tom
 Turley, Anna
 Turner, Mr Andrew
 Turner, Karl
 Twigg, Derek
 Twigg, Stephen
 Tyrie, rh Mr Andrew
 Umunna, Mr Chuka
 Vaizey, rh Mr Edward
 Vara, Mr Shailesh
 Vaz, rh Keith
 Vaz, Valerie
 Vickers, Martin
 Villiers, rh Mrs Theresa
 Walker, Mr Charles
 Walker, Mr Robin
 Wallace, Mr Ben
 Warburton, David

Warman, Matt
Watkinson, Dame Angela
Watson, Mr Tom
Wharton, James
Whately, Helen
Wheeler, Heather
White, Chris
Whittaker, Craig
Whittingdale, rh Mr John
Wiggin, Bill
Williams, Craig
Wilson, Phil
Wilson, Mr Rob

Wilson, Sammy
Winnick, Mr David
Winterton, rh Dame Rosie
Wollaston, Dr Sarah
Woodcock, John
Wragg, William
Wright, Mr Iain
Wright, rh Jeremy
Zahawi, Nadhim

Tellers for the Ayes:
Gavin Williamson and
Jackie Doyle-Price

Wishart, Pete
Zeichner, Daniel

**Marion Fellows and
Owen Thompson**

Tellers for the Noes:

Question accordingly agreed to.

Bill read a Second time.

EUROPEAN UNION (NOTIFICATION OF WITHDRAWAL) BILL (PROGRAMME)

*Motion made, and Question put forthwith (Standing
Order No. 83A(7)),*

That the following provisions shall apply to the European
Union (Notification of Withdrawal) Bill:

Committal

(1) The Bill shall be committed to a Committee of the whole
House.

Proceedings in Committee and up to and including Third Reading

(2) Proceedings in Committee, any proceedings on Consideration,
any proceedings in legislative grand committee and proceedings
on Third Reading shall be taken in three days.

(3) The proceedings shall be taken on each of those days as
shown in the first column of the following Table and in the order
so shown.

(4) The proceedings shall (so far as not previously concluded)
be brought to a conclusion at the times specified in the second
column of the Table.

Table

<i>Proceedings</i>	<i>Time for conclusion of proceedings</i>
First day	
New Clauses and new Schedules Relating to parliamentary scrutiny of the process for the United Kingdom's withdrawal from the European Union	Four hours from the commencement of proceedings on the Bill on the first day
New Clauses and new Schedules relating to devolved administrations or legislatures	Seven hours from the commencement of proceedings on the Bill on the first day
Second day	
New Clauses and new Schedules relating to a vote on the final terms of the United Kingdom's withdrawal from the European Union	Four hours from the commencement of proceedings on the Bill on the third day
New Clauses and new Schedules relating to impact assessments	Seven hours from the commencement of proceedings on the Bill on the second day
Third day	
New Clauses and new Schedules relating to the priorities in negotiations for the United Kingdom's withdrawal from the European Union; clauses 1 and 2; remaining new Clauses; remaining new Schedules; remaining proceedings in Committee; any proceedings on Consideration; any proceedings in legislative grand committee	Five hours from the commencement of proceedings on the Bill on the third day
Proceedings on Third Reading	Seven hours from the commencement of proceedings on the Bill on the third day

NOES

Ahmed-Sheikh, Ms Tasmina
Alexander, Heidi
Ali, Rushanara
Allen, Mr Graham
Allin-Khan, Dr Rosena
Arkless, Richard
Bardell, Hannah
Berger, Luciana
Black, Mhairi
Blackford, Ian
Blackman, Kirsty
Boswell, Philip
Bradshaw, rh Mr Ben
Brake, rh Tom
Brennan, Kevin
Brock, Deidre
Brown, Alan
Brown, Lyn
Bryant, Chris
Buck, Ms Karen
Butler, Dawn
Cadbury, Ruth
Cameron, Dr Lisa
Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair
Chapman, Douglas
Cherry, Joanna
Clarke, rh Mr Kenneth
Clegg, rh Mr Nick
Clwyd, rh Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cowan, Ronnie
Coyle, Neil
Crawley, Angela
Creagh, Mary
Creasy, Stella
Day, Martyn
Debbonaire, Thangam
Docherty-Hughes, Martin
Donaldson, Stuart Blair
Doughty, Stephen
Dowd, Jim
Durkan, Mark
Eagle, Maria
Ellman, Mrs Louise
Farrelly, Paul
Farron, Tim
Ferrier, Margaret
Foxcroft, Vicky
Gapes, Mike
Gethins, Stephen
Gibson, Patricia
Grady, Patrick
Grant, Peter
Gray, Neil
Greenwood, Lilian
Hayes, Helen

Hendry, Drew
Hermon, Lady
Hillier, Meg
Hosie, Stewart
Huq, Dr Rupa
Kerevan, George
Kerr, Calum
Kyle, Peter
Lammy, rh Mr David
Law, Chris
Lucas, Caroline
MacNeil, Mr Angus Brendan
Maskell, Rachael
Mc Nally, John
McCarthy, Kerry
McDonald, Stewart Malcolm
McDonald, Stuart C.
McDonnell, Dr Alasdair
McGarry, Natalie
McKinnell, Catherine
McLaughlin, Anne
Monaghan, Carol
Monaghan, Dr Paul
Moon, Mrs Madeleine
Mullin, Roger
Murray, Ian
Newlands, Gavin
Nicolson, John
O'Hara, Brendan
Olney, Sarah
Oswald, Kirsten
Paterson, Steven
Pound, Stephen
Pugh, John
Ritchie, Ms Margaret
Robertson, rh Angus
Salmond, rh Alex
Saville Roberts, Liz
Sharma, Mr Virendra
Sheppard, Tommy
Siddiq, Tulip
Slaughter, Andy
Smith, Jeff
Smith, Owen
Stephens, Chris
Stevens, Jo
Thewliss, Alison
Thomson, Michelle
Timms, rh Stephen
Weir, Mike
West, Catherine
Whiteford, Dr Eilidh
Whitehead, Dr Alan
Whitford, Dr Philippa
Williams, Hywel
Williams, Mr Mark

Programming committee

(5) Standing Order No. 83B (Programming committees) shall not apply to proceedings in Committee of the whole House, to any proceedings on Consideration or to other proceedings up to and including Third Reading.

Other proceedings

(6) Any other proceedings on the Bill (including any proceedings on consideration of Lords Amendments or on any further messages from the Lords) may be programmed.—
(*Heather Wheeler.*)

The House divided: Ayes 329, Noes 112.

Division No. 136]**[7.32 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
Barclay, Stephen
Baron, Mr John
Barwell, Gavin
Bebb, Guto
Bellingham, Sir Henry
Benyon, Richard
Beresford, Sir Paul
Berry, Jake
Berry, James
Bingham, Andrew
Blackman, Bob
Blackwood, Nicola
Blunt, Crispin
Bone, Mr Peter
Borwick, Victoria
Bottomley, Sir Peter
Bradley, rh Karen
Brady, Mr Graham
Brazier, Sir 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, rh Alun
Campbell, Mr Gregory
Carmichael, Neil
Carswell, Mr Douglas
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
Courts, Robert
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
Davis, rh Mr David
Dinenage, Caroline
Djanogly, Mr Jonathan
Dodds, rh Mr Nigel
Donaldson, rh Sir Jeffrey
M.
Donelan, Michelle
Double, Steve
Dowden, Oliver
Drax, Richard
Drummond, Mrs Flick
Duddridge, James
Duncan, rh Sir Alan
Duncan Smith, rh Mr Iain
Dunne, Mr Philip
Elliott, Tom
Ellis, Michael
Ellison, Jane
Ellwood, Mr Tobias
Elphicke, Charlie
Eustice, George
Evans, Graham
Evans, Mr Nigel
Evennett, rh David
Fabricant, Michael
Fallon, rh Sir Michael
Fernandes, Suella
Field, rh Mark
Foster, Kevin
Fox, rh Dr Liam
Francois, rh Mr Mark
Frazer, Lucy
Freeman, George
Freer, Mike
Fuller, Richard
Fysh, Marcus
Garnier, rh Sir Edward
Garnier, Mark
Gauke, rh Mr David
Ghani, Nusrat

Gibb, rh Mr Nick
Gillan, rh Mrs Cheryl
Glen, John
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, rh Ben
Gyimah, Mr Sam
Halfon, rh Robert
Hall, Luke
Hammond, rh Mr Philip
Hammond, Stephen
Hancock, rh Matt
Hands, rh Greg
Harper, rh Mr Mark
Harrington, Richard
Harris, Rebecca
Hart, Simon
Hayes, rh Mr John
Heald, rh 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, rh Boris
Johnson, Dr Caroline
Johnson, Gareth
Johnson, Joseph
Jones, Andrew
Jones, rh Mr David
Jones, Mr Marcus
Kawczynski, Daniel
Kennedy, Seema
Kinahan, Danny
Kirby, Simon
Knight, rh Sir Greg
Knight, Julian
Kwarteng, Kwasi
Lancaster, Mark
Latham, Pauline
Leadsom, rh Andrea
Lee, Dr Phillip
Lefroy, Jeremy

Leigh, Sir Edward
Leslie, Charlotte
Letwin, rh Sir Oliver
Lewis, rh Brandon
Lewis, rh Dr Julian
Liddell-Grainger, Mr
Ian
Lidington, rh Mr David
Lilley, rh Mr Peter
Lopresti, Jack
Lord, Jonathan
Loughton, Tim
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
McLoughlin, rh Sir Patrick
McPartland, Stephen
Menzies, Mark
Mercer, Johnny
Merriman, Huw
Metcalfe, Stephen
Miller, rh Mrs Maria
Milling, Amanda
Mills, Nigel
Milton, rh Anne
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
Norman, Jesse
Nuttall, Mr David
Offord, Dr Matthew
Opperman, Guy
Osborne, rh Mr George
Paisley, Ian
Parish, Neil
Patel, rh Priti
Paterson, rh Mr Owen
Pawsey, Mark
Penning, rh Mike
Penrose, John
Percy, Andrew
Perry, Claire
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, Gavin
Robinson, Mary
Rosindell, Andrew
Rudd, rh Amber
Rutley, David
Sandbach, Antoinette
Scully, Paul
Selous, Andrew
Shannon, Jim
Shapps, rh Grant
Sharma, Alok
Shelbrooke, Alec
Simpson, David
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 Dame Caroline
Spencer, Mark
Stephenson, Andrew
Stevenson, John
Stewart, Bob
Stewart, Iain
Stewart, Rory
Streeter, Mr Gary
Stride, Mel
Stuart, Graham
Sturdy, Julian
Sunak, Rishi
Swayne, rh Sir Desmond
Swire, rh Sir Hugo
Syms, Mr Robert
Thomas, Derek

Throup, Maggie
Timpson, Edward
Tolhurst, Kelly
Tomlinson, Justin
Tomlinson, Michael
Tracey, Craig
Tredinnick, David
Trevelyan, Mrs Anne-Marie
Truss, rh Elizabeth
Tugendhat, Tom
Turner, Mr Andrew
Tyrie, rh Mr Andrew
Vaizey, rh Mr Edward
Vara, Mr Shailesh
Vickers, Martin
Villiers, rh Mrs Theresa
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
Wilson, Mr Rob
Wilson, Sammy
Wollaston, Dr Sarah
Wragg, William
Wright, rh Jeremy
Zahawi, Nadhim

Tellers for the Ayes:
Gavin Williamson and
Jackie Doyle-Price

NOES

Ahmed-Sheikh, Ms Tasmina
Alexander, Heidi
Ali, Rushanara
Allen, Mr Graham
Arkless, Richard
Bardell, Hannah
Berger, Luciana
Black, Mhairi
Blackford, Iain
Blackman, Kirsty
Boswell, Philip
Bradshaw, rh Mr Ben
Brake, rh Tom
Brock, Deidre
Brown, Alan
Brown, Lyn
Bryant, Chris
Cameron, Dr Lisa
Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair
Chapman, Douglas
Cherry, Joanna
Clarke, rh Mr Kenneth
Clegg, rh Mr Nick
Coffey, Ann
Cowan, Ronnie
Coyle, Neil
Crawley, Angela
Creagh, Mary
Creasy, Stella
Day, Martyn
Docherty-Hughes, Martin
Donaldson, Stuart Blair
Doughty, Stephen
Dowd, Jim
Durkan, Mark
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eagle, Maria
Ellman, Mrs Louise
Farrelly, Paul
Farron, Tim
Ferrier, Margaret
Gapes, Mike
Gethins, Stephen
Gibson, Patricia
Grady, Patrick
Grant, Peter
Gray, Neil
Green, Kate
Hayes, Helen
Hendry, Drew
Hermon, Lady
Hillier, Meg
Hosie, Stewart
Kendall, Liz
Kerevan, George
Kerr, Calum

Kyle, Peter
Lamb, rh Norman
Lammy, rh Mr David
Law, Chris
Leslie, Chris
Lucas, Caroline
MacNeil, Mr Angus Brendan
Mactaggart, rh Fiona
Malhotra, Seema
Marris, Rob
Maskell, Rachael
Mc Nally, John
McCabe, Steve
McCarthy, Kerry
McDonald, Stewart Malcolm
McDonald, Stuart C.
McDonnell, Dr Alasdair
McFadden, rh Mr Pat
McGarry, Natalie
McLaughlin, Anne
Monaghan, Carol
Monaghan, Dr Paul
Moon, Mrs Madeleine
Mullin, Roger
Murray, Ian
Newlands, Gavin
Nicolson, John
O'Hara, Brendan
Olney, Sarah
Oswald, Kirsten

Paterson, Steven
Pound, Stephen
Pugh, John
Ritchie, Ms Margaret
Robertson, rh Angus
Salmond, rh Alex
Saville Roberts, Liz
Sharma, Mr Virendra
Sheerman, Mr Barry
Sheppard, Tommy
Siddiq, Tulip
Smith, Owen
Stephens, Chris
Stevens, Jo
Thewliss, Alison
Thomson, Michelle
Timms, rh Stephen
Umunna, Mr Chuka
Vaz, rh Keith
Weir, Mike
Whiteford, Dr Eilidh
Whitford, Dr Philippa
Williams, Hywel
Williams, Mr Mark
Wishart, Pete
Zeichner, Daniel

Tellers for the Noes:
Marion Fellows and
Owen Thompson

Question accordingly agreed to.

Business without Debate

DELEGATED LEGISLATION

Motion made, and Question put forthwith (Standing Order No. 118(6)),

TRADE UNIONS

That the draft Important Public Services (Education) Regulations 2017, which were laid before this House on 5 December 2016, be approved.—(*Heather Wheeler.*)

The Speaker's opinion as to the decision of the Question being challenged, the Division was deferred until Wednesday 8 February (Standing Order No. 41A).

Motion made, and Question put forthwith (Standing Order No. 118(6)),

TRADE UNIONS

That the draft Important Public Services (Transport) Regulations 2017, which were laid before this House on 5 December 2016, be approved.—(*Heather Wheeler.*)

The Speaker's opinion as to the decision of the Question being challenged, the Division was deferred until Wednesday 8 February (Standing Order No. 41A).

Motion made, and Question put forthwith (Standing Order No. 118(6))

CONSTITUTIONAL LAW

That the draft Scottish Fiscal Commission Act 2016 (Consequential Provisions and Modifications) Order 2017, which was laid before this House on 19 December 2016, be approved.—(*Heather Wheeler.*)

Question agreed to.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith (Standing Order No. 118(6)).

IMMIGRATION

That the draft Immigration (Health Charge) (Amendment) Order 2017, which was laid before this House on 20 December 2016, be approved.—(*Heather Wheeler.*)

Question agreed to.

Sir Gerald Howarth (Aldershot) (Con): On a point of order, Mr Speaker. Before the House disperses, may I, on behalf of those of us who took part in the debate, thank you very much for having sat in the Chair for most of the day, both yesterday and today, with very little by way of refreshment, as far as I could see? For conducting these proceedings, which have obviously been quite historic, with a huge number of Members wanting to be called, we thank you very much.

Mr Speaker: I am extremely grateful. The hon. Gentleman is a gentleman, and I am just doing my duty, but I am very grateful for what he has so kindly said.

PETITION

English Language and English Literature GCSE-Level Examinations

7.47 pm

Phil Wilson (Sedgefield) (Lab): This petition is being lodged, and was organised by, year 11 pupils at Greenfield Community College. I would like to put on record the names of Aidan Wong, Melissa Foster and Christina Davies.

The petition states:

The petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urges the Government to provide a level playing field in the rules applied to English Language and English Literature GCSE-level examinations in state-funded schools and independent schools, including provision for coursework and opportunities for sitting examinations.

Following is the full text of the petition:

[The petition of residents of the UK,

Declares that in independent schools, pupils sitting GCSEs in English Language and English Literature can still take advantage of 40% coursework as part of their final mark and have the option of sitting their examinations in January or June; and further that this is not comparable to state-funded schools and offers an unfair advantage to independent schools.

The petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urges the Government to provide a level playing field in the rules applied to English Language and English Literature GCSE-level examinations in state-funded schools and independent schools, including provision for coursework and opportunities for sitting examinations.

And the petitioners remain, etc.]

[P002004]

World Hijab Day

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn. —(Heather Wheeler.)

7.48 pm

Ms Tasmina Ahmed-Sheikh (Ochil and South Perthshire) (SNP): Thank you very much for granting this Adjournment debate on the subject of World Hijab Day, Mr Speaker.

Hijab is an Arabic word meaning barrier or partition. In Islam, however, it has a broader meaning. The most visible form of hijab is the head covering that many Muslim women wear. I should say now that I feel that Muslim women should wear it only if they want to wear it; it absolutely should be a matter of choice. Although Hijab Day was started in New York by Nazma Khan, the movement has been organised almost solely over social media networking sites. For many people, the hijab is a symbol of oppression and divisiveness. It is a visible target that often bears the brunt of a larger debate about Islam in the west. Although Hijab Day is designed to counteract such controversies, it encourages non-Muslim women or even Muslim women like me who do not ordinarily wear a hijab to don one and experience what it is like to do so as part of a bid to foster better understanding.

Margaret Ferrier (Rutherglen and Hamilton West) (SNP): I commend my hon. Friend for securing this Adjournment debate today. At a time when Muslims are being demonised by an extreme right-wing agenda on the other side of the Atlantic, does she agree that initiatives such as Hijab Day serve a very important purpose not only to celebrate our diversity, but to break down barriers across different communities?

Ms Ahmed-Sheikh: My hon. Friend makes an important point. As I said earlier this week in the Chamber, we must not be afraid to stand up to racism and xenophobia where it exists, but I fear that, sometimes, we lose our ability to do that when we see who the proponent is. We must never do that.

The Hijab Day founder said:

“Growing up in the Bronx, in New York City, I experienced a great deal of discrimination due to my hijab. I figured the only way to end discrimination is if we ask our fellow sisters to experience hijab themselves.”

In middle school, she was known as Batman or Ninja. She said:

“When I moved on to college, it was just after 9/11, so they would call me Osama Bin-Laden or terrorist. It was awful. I figured the only way to end discrimination is if we ask our fellow sisters to experience hijab themselves.”

A report, which was published by the Scottish Government social research team in 2011, discussed the experience of Scottish Muslim women wearing the hijab. This was one case study—a personal story:

“You get looks...It makes you feel very uncomfortable. It makes you feel very unwelcome as well. By a few people I will add. Yeah, the majority of people are quite nice and respect you. ...I think some people still have in their minds that we're Muslims and we're not meant to be here, but...that's what I feel. Probably some don't feel that way. Probably they just think that's the way we're dressed.”

The story went on:

“I agree with that. Especially...that is why I wear a hijab and I do, like, feel kind of...if you're walking with someone who's not, you can see the way you're treated differently, and I've felt that quite a lot.”

Jim Shannon (Strangford) (DUP): I thank the hon. Lady for giving way and bringing this matter to the House for consideration. Does she agree that the United Kingdom is a multicultural society, and that that is something of which we should be immensely proud? However, does she also agree that multiculturalism shows a facet of what being British means, and that foundation should always give us pride, as it is about being part of the wonderful United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, which allows for diversity, faith and belief on our shores?

Ms Ahmed-Sheikh: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his intervention, some of which I agree with and, as he will understand, some of which I do not. This idea of what it means to be British is very much under question. However, I do know what it means to be a human being and to stand up for human rights and for what is right. I do not think that that is defined by where someone comes from in the world, which is why I say again that, wherever there are things going on in this world, we must not be afraid to stand up to them.

Today is an opportunity to combat the prejudice that exists. Hate crime remains a serious issue. Civic groups in England and Wales have been monitoring the rise in hate crime. The Muslim Council of Britain's group of mosques said that it had compiled a dossier of 100 hate crimes over the weekend of the EU referendum. Dr Shafi, the secretary-general of the Muslim Council of Britain said:

"As the results of the referendum became known, I called for our politicians to come together and heal the divisions that have emerged as a result of the campaign. Now we are witnessing the shocking extent of this with reports around the country of hate speech and minorities being targeted. Our country is experiencing a political crisis which, I fear threatens the social peace."

I do believe that we are making progress in this area. One extremely positive move has been the recent adoption of the hijab as part of the police uniform in Scotland. In 2006, Police Scotland announced that women from Muslim communities may now wear the hijab as part of their uniform. Speaking on behalf of Police Scotland, a spokesperson said:

"I hope that this addition to our uniform options will contribute to making our staff mix more...and add to the life skills, experiences and personal qualities that our officers and staff bring to policing the communities of Scotland."

That is something that I absolutely support.

However, challenges remain when it comes to combating prejudice. It would be remiss of me not to mention the well-documented situation that arose between the journalist, Fatima Manji, and Kelvin MacKenzie. Channel 4 news presenter, Fatima Manji, was criticised in July 2016 by former editor of *The Sun*, Kelvin MacKenzie, for wearing a hijab while reporting on the Nice truck attack. MacKenzie said in his column in *The Sun*:

"I could hardly believe my eyes...Was it appropriate for her to be on camera when there had been yet another shocking slaughter by a Muslim? Was it done to stick one in the eye of the ordinary viewer who looks at the hijab as a sign of the slavery of Muslim women by a male-dominated and clearly violent religion?"

It was reported that 1,400 complaints were sent to the Independent Press Standards Organisation about that column. Fatima Manji responded to MacKenzie in an article, saying:

"He has attempted to smear half of them further by suggesting they are helpless slaves. And he has attempted to smear me by suggesting I would sympathise with a terrorist."

A YouGov poll following the events found that 44% thought that MacKenzie's remarks were wrong and should not have been printed. The right of women to wear a hijab if they so wish is a right, like any other, for women to wear what they want when they want.

Naz Shah (Bradford West) (Lab): Does the hon. Lady agree that, although it is right for us to mark World Hijab Day in this Chamber, we must acknowledge and recognise that some women are forced to wear the hijab? Ultimately, this is about women's right to choose to wear what they want to, and for us to stand against the bigotry that we have seen lately in this country. For example, women have had their hijabs ripped off their heads. That is not acceptable.

Ms Ahmed-Sheikh: The hon. Lady makes an excellent point. Yes, too many crimes are committed whereby women—even young women and girls—have their hijabs pulled off. I agree with her point that, as Muslim women, we stand by those whose choice it is not to wear the hijab and whose choice it is not to do what they may be told by male counterparts in their family. Islam is about equality. Anyone who suggests otherwise does not know or understand that religion. We will continue to stand up against those who try to paint our religion in a negative light. We ask people not to expect us to apologise for everything that is done wrong in society by a Muslim. We are not responsible for all of them. We are each, as individuals, responsible for our own actions and for speaking up when we think that wrong is taking place.

It is the right of women to wear what they want where they want, including in this Chamber and beyond, without any fear of what people might suggest the repercussions may be. That brings me to another case in point. In 2016, Nicola Thorp, who was working as receptionist at City firm PwC, was sent home without pay for refusing to wear high heels. She was required to wear a heel of two to four inches. She went on to launch a petition asking to make it illegal for a company to require female employees to wear high heels at work. The petition garnered 152,420 signatures and will be debated in Westminster Hall on 6 March. I cannot wait. The Government's initial response to the petition stated:

"Company dress codes must be reasonable and must make equivalent requirements for men and women. This is the law and employers must abide by it."

The Petitions Committee and the Women and Equalities Committee published the "High heels and workplace dress codes" report on 26 January, recommending that the Government take urgent action to improve the effectiveness of the Equality Act 2010. It recommends that

"the Government...review this area of the law",

and, if necessary,

"ask Parliament to amend it".

It calls for "more effective remedies" such as increased financial penalties

"for employment tribunals to award against employers who breach the law"

in order to provide an effective deterrent.

I agree with the Committees' inquiry findings, as the report also states:

"We heard from hundreds of women who told us about the pain and long-term damage caused by wearing high heels for long periods in the workplace"—

perhaps I should not be the one giving this speech, because I am currently wearing heels, by choice of course—

"as well as from women who had been required to dye their hair blonde, to wear revealing outfits and to constantly reapply make-up. The Government has said that the existing law is clear, and that the dress code that prompted this petition is already unlawful. Nevertheless, discriminatory dress codes remain widespread. It is therefore clear that the existing law is not yet fully effective in protecting employees from discrimination at work."

There is much to do.

I reiterate that women—I know that everyone in the Chamber will agree with me; I dare them to say otherwise—should have the right to wear what they want without fear of discrimination. No one, but no one, has the right to discriminate against someone on the basis of their religious beliefs, whatever those beliefs may be or if they hold none at all. We are living in a world where women are feeling more threatened and more vulnerable. Telling women what they can and cannot wear, or how they should and should not look, is detrimental not only to women but to society as a whole. We need to work together to create a safer society where everyone can feel free to express religious beliefs without fear of discrimination, and everyone can feel comfortable to wear what they want, whenever they want.

8 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government (Andrew Percy): I thank the hon. Member for Ochil and South Perthshire (Ms Ahmed-Sheikh) for introducing this important debate and for regaling us with her own fashion choices in terms of footwear. I cannot match the high-heel wearing—not in the Chamber, anyway—but I can certainly match her support for people wearing what they wish to wear through their own free choice. I entirely agree with her on that. The Government fully support people's right to celebrate their faith and are firmly opposed to policies that seek to stigmatise or create division on the basis of faith, race or nationality.

As the hon. Lady and other Members said, we have a strong tradition throughout these islands—throughout the United Kingdom—of tolerance and freedom of expression. We are proud that we are a diverse nation. This House has further to go on that, but even in my short time here, I think we have been getting better. We want to build a nation where people are free to express their religious identity, including through the wearing of the hijab, the kippah, or whatever else fits with their religious beliefs. As I said in the debate on Holocaust Memorial Day a couple of weeks ago, I was shocked, when I was vice-chairman of the all-party parliamentary group on anti-Semitism, to go Brussels to meet young Jewish students who were afraid of going out in the streets there with their kippah on. The hon. Lady referred to instances in this country of women wearing the hijab who have similarly been subject to abuse. That is completely and utterly unacceptable, and we would all condemn it on both sides of the House.

We should, as the hon. Lady did, celebrate the many successful women in the country who do choose to wear the hijab by free choice—women like Fatima Manji, who became Britain's first hijab-wearing TV newsreader in March 2016.

Joanna Cherry (Edinburgh South West) (SNP): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Ochil and South Perthshire (Ms Ahmed-Sheikh) on securing this debate. As a supporter of sensible shoes, I am particularly in favour of the comments about high heels. The Minister mentioned Fatima Manji. Will he add his voice to mine and those of other MPs who condemned Trevor Kavanagh, a board member of the so-called Independent Press Standards Organisation, who called Fatima Manji a fool for bringing the case against Kelvin MacKenzie and said that wearing a hijab was a provocative gesture? Does the Minister agree that that was a most unsuitable comment from somebody who is a board member of the so-called Independent Press Standards Organisation?

Andrew Percy: I thank the hon. and learned Lady for her intervention. I was not aware of that case, but it is clearly completely unacceptable to suggest that because somebody is a member of the Muslim faith they are in some way responsible for a terrorist atrocity committed by people apparently in the name of that religion.

As I said, we should celebrate women who decide, through their own choice, to wear the hijab. I mentioned Fatima Manji. Nadiya Hussain, another woman who chooses to wear the hijab, was named as one of the BBC's top 100 women in 2016 after her unforgettable triumph on "The Great British Bake Off", which I am sure many of us watched with joy. Malala Yousafzai, the youngest holder of the Nobel peace prize at the age of 17, is a young woman who has stood up against all odds to promote the rights of education and freedom for all.

We are very clear as a Government about the profound contribution that people from all religious backgrounds make to our society. Whatever our faith, we share British values that we should all be proud of. We share those values regardless of our political beliefs, whether we are nationalists or Unionists; the hon. Member for Strangford (Jim Shannon) alluded to that. Freedom of speech, freedom of worship, democracy, the rule of law, equal rights and the equal treatment of people and individuals define us as a society. We should be very proud of those values, which are supported by the overwhelming majority of people in the United Kingdom and sustained through our important local and national institutions.

We should also be proud of the fact that this country has, for a very long time, been home to many different cultures, religions and communities. As the hon. Member for Ochil and South Perthshire has said, it is of course right that we celebrate the positive contribution that diverse groups make to British, Scottish, English, Welsh and Northern Irish life—I am trying to be inclusive.

We also need to recognise that more needs to be done, as the hon. Lady said throughout her speech, to make sure that nobody is excluded or left behind. On race relations and racial equality, the Government have been very clear that we want to create a fair society in which all people, whatever their ethnic origin, sexual orientation or social background, are valued and able to participate

[Andrew Percy]

fully and realise their potential. We have work to do in that regard across the United Kingdom. Nobody should be held back because of where they are born, the religion they choose or their sexuality or gender.

The Prime Minister was very clear on the steps of Downing Street that we believe in a union not just between the nations of the UK, but between our citizens—each and every one of us. That is why the Government have set ourselves a mission of creating a country that works for everyone, which is something on which we can all agree.

We have launched a unit to look into racial disparities in our public services, and it stretches right across Government. As a former schoolteacher in some difficult areas, I am pleased that the Government will focus on the disparity between white working class boys and other boys in this country, because the divisions are not always where we expect them to be. The study will highlight the differences in outcomes for people of different backgrounds in every area—from health and education, to childcare, welfare, employment, skills and the criminal justice system. During Prime Minister's questions today, the Prime Minister used some powerful words to describe the changes we have made to ensure fairness in the criminal justice system. That audit will be published this summer.

We also need to ensure that women are truly free to choose whether or not to wear the hijab, as the hon. Lady so eloquently said, and that all women are able and empowered to access their full rights as British citizens. The promotion and protection of women's rights is enshrined in international human rights law, and it is vital to ensure that stable and prosperous societies enable women to participate fully in political, economic and social life.

Dame Louise Casey's review, which was published just before Christmas, makes it clear that there is more to be done in this country to integrate isolated communities, precisely to ensure that people are not marginalised and are able to access the full range of opportunities available in this country. The Government are considering her recommendations as part of a new integration strategy, which our Department will lead on and which will be launched this spring so that we can continue to build a country that works for everyone.

The review highlighted the issue of English language provision, because 22% of Muslim women in Britain in 2011 spoke no English, compared with only 9% of Muslim men, less than 1% of Christian women and 0.4% of the female population overall. That is not acceptable in modern Britain, which is why in January 2016 the former Prime Minister announced a new English language offer worth £20 million over this Parliament to help at least 40,000 women in the most isolated communities get the training they need to enable and empower them to play a full part in our society.

The Casey review also highlighted issues faced by women in specific communities, including domestic abuse and other disgusting criminal practices such as female genital mutilation, forced marriage and so-called honour-based crimes. I am proud to serve as a White Ribbon ambassador, for a charity that is doing so much with a range of different communities across the country to encourage men to stand up to violence against women.

Dr Lisa Cameron (East Kilbride, Strathaven and Lesmahagow) (SNP): The Minister is making an excellent point. Does he agree that it is extremely important to challenge rape myths based on beliefs about what women wear and, therefore, their intentions? We should always challenge and stand up against rape myths, because the conviction rates for such crimes in our courts are desperately low. We must do all we can to address juror bias.

Andrew Percy: I could not agree more. There is absolutely no connection between what somebody chooses to wear and whether that awful, heinous crime is committed against them. We should be absolutely clear on that.

It is important to emphasise in debates such as this one that men are also the victims of domestic abuse, but there is no doubt that the majority of the victims of domestic abuse are women. It is particularly difficult in certain communities to access those victims, and charities such as the White Ribbon Campaign are really important to that.

Violence against women and girls is a very serious crime. Such crime has a massive impact, not just on the individuals concerned but on our economy, health services and criminal justice system. As I have made absolutely clear, we as a Government—indeed, we are in complete agreement on this across the House—will not stand for those crimes. Protecting women and girls from violence, and supporting victims and survivors of sexual violence, remains a priority for the Government. That is why last year we published our violence against women and girls strategy for this Parliament.

Women who choose to wear the hijab can often be targets of hate crime, and the hon. Member for Ochil and South Perthshire gave some examples of that in her speech. I agree with her, and I want to make it very clear from the Dispatch Box that that form of hatred is un-British and it will not be tolerated. The Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government said recently:

“Hate crime has no place whatsoever in British society. We will not stand for it. All communities must be able to live their lives free from fear of verbal or physical attack.”

None of us could disagree with that. That is why we have adopted a zero-tolerance approach towards all forms of hate crime. Anti-Semitism has been a particular cancer in our political discourse of late, and more still needs to be done to address that. Islamophobia is also a concern in our political discourse, and neither of those is acceptable.

I am proud that we have some of the strongest legislation in the world to tackle hate crime. It includes specific offences for racially or religiously aggravated activity, and offences of stirring up hatred on the grounds of race, religion or sexual orientation. We have put stronger sentences in place for those who are found guilty of perpetuating hate crime. Both the police and the Crown Prosecution Service are absolutely clear that those who perpetrate any form of hate crime will be punished with the full force of the law. We should be proud of that.

We cannot be complacent. We need to do much more to understand the hate crime we are seeing and to tackle it at its root. That is why we worked on the cross-Government hate crime action plan, which we published last summer. It includes measures to increase reporting of hate incidents and crimes, improve support for victims

and prevent hate crime, particularly through education and by targeting at-risk groups or locations, such as public transit, which has been a particular problem in that regard.

I am proud of my Department's role in helping to create an environment that prevents hate crime from happening in the first place. We contribute to a number of projects, such as the Anne Frank Trust and Streetwise, which support young people and encourage them to challenge prejudice and hatred. That is particularly important given the fact that sadly, according to research, and as is the case with so many crimes, young people are both the main victims and—more shockingly, perhaps, given the tolerance that we expect from young people—the main perpetrators of hate crime.

We also support third-party reporting initiatives, such as Tell MAMA, which play a vital role in monitoring and recording incidents of anti-Muslim hostility, in supporting victims and in raising community awareness of the importance of reporting. There is a double-edged sword: hate crime figures have increased during the past few years, which is shocking to many of us, but that is also evidence of the success of many of these organisations in encouraging communities to come forward and report hate crime.

I recently met a group of ultra-Orthodox Jews. They are often very obvious targets, because of the physical dress they choose to wear. Previously, they did not report hate crimes. Quite a significant effort has gone into encouraging them to do so, and we are seeing more of them come forward, which is all to the good. We will not tolerate the few individuals in this country who target people because they happen to look a bit different

or to dress a bit differently, and we encourage anyone who has experienced hate crime to report it to the police.

We are committed to creating a strong and integrated society in which hatred and prejudice are not tolerated, and all people are free to express their religious identity and live their lives without fear of hatred or discrimination. Despite the problems we have, we should actually be very proud of the fact that such is the experience of most people living in this country. We want a society that treats people with equality and respect, and our Government are committed to that.

I congratulate the hon. Lady on securing this debate. She has raised awareness of women's right to dress as they choose—not just the hijab, but high heels, as she said—and to celebrate their faith. Importantly, we are in agreement that, as she said herself, that right must be balanced within society by a woman's right to choose for herself and not to feel under any particular pressure. If a woman chooses to wear the hijab, or anything else for that matter, it should be of her own free will and free choice.

I again congratulate the hon. Lady on securing this debate, and on securing such a good turnout of SNP Members and other hon. Members who have contributed to it. We should be proud of our values of tolerance and respect in this country. There is more to be done, and she can be assured that the Government are 100% committed to doing what is necessary.

Question put and agreed to.

8.16 pm

House adjourned.

Westminster Hall

Wednesday 1 February 2017

[NADINE DORRIES *in the Chair*]

Maintained Nursery Schools Funding

9.30 am

Nadine Dorries (in the Chair): Order. Only a few hon. Members have put down their names to speak, but there are rather a lot present. Interventions are welcome, but I will not tolerate their being used as an opportunity to make a speech.

Helen Jones (Warrington North) (Lab): I beg to move,

That this House has considered funding for maintained nursery schools.

It is a pleasure to be here under your chairmanship, Ms Dorries. It may help if I say at the outset that I do not intend to speak for long and will take only a few interventions; otherwise I shall be unfair to colleagues, many of whom want to make speeches.

We are here because we fear for the future of maintained nursery schools—the jewel in the crown of early years education. Maintained nursery schools have an outstanding record of providing for the very youngest children; 60% of them are rated outstanding by Ofsted, and 39% as good. That record of excellence is equalled nowhere else in the education sector. It is not anything like equalled even in the early years sector, where only 17% of other nurseries and preschools, and 13% of childminders, are rated outstanding. One would think that any Government would want to preserve and even expand a system that achieves such a degree of excellence, but unfortunately the reverse is true. The Prime Minister told me last week that she wants

“good-quality education at every...stage”.—[*Official Report*, 25 January 2017; Vol. 620, c. 285.]

However, when the Government started their consultation on early years funding, it is fair to say that it caused panic in the maintained nursery sector.

The response to the consultation has done little to allay the feeling of panic, because the Government want to fund all providers equally. They tell us that the average amount paid per hour for three and four-year-olds will rise from £4.56 to £4.94, and that no council will receive less than £4.30 an hour, so that providers can be paid at least £4. That would sound extremely reasonable if all providers had to abide by the same rules and do the same things, but they do not. That is the real problem. Even with the transitional funding that the Government have promised, one in 10 nursery schools still think they will have to close by July and 67% believe they will have to close by the end of the transitional funding.

Chris White (Warwick and Leamington) (Con): I congratulate the hon. Lady on securing this important debate. Warwick Nursery School and Whitnash Nursery School in my constituency will face a funding decrease under the proposals. Does she agree that the Government

should revisit those proposals, so that such nurseries are not placed under a disadvantage or, worse still, forced to close?

Helen Jones: I agree absolutely, for reasons that I hope to set out. Having just seen that every school in my area will lose money under the Government’s so-called fair funding formula, even though we were already one of the lowest-funded authorities in the country, I think that we should treat everything with a fair degree of scepticism until we see the basis on which all the funding is allocated.

Mr Jim Cunningham (Coventry South) (Lab): I congratulate my hon. Friend on securing this timely debate. We have a similar problem at the Hillfields nursery in Coventry, whose funding is similarly under threat. It has an excellent achievement record; Ofsted has affirmed that. More importantly, I agree that what is happening is disproportionate through the country.

Helen Jones: I agree with my hon. Friend. The real problem is demonstrated in the foreword by the Secretary of State to the Government’s consultation response. It displays astonishing ignorance for someone holding her office, because she talks continually about childcare. Childcare is not the same thing as early years education, and Ministers must stop confusing and conflating the two. Maintained nursery schools provide early years education. They are schools and must employ qualified teachers. They must have a qualified head. Indeed, many of the headteachers in the sector are highly qualified. More than 80% are qualified at master’s degree level or above, because their job is highly skilled.

Richard Benyon (Newbury) (Con): Unlike schools, they are not allowed to academise, for example, or to form unions of different schools that would allow them a centre of gravity that might just enable them to get through the difficulty.

Helen Jones: That is an interesting point, but not one that I have heard from maintained nurseries, which value their independence and their different way of working, and want to keep that special atmosphere. The problem, of course, is that they are funded not as schools but through the early years formula, which has been consistently cut by the Government. Its various incarnations have had various names, but the Library has produced figures showing that the predecessor grants that were originally rolled up into it would have been worth £2.79 billion in 2010. There was an immediate cut to £2.48 billion and continued decreases and, based on our indicative figures, the sum will be £1 billion by 2019-20.

The problem is that at the same time, the Government have changed the way they fund local authorities. Those authorities have the power to fund nursery schools on a different basis from other providers, but they do not have an obligation to do so. They face a double whammy, because most maintained nursery places—65% of them—are in the most deprived areas. It is councils in those areas that have faced enormous cuts in their budgets, so that some are struggling even to fund statutory services. It is no surprise that there is pressure on maintained nurseries to close or amalgamate.

[Helen Jones]

Maintained nursery schools provide outreach to families, support to other providers, and initial teacher training places. Nowhere else in the sector does all that. Yet they achieve enormous success with children from the most deprived families in the country. Sandy Lane Nursery and Forest School in my constituency serves, mostly, two wards, Orford and Poplars and Hulme, although it takes children from a wider area too. Those wards are among the most deprived 30% in the country. In Orford 33.7% of children are growing up in workless families. In Poplars and Hulme the figure is 32.9%. The fact that the nursery is rated outstanding in those circumstances is a tribute to the skill and expertise of the staff, but that is by no means unusual. The Government should pay heed to the words of a former chief inspector of schools, who said:

“The only early education provision that is at least as strong, or even stronger, in deprived areas compared with wealthier areas is nursery schools”.

Dr Daniel Poulter (Central Suffolk and North Ipswich) (Con): The hon. Lady is making a very good speech. The evidence is certainly there, from health visitors who see children at an early age, that targeted interventions for deprived families, single mothers and people in other situations that may interfere with a child's life chances make a real difference. That is actually investing to save later on, because of the reduced rates of family breakdown and the improvement in a child's life chances.

Helen Jones: The hon. Gentleman is absolutely right. It is interesting that there is a fair degree of consensus on that across the House. The evidence is there: if the Prime Minister really wants to improve social mobility, she will stop fixating on grammar schools and start investing in maintained nursery schools. Even if I believed that there was a test that could measure the innate ability of 11-year-olds—I certainly do not—as opposed to them being tutored for that test, 11 is too late for many children. They need intervention earlier on.

For example, the Ofsted report on Sandy Lane Nursery and Forest School in my constituency is clear that most children come to the school with skills well below the level expected of their age group. However, by the time they go on to reception, the vast majority are achieving at the right level for their age. Furthermore—one of the teachers has tracked children's progress through primary school—they maintain those gains in future years.

The fact that the school achieves that, while at the same time catering for children with disabilities and other special needs, and while—unusually for Warrington, which is largely white, British and monoglot—they have children speaking eight different languages, is amazing. On a recent visit there, I saw that all the children learn to sign; they all learn Makaton, because there are children there with communication difficulties and the staff want them all to be included.

Like most nursery schools, my local nursery also caters for children with special needs and disabilities. Some 49% of maintained nurseries are attended by children with the most severe degree of disabilities, 69% are attended by children with moderate disabilities and 72% are attended by children with mild disabilities. They get more referrals from councils than other providers, because they

have the expertise. If nurseries close, the Minister has to tell us where those children will go. We already know that 42% of parents of children with disabilities find difficulty in accessing the early years provision that they are entitled to.

Maintained nurseries actually do more than simply cater for children with disabilities and special needs—they also provide advice to other providers. For example, a teacher at my local nursery co-ordinates provision for nought to five-year-olds with disabilities and special needs throughout the borough. Again, that is common: 46% of our maintained nurseries provide disability and special needs support to the local authority; 43% provide it to other maintained settings; and 47% provide it to private and voluntary sector settings as well. That outreach work, not only to families but to others in the sector, is a vital part of maintained nursery schools' work.

Since the coalition Government took what I think was the retrograde step of not requiring children's centres to employ a trained teacher, that expertise is largely in maintained nurseries. Some 71% of maintained nurseries support their local children's centre and 60% of them support private and voluntary settings. In fact, in my area, the maintained nursery, the children's centre and the private nursery were all built on the same site, precisely to facilitate that exchange of expertise. Because there is a real need to raise standards across the early years sector, we ought to cherish and facilitate that sharing of expertise.

Lucy Powell (Manchester Central) (Lab/Co-op): My hon. Friend is making a truly outstanding speech in support of maintained nursery schools. We heard reassurances from the Minister at the recent meeting of the all-party group on nursery schools and nursery classes, but my hon. Friend will be aware that those assurances are insufficient given the imminence of the threat to our maintained nursery schools. Of the more than 400 nursery schools, 67 think they will close by the summer. We need urgent action, not just warm words for the future.

Helen Jones: I could not agree more with my hon. Friend. The lack of urgency from the Government worries all of us who support the continuance of our maintained nurseries.

Maintained nurseries do a lot more than I have already described. They have regular contact with families. Because they are trusted by families, they can refer those in difficulty to other services, such as domestic violence services or English as a second language services for those who do not speak English. That is vital in ensuring that a child's life chances are not damaged early on.

Rosie Cooper (West Lancashire) (Lab): This is a timely and tremendous debate, because my constituents are really worried. On the comment made by my hon. Friend the Member for Manchester Central (Lucy Powell), does my hon. Friend the Member for Warrington North (Helen Jones) agree that despite the Government's wish to appear to be supporting working families and caring for the quality of early years education, they are trying to do that on the cheap? That decimates any remaining credibility they have on the issue. We need them to do the right thing.

Helen Jones: I agree with my hon. Friend; I said in a previous debate that there can be good early years provision or there can be cheap early years provision—there cannot be good, cheap early years provision. It requires high ratios of staff to children and properly trained staff. What sort of Government would want to put such a high-achieving sector, with such a wealth of expertise and such a record in promoting social mobility, in jeopardy? This Government, apparently. The Prime Minister's repeated assertions about social mobility will ring hollow if maintained nurseries, which are the best engine of social mobility, as proven by study after study, start to close.

The Government need to look at this urgently. They need to ensure that they get a grip, to stop closures from coming this summer and to ensure the future of our maintained nurseries. They need to review the funding arrangements, and to recognise the interaction with other council funding; so far, they have not managed to do that. They cannot cut and cut and expect the same services. They also need to commit not only to interim funding, but to properly funding our maintained nursery schools.

Maintained nursery schools have far greater duties and obligations than other providers in the sector, and are supporting many of those other providers. What has consistently bedevilled early years provision in this country is that we do not have enough trained staff; most of the properly trained staff we have are in maintained nursery schools, and we would be very foolish to lose them. I can never make up my mind whether Ministers simply do not understand the difference between early education and childcare, or whether they are trying to disguise the fact that they have not properly funded their decisions and commitments on childcare, and so are taking money away from maintained nurseries. That needs to stop now.

The Government need to take this seriously. If they do not, the life chances of a whole generation of children will be damaged in a way that cannot be made up for later. The hon. Member for Central Suffolk and North Ipswich (Dr Poulter) was right: every teacher will agree that, with early intervention, money is saved and problems are avoided later on in the education system. The Government need to understand that and do the best they can for our youngest children. That, after all, is the mark of a civilised society. The Minister needs to make some commitments to that in this debate.

9.49 am

Sir Simon Burns (Chelmsford) (Con): What a pleasure it is to serve under your chairmanship, Ms Dorries. I congratulate the hon. Member for Warrington North (Helen Jones) on securing this important debate and on her speech; she made some very important and relevant points, many of which I have a considerable amount of sympathy for. As a Government Member, rather than an Opposition Member—I understand how the system works—I do not agree with some of her points. I would like to pick up one point immediately. I thought that her comments on my hon. Friend the Minister were a little unfair. My hon. Friend is totally committed to this area and is doing a tremendous amount of work, as I experienced at the all-party group meeting last week, to find a satisfactory solution to the situation.

The basic point of the hon. Lady's speech was the importance of maintained nurseries in our constituencies. I could not disagree with that at all; she is absolutely right. They play a critical role, and some other nursery and primary schools do not have the same focus. In my constituency of Chelmsford we have two excellent maintained nurseries: Tanglewood and Woodcroft. I was fortunate to be invited to Tanglewood a few weeks ago to see for myself the fantastic work done there. The Minister will be as familiar as the hon. Lady with the commitment and dedication of staff and what they seek to achieve. As the hon. Lady rightly said, more often than not they are dealing with some very challenging and deprived families in difficult circumstances. It is a joy to see the commitment of staff and the help they give to children who would not otherwise have such a start in life.

Maybe I am naive, but I was told in no uncertain terms that there are children at that nursery who have no concept of what play is. I imagine most hon. Members in this Chamber take it for granted that every child knows how to play and that it comes naturally, but for some it does not, because their parents were not taught how to play or have no concept of it. We get a full appreciation of the challenges those children face when starting from that base. These schools are so crucial because of the help and the start in life they can offer children who would not otherwise benefit.

The other thing I was particularly impressed by on my visit—this certainly did not happen at my school—was the number of members of staff who were parents of children who had been at the school. They were so impressed by what was going on that they wanted to become involved. Rather than just looking on from the outside, they wanted to actually play a part. They started their training and are now working there with the next generation of children, providing help with the benefit of the experience and knowledge they have as parents of children who attended the school. It is so important that we ensure that tradition continues.

I suspect that all of us, in our different ways, have had contact with my hon. Friend the Minister on these issues. We live in difficult times, and we have to be careful that we get value for money and do not waste taxpayers' money. It is not an enviable job, but it has to be done regardless of who is in government. I have been impressed by my hon. Friend's commitment. It is quite clear that she accepts and understands the role of these schools and wants to find a meaningful solution that will hopefully continue to provide a solution beyond 2020, so that these schools can continue to flourish and survive.

Lucy Powell: I thank the right hon. Gentleman for his generosity in giving way. He is making a heart-warming speech about the emotional impact that nursery schools can have. May I reiterate the point he makes? The Minister came to our all-party group meeting last week, and I want to put on the record that her responses and the speech she gave at that meeting were very well received by the hundreds of nursery schools we had there. This debate is a good follow-on to that meeting.

Sir Simon Burns: I am extremely grateful to the hon. Lady and particularly pleased that I gave way to her. All too often, partisan issues blur a debate, but for her to be

[*Sir Simon Burns*]

so fair in her assessment of that meeting and her dealings with the Minister is a refreshing reflection of her chairmanship of that all-party group.

Basically, we are all together in trying to find a positive solution. My hon. Friend the Minister has secured funding up until 2020, which I believe is an important step forward as a short-term measure to try to allay the fear of some of these schools that they may face closure, the deadline for which is, more often than not, July 2017. What my hon. Friend has done should ensure that that does not happen. I am also confident that as she continues the consultations and assessments, a longer term solution will be found, so that we do not have to keep coming back to this issue or see the closure of schools that provide such a vital service in all our constituencies, whether they suffer from severe deprivation across the board or, like my own, are more fortunate. Constituencies such as mine do not have deprivation across the board but still have areas where there is a vital role to play and job to be done by these schools, to help give every child the best possible start in life.

These schools fill a gap in the provision of nursery care and education for a targeted group who so badly need help and who disproportionately benefit. As the hon. Member for Warrington North said in her compelling remarks at the beginning, giving a child the best start in their early years is a far better investment than any amount of money thrown at an issue. They then get experience, confidence building and everything associated with that to be able to move forward in life. It encourages and enhances their learning development, social skills and interactive skills, which are so crucial.

I am more confident that the Minister is committed to ensuring that we come up with relevant solutions. It is quite clear—from not only the all-party group meeting, but the way in which she has made herself available to all hon. Members who want to feed in their concerns and viewpoints—that she is prepared to listen and work to find a solution that is beneficial to all. I am pleased that we have this opportunity to share yet again with the Minister our different experiences in the variety of constituencies represented in the Chamber today. I believe that this will be of invaluable help to her as she continues her work to find a resolution to the concerns and worries bedevilling many people quite genuinely.

9.59 am

Mrs Sharon Hodgson (Washington and Sunderland West) (Lab): I am very happy to serve under your chairmanship, Ms Dorries. I want to make a small contribution to this very important debate, because I passionately believe that nursery schools are a vital contributor to social mobility in this country. There is ample evidence to show that maintained nursery schools that offer high-quality early education can have profound impacts on the start of children's lives. That is why it is not surprising that nursery schools have been described as the "jewel in the crown" of the education system. However, the current Government are allowing the crown to be tarnished by going down a route that will place all nursery schools under threat. That is especially true for children in some of the most deprived communities in the country.

As was said at the last meeting of the all-party parliamentary group on nursery schools and nursery classes, which my hon. Friend the Member for Manchester Central (Lucy Powell) so excellently chairs, it was estimated in 2011 that 80% of three-year-olds from the most deprived areas attended a setting with a qualified early years professional compared with just 50% in more affluent areas. That was surely a good thing.

In my own constituency, Washington and Sunderland West, there are four maintained nurseries: Hylton Red House, Usworth Colliery, Oxclose and Pennywell Early Years Centre. I understand that I am lucky because there are four good maintained nursery schools in my constituency, but that also shows the demographics of my constituency. It must be pointed out that Sunderland has one of the highest numbers of these nurseries within our local authority area—a total of nine.

The Government have partially redeemed themselves with transitional arrangements. That is welcome, as it will help to mitigate any problems that nursery schools face due to the cuts in their funding. However, it must be said that funding will still be reduced and the transitional subsidy may not continue—the Minister may tell us otherwise this morning—after the two years are up.

In Sunderland, the baseline funding rate for three and four-year-olds for 2016-17 stood at £5.38 per hour, but through the early years national funding formula that will decrease to £5.11 per hour. That might not sound like much of a decrease, but it is per hour and it is the difference between survival and closure. As the Social Mobility Commission has stated:

"It would be a travesty if funding reforms mean that over time we lose more of the remaining high-quality, maintained nursery schools."

I could not agree with that more, and I hope that the Minister agrees with it, too.

The concerns expressed have been echoed by staff and parents at my local nursery schools—they have all been in touch with me. Claire Nicholson, the local headteacher of Pennywell Early Years Centre, has told me that

"such a big percentage is going to be lost, that it won't allow us to be viable".

Also, nearly 100 parents at Pennywell Early Years Centre, in a letter they sent to me, have described their disbelief and dismay at the policy and the direction in which the Government are taking early years education.

These schools are a proven and vital part of our country's strategy for improving social mobility, which is something we desperately need to be doing more of, not less. It is important that the Government do all they can to give children the best start in life. That is why many of us in this House, and specifically in this Chamber today, got into politics, and we will hold Ministers to account every step of the way on this matter. I urge the Minister not to squander the life chances of any of the children in this country, especially those in the most deprived communities. Our young constituents do not deserve this, and I hope that the Minister will reconsider for their sake.

10.3 am

Martin Vickers (Cleethorpes) (Con): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Ms Dorries. I congratulate the hon. Member for Warrington North

(Helen Jones) on securing this important debate. During her comments, she drew an important distinction between childcare and nursery education.

I fully support the words of my right hon. Friend the Member for Chelmsford (Sir Simon Burns), who summed up very well the value of these schools. He also pointed out, rightly, that our hon. Friend the Minister is a supporter of nursery education. I am not here to seek to criticise her, because I know that she is supportive, but I want to refer to one particular school that serves my constituency and is in the constituency of the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Melanie Onn)—Scarcho Nursery School. I will speak specifically about that school, but my comments also relate to many schools across the country. I am here to support the hon. Lady, who will no doubt also highlight other issues.

Scarcho Nursery School was actually under attack when I was a councillor for Scarcho ward. The hon. Lady's predecessor, Austin Mitchell, and I fought a campaign to ensure that it stayed open. We had the help of my now noble Friend Lord Willetts, who visited the school—were the Minister to speak to him, I am sure that he would remember, although it was 17 or 18 years ago. He was very impressed by the school at the time.

The headteacher, Liz Jeffrey, who is a constituent of mine, in a letter that the hon. Member for Great Grimsby will also have received, opens by saying: "We need your help!" She rightly points out that Scarcho Nursery School

"has been a beacon for Early Years Education".

Indeed, the *Grimsby Telegraph*, on 26 April 2013, had the headline "It's another cracking Ofsted for Scarcho Nursery School". That was the fourth inspection in a row from which it had received the "excellent" accolade.

The question is how we ensure that funding continues, and not just for Scarcho nursery, but for similar schools up and down the country. We need a clear statement. From my earlier remarks, the Minister knows that I recognise her support for this sort of school. However, it would be helpful if, in summing up of the debate, she made it clear that the Government do indeed to support maintained nursery schools. If that is the case, a funding formula to allow them to continue is clearly essential.

May I refer again to the comments from the headteacher of Scarcho Nursery School? Liz Jeffrey says that, like many similar schools, it

"prides itself on the fact that it caters only for nursery aged children, providing them with the best possible start to their education."

It is that "best possible start" that we would want for our children and the children in our constituencies. As Mrs Jeffrey points out,

"It is a specialist setting".

I have visited the school on many occasions and I recognise its importance to people. I recognise how the community values it and, most particularly, how the parents value it. Generations of families continue to go to that school, which is a recommendation in itself.

Liz Jeffrey asks whether the Government are

"willing to risk losing the four hundred nursery schools that have been referred to as 'the jewel in the education crown'."

She says:

"We should be celebrating because at least 90% of nursery schools have been judged by OFSTED to be outstanding or good".

As I said, Scarcho itself has received the "excellent" accolade on a number of occasions.

I want to tease out from the Minister an absolute commitment to the continuation of maintained nursery schools. Will she also meet the hon. Member for Great Grimsby and me, so that we can speak specifically about Scarcho? The hon. Lady will also speak about Great Coates Village Nursery School, which also serves a number of my constituents. If the Minister would do that, it would be very helpful. With that, I will conclude and look forward to hearing a positive reply from the Minister.

10.8 am

Melanie Onn (Great Grimsby) (Lab): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Ms Dorries.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Warrington North (Helen Jones) on securing this debate and excellently setting out the case in her thoughtful comments. I run a great risk of repeating some of them, so I will be careful not to steal her thunder too much. There is such a danger that serious and important domestic matters that will have a significant effect on my constituents and their children will be lost in the noise of Brexit. I therefore welcome this debate and ask the Minister to make sure that this important issue is not ignored and that close attention is paid to the impact of the implementation of the restructured funding.

As my hon. Friend mentioned, 97% of state-maintained nurseries are rated as good or outstanding by Ofsted. Despite that amazing rating, which many sectors would give their eye teeth for, some 67% of such nurseries say that they will be unsustainable once transitional funding provided by the Government finishes at the end of this Parliament. As mentioned by the hon. Member for Cleethorpes (Martin Vickers), two of those 67% are in my constituency—Scarcho Nursery School and Great Coates Village Nursery School.

I visited Scarcho Nursery School last week and met its headteacher and governors, the headteacher of Great Coates, teachers, early years practitioners, special educational needs staff and, of course, the children. Some of the children had been in that setting for only two or three weeks but they were settled, happy, polite and engaged in their learning through play. They all understood the routine of the day such as when it was snack time and when it was story time—the important parts of the day—and were comfortable and confident within that space. They were making friends and were secure with the staff.

It was not that long ago, in April 2016, that a debate was held—some of the Members in this room attended it—secured by the late Jo Cox, on educational attainment in Yorkshire and the Humber. I was keen to contribute to the debate because of the significant detriment in our region experienced by our children. The links to poverty and attainment were laid bare and commitments were made to take this seriously. Yet we now know that in two years' time transitional funding for one of the most indicative changers of attainment and social mobility in deprived areas will end. If, in the case of my two nurseries, they are unable to raise the £100,000-plus

[Melanie Onn]

shortfall per annum, these essential facilities in our communities will be lost. They will be lost forever and the only ones who will suffer will be our kids.

In Great Grimsby if we lose this provision, which has around 200 children enrolled across the two sites, we will experience a double whammy of loss of provision and support. Over the past few years we have seen the closure of Sure Start centres at the heart of communities in favour of more centralised family hubs. That is okay, we might think, as private nurseries still offer excellent nursery provision. Yes, there are many in my constituency of Great Grimsby that parents love and that also provide happy, safe environments. It is great that parents have a choice of provision, whether they choose a childminder, private nursery or state nursery. However, through my discussions last week, I discovered that some of those nurseries have already decided that they will not offer the additional hours up to 30. That is due to the £4.30 per pupil per hour cost allocated for those additional hours under the free childcare pledge; the private nursery hourly rates are in excess of that and they are not allowed to charge a top-up so they will lose money. The headteacher of Great Coates Nursery Village School told me that she has already been approached by many parents wanting to take up the 30-hours offer. If private nurseries recognise that they are not able to provide a service for that figure and it is not sustainable, how do the Government expect the state-maintained nurseries to do it?

As mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Warrington North, it is important to raise the issue of the hidden costs for state-maintained nurseries, so I will repeat them. Nurseries remain within the early years funding bracket and yet legislation dictates that they operate within a schools framework in terms of having to have a headteacher and teachers including a staff member with expertise in special educational needs. The school I visited has children who will be eligible for free school meals by the time they enter infant school. Those two schools have a significant percentage of children who will be eligible, but they are not funded for free school meals. The proposal for the extension of the 15-hour offer to 30 hours will not see any change to that, despite some children then possibly being there for six hours a day for five days a week. The guidance issued by the Pre-School Learning Alliance is explicit that funding is only for education or care provision, not meals or drinks.

Some children at the nursery had evident special educational needs, from suspected autism to noticeable delays in speech development. Additional funding is available to support those children, but the length of time it takes for the children to achieve a diagnosis means that the nurseries are not receiving that much-needed funding and are providing the additional support through the good will of dedicated staff. What can the Minister do to ensure that the referral of children for SEN assessments at ages three and four is sped up?

I am beyond worried that those two excellent facilities that are much loved in the community and have served multiple generations of families, some of whom have gone on—this is exactly the same situation as the right hon. Member for Chelmsford (Sir Simon Burns), who is no longer in his place, mentioned—to work in those

establishments where their children were educated because they love them so much, will be lost. That will leave those with the greatest need without the right support. I fundamentally disagree with the idea that those learning establishments for our children who are at the most exciting and rich period of development in their lives should have to turn their attention away from those children in order to fundraise to cover substantial financial losses.

10.15 am

Derek Twigg (Halton) (Lab): I have heard some excellent speeches today but I want to give particular credit to my hon. Friend the Member for Warrington North (Helen Jones) for her excellent speech.

Halton is the 27th most deprived borough in the country, and its maintained nursery schools are important not only to the general population but for the difference they make for children from deprived and poorer backgrounds. They can identify at a very early age children who will struggle all the way through school and the rest of their lives. They are particularly good at that. My constituency has three maintained nursery schools: Birchfield Nursery School, Warrington Road Nursery School and Ditton Nursery School. All of them have been in existence in Widnes for 75 to 80 years to support children's early education and parents value them greatly. The headteachers have told me that they are extremely worried that the schools may not exist for much longer if the national early years funding formula goes ahead as planned. Early Education forecasts that 67% of nurseries will be unsustainable after transitional funding finishes.

The evidence is clear that the quality of early education makes the most difference in raising achievement for the most disadvantaged children. That justifies such large Government investment in early intervention. Quality is determined by the qualifications of early years staff and teachers. Nursery schools in Halton employ well-qualified and highly experienced headteachers and assistant headteachers, as well as taking on and mentoring newly qualified teachers who work with them as early years specialists. They also have a number of staff members with early years degrees, a qualified early years teacher and special educational needs co-ordinators who are qualified and experienced teachers who have offered support across other settings and enabled transitions and planning to take place to support the most vulnerable children. Again, early intervention is crucial.

Daniel Zeichner (Cambridge) (Lab): I am grateful to my hon. Friend for taking an intervention and apologise, Ms Dorries, for not being here at the start of the debate. My constituency is very different to my hon. Friend's, but it has the Fields Children's Centre, which I have visited over many years. Does he agree that the work being done in this area is about far more than just childcare?

Derek Twigg: My hon. Friend is right. A whole sphere of things can make a difference. I will come back to that later in my speech, but he makes a very good point.

Halton is one of the 25% of councils that will lose money for early years in the revised formula. At present, early years is a priority for Halton and we feel there

should be funding to support it—early years has always been a priority in Halton. The 2015 Ofsted early years report endorses the consistent evidence of other national research that the most effective early education is provided by such nursery schools. Over the past five years maintained nursery schools in Halton have annually increased the average points progress made by children in all settings. We can demonstrate outstanding progress for children with special educational needs and disabilities, English as an additional language and those children entering our schools with low levels of personal, social and emotional development—that is really important—communication and speech.

The headteachers in my constituency believe strongly that nursery schools are in jeopardy all over the country because the qualifications of staff and the leadership of headteachers mean that they cost more than any other sort of nursery. The current system of funding early education, or what seems to be now called childcare, assumes that what every nursery offers is broadly the same, but it is not. They cannot be funded in the same way because maintained and private provision have completely different structures. I hope the Government will understand and address that.

Nursery schools lead to the kind of outstanding early years education we want for every child in our country. They play a key role in supporting training in the early years sector including work placements, initial teacher training, qualified teacher status and postgraduate certificate in education placements. Nursery headteachers and staff want to be supported to operate as system leaders for the future to ensure that early years professionals continue to have quality training and development and are able to have a positive impact on young children's learning.

The recent consultation showed no awareness of the reality of the funding crisis for maintained nursery schools, or of their remit and impact. Proposals should be founded upon research and a commitment to developing early years leadership. One headteacher told me:

“The consultation largely ignored social return on investment and places no weighting on rewarding those organisations mainly schools who have a statutory and moral imperative to support their communities.”

The proposed funding reform would effectively eradicate such nurseries, losing knowledge specialism and damaging the life chances of our most vulnerable children. Nurseries want reassurances from the Minister that the transitional funding mentioned in the consultation will get through to nursery schools and will be sufficient to keep them running while we move towards a new system and leadership model.

I recently asked my local authority, Halton Borough Council, about its view of the situation. People there told me that they will not know the final figures until they receive the census information in February. However, previous estimates based on this year's funding show that the three nursery schools—even after applying the higher base rate for the maintained nursery schools—will face a shortfall for 2017-18. That takes into consideration the additional protection that nursery schools will receive. Halton Borough Council can only provide the higher base rate for one year, so the shortfall could rise in 2018-19 to £130,000. When the transitional protection is removed in two years, the shortfall could increase to between £160,000 and £190,000. Although the council

is working with nursery schools on models and options to reduce the cost, it will struggle to save £130,000-plus, which might mean that it can no longer afford to retain our nursery provision. That is how serious the situation is in Halton, where securing good-quality early years provision is a particular challenge. If Halton ends up having to look at closure, it will be a considerable loss.

Before I conclude, I want to quote the headteacher at Ditton Nursery School, who told me:

“We have a higher base rate for next year (18-19) plus transitional funding for the following year. When this finishes we will have seen our individual budgets cut by between £50,000-60,000 but we have already cut staffing down to a minimum and although looking at a federated model are not sure we will be sustainable when additional funding finishes...Nursery schools drive high quality pedagogy across the sector. We provide outstanding support for Special Educational needs and disadvantaged children thus supporting their learning chances later in education. We offer partnership, innovation and system leadership within the sector, and also support Initial Teacher Training for Early Years. This would all be lost if we closed. We need to ensure that we retain high quality Early years staff to work with our children—they deserve the best.”

I stress that—they deserve the best. The headteacher continued:

“This is difficult when facing such uncertainty. We want to retain quality staff to ensure the best outcomes for our children.”

I recently visited Birchfield Nursery School and talked to the headteacher there. I was so impressed by what was going on; there was a range of support for young people in education and play, and so on. The right hon. Member for Chelmsford (Sir Simon Burns) made a very important point. Nurseries have seen an increase in the number of children who not only do not know how to play, but perhaps more surprisingly, are not able to speak at the age at which they should be able to start speaking. All the headteachers I spoke to said that. Even more surprisingly, that is the situation not just among poorer children, but across the sphere when it comes to talking and play. They said that children are told, “Get on and play with that,” and although most parents are still fantastic at helping their children to talk and at developing their education, a growing number of parents are not. The lack of parents talking and playing with their children is becoming a major problem for some schools. Dealing with that requires extra money and extra effort, and the schools are then making the difference, not some of the parents. Obviously they try and encourage parents to play with and speak to the children more—to have more conversations with them—but it is sometimes an uphill struggle. That is partly because of the nature of the society we live in, but in this respect nurseries are making a real difference to our children, particularly in deprived areas. That intervention is so crucial to helping children's life chances. Maintained nursery schools have that impact because of the nature of teachers' qualifications and experience, and because of how they work together.

I therefore urge the Minister to reconsider the plans. The real problem is that the Government are cutting education and funding, and they need to rethink that. She shakes her head, but she should talk to the headteachers. They tell me what is going on in their schools. This is not me making a political point; it is what headteachers tell me, so the Government need to think again about funding. At the end of the day we cannot lose these fantastic maintained nurseries—we must do all that we can to keep them.

10.24 am

Naz Shah (Bradford West) (Lab): I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Warrington North (Helen Jones) for securing this timely, much-needed debate. There is a huge misunderstanding about the treasure we have in maintained nurseries and the services they provide, and I welcome the opportunity to talk specifically about why the service should be offered considerably more protection from the Government.

Only two weeks ago, I met the headteachers and governors of the maintained nursery schools in Bradford, four of which are in my constituency. We talked about the funding pressure and challenges that this vital service is facing and the incredible early years education service that they provide. Of the four maintained nursery schools in Bradford West, all are considered good or outstanding by Ofsted, and all offer unique and exceptional early intervention for those most in need. They are what the former Education Secretary would no doubt have described as “a cluster of excellence”, but they are all facing an uncertain financial future due to the changes to Government funding for nursery provision. Although they have seen a short-term funding solution, it does not feel like a settlement that truly appreciates the high-quality services that they provide.

James Berry (Kingston and Surbiton) (Con): Does the hon. Lady agree that an advantage of maintained nurseries, such as Surbiton Children’s Centre Nursery—the only one in my constituency—is that they have the security that private nurseries, often run by private tenants, do not have if the landlord decides that they do not want them to continue there, or if the rent goes up?

Naz Shah: Absolutely; I agree with the hon. Gentleman’s point. As I was saying, the settlement does not seem to recognise the high-quality services that they provide or compensate for the unique challenges that they face, and it will do little to ensure their long-term sustainability.

Nursery schools are the one aspect of the education system where the gap in attainment between the poorest children and the rest is significantly narrowed. The reason is that nursery schools are staffed by qualified teachers and led by qualified headteachers. They are schools, and although they are not afforded all the same protections by the Government as other schools, they represent the very best provision in terms of teaching quality and outcomes, and they play a vital role in social mobility. The Government’s funding proposals will have a devastating effect on such quality provision. The funding formula will make it impossible to pay for the qualified staffing teams that have consistently delivered such outstanding results in Bradford.

Let us be clear: we are talking about schools staffed by teaching professionals that also provide a hub of support for Bradford’s children’s centres and sit at the heart of Bradford’s early years provision. Those centres play an increasing role in the early years sector, providing training and support for other types of nursery provision, as well as being the only service where the outcomes for the poorest and most deprived children are on a par with those for their more affluent counterparts. That is the case not only when compared with other forms of early years education, but across the entire education system. Such provision targets those who will struggle the most. It works with those who face the most uncertainty

in their education and plays an innovative and exceptional role in the development of those with special educational needs and disability.

The question for the Government now is the same as the one that the Social Mobility Foundation asked: essentially, what do we want our early education to be? The Government seem torn between genuine development in early years and parental employment, but those things do not need to be mutually exclusive. I understand the concern that these forms of education provider may be more expensive, given that they are schools. They are also not consistently distributed across the entire country, with 64% clustered in the most deprived areas, but that is not a reason to allow the demise of expertise or to water down provision. They are located in those areas because that is where they add the most value and where they are essential.

All the evidence clearly demonstrates that maintained nursery schools are one of the most successful types of education provider, if not the most successful. That alone should be enough of a reason to give them the guarantees and support that they need, not just to maintain their current level, but to expand and to genuinely secure their long-term future. As children move through these providers, they not only develop in their environment but maintain momentum through the rest of their education.

I call on the Government to consider the wealth of data now available on the early years funding formula and to go back and try again to find a better way to support the nursery school sector. There is clear evidence that the early years funding formula will take money away from nursery school provision and that many nursery schools will become unsustainable in the very near future. There are many ways in which they could be guaranteed the funding that they need, but the Government need to go further and support the sector in its entirety, bringing provision up to par with that for other schooling. These are expert institutions that have a genuine impact on social mobility, so I call on the Minister to do everything she can to ensure that the services they provide are not watered down and can be allowed to flourish as the models of excellence that they are.

In Bradford West, and in Bradford as a whole, we face the significant challenges of complex educational needs and deprived communities. When I have met nursery heads, as my hon. Friends have done, they have told me about the other services that they provide in the community. They act as a hub and a resource for their communities. With all the funding cuts we have had across the sector, with community centres closing down and other areas being affected, nurseries are the last thing we can afford to lose. They are the one hub that binds communities together, keeps families together and gives children a start. I really, really urge the Minister to reconsider the package and to bring something much more sustainable to the table.

10.31 am

Marion Fellows (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Ms Dorries. I congratulate the hon. Member for Warrington North (Helen Jones) on securing this important debate. She said in her passionate and informed opening speech

that the record of excellence for maintained nurseries has been achieved nowhere else in the education system and should be maintained.

The Government's proposed changes and the loss of transitional funding will affect nurseries throughout England, which will be a great loss to local communities. Maintained nurseries make the difference between early years education and early years caring very prominent. There is a real difference—I know that from my experience as a local authority councillor in Scotland. Nursery education is the *crème de la crème*. Children need looking after in their early years, but just looking after them is not enough. If our economy is to grow and thrive, we will need people who are able to grow and thrive and to overcome their disadvantaged backgrounds. The message that I have heard clearly today is that it is maintained nurseries that best make that happen.

The right hon. Member for Chelmsford (Sir Simon Burns) did not really disagree much with the hon. Member for Warrington North. He, too, was very supportive of maintained nurseries, although he was trying to support his Government at the same time.

Sir Simon Burns: The hon. Lady is absolutely right. I speak as an English MP about English maintained nursery schools, and I support my hon. Friend the Minister because of her commitment and the work she does to navigate around the problem and find a meaningful solution.

Marion Fellows: I take refuge in my international observer status, which I frequently refer to on the Select Committee on Education. I look at things from a different perspective, but I passionately want children throughout the UK to have the best possible start.

The hon. Member for Washington and Sunderland West (Mrs Hodgson) spoke about maintained nurseries as the jewel in the crown of the education system. She also made the point, which was echoed throughout the Chamber, that there are more maintained nurseries in deprived areas. That is undoubtedly a good thing, because that is where they are needed. If the United Kingdom is to move forward, we need to encourage and help those who are most deprived. Some of us here will not recognise the shocking statistics about parents not reading to their children or even talking to them, but there are such parents, and they and their children are the ones who need most help. That is why early years education is so important.

The hon. Lady said that the end of the two-year transitional arrangement could lead to a quite significant number of closures of maintained nurseries. She spoke about a drop in funding from £5.38 to £5.11 per hour—a huge drop that could lead to closures that I am sure no one in the Chamber wants.

The hon. Member for Cleethorpes (Martin Vickers) reinforced the difference between childcare and early years education. He spoke eloquently and passionately about Scartho Nursery School, which typifies most maintained nursery schools. In fact, it would be difficult to name any hon. Member who has contributed to the debate without speaking passionately about the need to maintain these nurseries.

The hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Melanie Onn) said that she did not want this debate to be lost in the Brexit fog that has now descended on the main Chamber.

I could not agree more. At times like this, we have to keep raising these issues and pushing the Minister to listen carefully, change her proposals and make a difference. Some nurseries will not even be offering an additional 30 hours of free provision because of the cost of implementation.

The hon. Member for Halton (Derek Twigg), too, was passionate about the excellent nurseries in his constituency. He described the devastating impact of the removal of transitional funding: the expertise that has been built up in the maintained nurseries in his area in supporting children with special educational needs and disabilities could be lost—and once these services are lost, it is very difficult to get them back.

The hon. Member for Bradford West (Naz Shah) said that nurseries are the part of the education system that has the least gap between children. The evidence on the subject, which the Scottish Government have based a lot of their measures on, shows that if we can get children into nurseries and give them proper education early on, we can carry it forward—the right hon. Member for Chelmsford also mentioned that. I cannot overstate the need for maintained nurseries with excellently educated staff who reach out across the whole sector.

This is not my debate or my area, but it is quite useful to turn briefly to what is happening in Scotland, as I do quite often. The political will in Scotland is different. The First Minister has made it her main priority to close the attainment gap, and the Scottish Government believe that the best way to do that is through transforming early years education and giving all children the best start in life.

Nadine Dorries (in the Chair): Order. Ms Fellows, could you begin to wind up so that the other two Front Benchers have time to speak?

Marion Fellows: Yes. Let me just say that, as a former councillor, I know how partnership nurseries work in Scotland—the local authorities help to fund and give their expertise to privately funded nurseries—and perhaps the Minister would like to think about that. What is needed is political will. I urge her to take on board what she has heard this morning and make the changes necessary to retain maintained nurseries in England.

10.38 am

Mike Kane (Wythenshawe and Sale East) (Lab): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Ms Dorries. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Warrington North (Helen Jones) on introducing the debate. I never fail to be impressed by the passion she brings to her speeches or by her campaigning zeal—I have campaigned with her since before I became a Member.

We know that this debate is of great importance; that is why we have had such a high turnout of Members and such a high-quality debate. I join the right hon. Member for Chelmsford (Sir Simon Burns) in praising nursery staff throughout the country for their commitment. He spoke more articulately than I can about all the work that goes on.

The Minister will be aware that Members here know the importance of maintained nurseries for sure, and the role they play in our early years system. They are invaluable. In fact, they are absolutely irreplaceable.

[Mike Kane]

The hon. Member for Cleethorpes (Martin Vickers) spoke about Scartho Nursery School with such passion, because he knows that that sort of provision cannot be replaced in any constituency up and down the land if it is lost.

Maintained nurseries operate overwhelmingly in disadvantaged areas and, as has been pointed out, 98% of them are rated “good” or “outstanding” by Ofsted. If 98% of them are rated so highly, why do we feel that they are suddenly being so undervalued by the Government, and why do they face this funding crisis? We are at the point now where there is no turning back.

Research by the all-party parliamentary group on nursery schools and nursery classes, which is chaired by my hon. Friend the Member for Manchester Central (Lucy Powell), who is no longer in her place but does astonishingly good work in this area, shows that dozens of nursery schools—I think she said 67—look like they will be forced to close by July this year. That is more than one in 10 nursery schools.

Almost 60% of those nurseries say that they will be unsustainable once the Government withdraw transitional funding support at the end of this Parliament, as my hon. Friend the Member for Great Grimsby (Melanie Onn) pointed out. She talked about educational attainment across the north and referred to the debate that Jo Cox secured about Yorkshire and the Humber. However, we should remember that in London 55% of kids on free school meals get five good GCSEs. If we take the area from the Mersey estuary to the Humber estuary, that figure for kids on free school meals declines to 34%. The Government produced the Nick Weller report about educational attainment in the north, but unfortunately it is now just gathering dust on a shelf somewhere—there is no evidence that any of its recommendations have been implemented.

Margaret Greenwood (Wirral West) (Lab): I thank my hon. Friend for giving way, and I apologise for not being able to be here for the whole debate, because of a prior engagement. However, I just feel so strongly about this issue that I want to put on the record how well Ganneys Meadow Nursery School in my constituency is doing. It is located in one of the 20% most deprived lower-level super output areas in the UK, but it received three “outstanding” judgments in its last three Ofsted reports. Nevertheless, it is really struggling financially and anything that the Minister can do to mitigate that situation would be hugely appreciated.

Mike Kane: My hon. Friend makes a fantastic point, as she defends the maintained nursery in her constituency. It has three “outstanding” judgments, yet it is under all that pressure. What sort of society are we living in when that is happening to professional staff, as well as to parents and their young children?

With so many nursery schools likely to rely on the transitional funding, this debate is of huge importance. In her eloquent speech, my hon. Friend the Member for Washington and Sunderland West (Mrs Hodgson) said that the order of the day at the moment is survival or closure for most of these operations. So can the Minister tell us how the transitional funding will be awarded, which nursery schools will benefit, and how will she

ensure that it is used in a way that supports our nursery schools up and down the land? I ask these questions because providing transitional funding is not the same as providing certainty. My hon. Friend the Member for Bradford West (Naz Shah) also pointed that out. We need long-term sustainability.

Right now, nursery schools across the country support some of our most disadvantaged communities and they are highly valued by parents, as my hon. Friend the Member for Halton (Derek Twigg) said. He was also absolutely bang on the money about the quality of training provided in these nursery schools. I remember being a PGCE—postgraduate certificate in education—student and spending two, three or four weeks at a nursery school, and I understood that those nursery teachers knew with 95% accuracy what the kids at that nursery would attain at their key stage 1 standard assessment tests and at their key stage 2 SATs, because they knew that what they could do was make the most important intervention in a child’s life.

The Minister and her colleague, the Secretary of State for Education, have said—rather frequently—that the Government are investing a record £6 billion in early years and childcare; we will see if she comes to that figure today. However, that assessment does not tell us the whole story. For instance, it does nothing to consider the impact of changes in the early years funding formula, and nor does it consider the impact of the savage cuts to local government funding that the Minister’s party has pursued for nearly seven years in government.

I will just turn to the situation in Scotland. The hon. Member for Motherwell and Wishaw (Marion Fellows) said, “Nursery education is the crème de la crème”, and I agree with her that nursery education is the best start in life. However, the Scottish National party Government are taking £150 million a year out of Glasgow City Council’s budget. How do we think that will impact on nursery schools in Scotland? And that is after Glasgow Labour had rebuilt every new school of the campus at £600 million over the last 15 years. What do we think those sorts of cuts will do for disadvantaged children in Glasgow? Let us also be absolutely clear that the SNP Government are failing to inspect nursery schools, with inspection ratios going up to years and years before the equivalent of Ofsted goes in and inspects those schools. I am afraid that the SNP Government have a record of failure in Scotland.

Marion Fellows: That is why they keep getting voted back in.

Mike Kane: That might be the case, as the hon. Lady suggests by chuntering from a sedentary position, but we now face a party that is like the Liberal Democrats of this Parliament—everybody else is to blame, except themselves. Having said that, we are to blame—all Members—for this situation, because we are not doing our research on what is actually going on north of the border.

Marion Fellows: Will the hon. Member take an intervention?

Mike Kane: No, I have no time.

Marion Fellows: You have done your slagging off.

Nadine Dorries (in the Chair): Order.

Mike Kane: Many families are supported by nursery schools that are supported by the Government. However, the Government's policy of tax-free childcare will do nothing for many working parents. The total benefit of tax-free childcare is £2,000, but that is only available to a family that spends £10,000 a year on childcare. It is quite a regressive tax and it does not really do much for those in the most disadvantaged communities, who rely on the maintained nursery sector.

The Government have to come up with a plan to protect some of the most valuable nursery schools in our country. The Minister has seen the passion that hon. Members across the Chamber have shown today, and we know that we get the biggest bang for our buck, educationally speaking, when it is spent on nursery education. However, I fear that unless the Minister comes up with a plan, her curriculum vitae will show that many maintained nurseries closed on her watch. I know personally that she does not want that to happen. Nevertheless, the risks are clear, and if she and the Government fail to act, a generation of children will really lose out.

10.46 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Women and Equalities (Caroline Dinenage): It is an enormous pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Ms Dorries. I, too, congratulate the hon. Member for Warrington North (Helen Jones) on securing this important debate, and indeed all the hon. Members from different parties who have taken part; they have spoken with great passion about their own experience of maintained nursery schools. It has been great to hear the support from across the House for these valuable educational providers.

The issue of maintained nursery schools is of huge importance. I am pleased to have the opportunity to set out very clearly the Government's position on the valuable contribution that they can make, not only to the lives of disadvantaged children, but to the wider early years sector. I want to make it very clear that the Government are committed to exploring all options to address the issues that nursery schools face, and we remain committed to ensuring that nursery schools have a bright future and can continue to meet the needs of the communities they serve.

Nursery schools do indeed have an impressive history. Central to the development of the very early nurseries was the recognition that disadvantaged children could thrive and overcome their circumstances by attending nursery settings that blended both care and education. Today that approach is backed up by robust research. We know that the first few years of a child's life are critical to shaping their future development. We also know that high-quality pre-school education reduces the effects of multiple disadvantage on later attainment and progress in primary school. In addition, we know that many maintained nursery schools go beyond the bounds of their immediate communities, using their pedagogical expertise to help other providers improve the quality of their provision.

In short, although maintained nursery schools are attended by only 2.8% of the two, three and four-year-old children who benefit from funded early education places, they nevertheless make a huge contribution to

disadvantaged children and to the early years sector as a whole. Like other Members, I have seen that in my own constituency.

Helen Jones: If, as the Minister says, she understands and values the contributions that maintained nursery schools make, why did the Government create this problem by going for a flat funding formula? She says she is trying to put it right, but the problem is entirely of the Government's own making, is it not?

Caroline Dinenage: I think that the hon. Lady is being a little narrow-minded. I was a mother under the previous Labour Government and both my children were in childcare. That Government presided over some of the most expensive childcare in Europe. I was literally working to pay for my childcare under her stewardship. We can all talk about past mistakes.

Helen Jones *rose*—

Caroline Dinenage: If the hon. Lady sits down, I will make a little progress. [*Interruption.*]

Nadine Dorries (in the Chair): Order. Ms Jones, you may get a chance to wind up at the end.

Caroline Dinenage: I put it on record that I want to preserve and promote the quality and expertise of maintained nursery schools. Social mobility is a high priority for the Government. That includes committing to the task of spreading existing best practice in high-quality early years provision across the whole system. We want all children, whatever their background and individual needs, to access the high-quality early education they deserve, wherever they come from. Nursery schools can play a valuable role in spreading that quality throughout the early years system, and many already do. I recently visited Sheringham Nursery School in Newham and saw at first hand the high-quality teaching and excellent system leadership it was providing to nurseries, private and voluntary providers and childminders across the local area. Many Members have already mentioned that issue.

Since I was appointed as Minister for early years in July, I have had many positive—but some challenging—conversations with nursery head teachers, staff and other early years professionals from across the country in an attempt to understand the issues these schools face. I have had a healthy flow of emails and letters from head teachers, governors and MPs on the subject of nursery schools. I really do understand the challenges they face. I have a very valuable one in my constituency, and I recognise the impressive support such schools have in their communities.

As my right hon. Friend the Member for Chelmsford (Sir Simon Burns) and the hon. Member for Manchester Central (Lucy Powell), who is no longer here, have mentioned, I spoke to the all-party parliamentary group on nursery schools and nursery classes last week. I was concerned by suggestions, as misquoted by the Opposition spokesperson, that 45 maintained nursery schools thought they faced closure. As a result, I asked my officials in the Department for Education to contact Pen Green, which is the maintained nursery that conducted the survey. Because the survey was confidential, Pen Green

[*Caroline Dinenage*]

has gone to the relevant maintained nursery schools to ask whether it can pass us their names. I urge Members and those in the sector to speak to us. I would like my officials to speak to every single one of those 45 nurseries that think they face imminent closure so that we can get to the bottom of the issues.

It is clear that one of the key issues facing nursery schools is funding, which is related to the introduction of the early years national funding formula. I want to be quite robust about this: the Government are not making any cuts to early years funding. In fact, we are spending more money on this than any Government. By the end of this Parliament, we will be spending £6 billion a year on childcare. [*Interruption.*] We all know that some of our Labour friends and colleagues live in a fluffy bunny world of economics, where money grows on trees and we can all spend what we want, but £6 billion a year of taxpayers' money is more than any Government have ever spent on this area. It includes more than £300 million a year for a significant uplift to our funding rates. For example, Warrington is seeing a 19% increase, Great Grimsby is seeing a 17% uplift and Manchester Central is seeing an 18% increase. [*Interruption.*]

Nadine Dorries (in the Chair): Order. I do not ever tolerate in my debates chunnings from the Back Benchers when anyone is speaking. Please desist.

Caroline Dinenage: Thank you, Ms Dorries. Members will also know that I have committed supplementary funding for maintained nursery schools of £55 million a year. That is not for two years, as the hon. Member for Washington and Sunderland West (Mrs Hodgson) misquoted, but until at least the end of this Parliament, so that current funding rates can be maintained. It will be £56 million this year. I cannot remember who it was, but one Opposition Member said that we need to spend more money and that we are doing it on the cheap. I would like to take a moment to think about that figure: £6 billion a year is a huge amount and is taxpayers' money, but it is the right amount and it reflects the Government's commitment to providing the high-quality, affordable childcare that hard-working parents need.

Derek Twigg: I am intrigued by the Minister's view on funding. Why do head teachers write to me saying that they have real concerns about massive funding cuts to their budgets?

Caroline Dinenage: I am more than happy to speak to the hon. Gentleman and any concerned providers in his constituency. We took a view to try to make the funding fairer across the country. We have also set in place a 95% pass-through rate, so that 95% of the money that local authorities get will go on to providers, and that will help. In some cases, local authorities were keeping back up to 30% of the funding.

I need to make some progress. We know that for historical reasons there were clearly unfair and unjustifiable funding differences between areas and between different types of providers. That is why we introduced the fair funding formula which maximises the amount passed on to providers while ensuring that all local authorities

are adequately funded to secure sufficient early education, including that provided by maintained nursery schools. I recognise that nursery schools have costs over and above other providers because of their structures and because of the nature of the communities they serve. That is exactly why I announced the additional £55 million a year for local authorities to allow them to maintain existing levels of maintained nursery school funding at least until the end of this Parliament. The Opposition spokesperson asked me how that money will be distributed. It will go to the local authorities, with the presumption that 100% of it will be passed on to the maintained nursery schools. It will not be part of the 95%.

The hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Melanie Onn) asked about SEND funding. In our early years national funding formula response, we said that through legislation we are requiring local authorities to set up a SEN inclusion fund and publish the eligibility criteria and value of that fund at the start of the year. It will be a local decision on eligibility, but it will be made in consultation with the local early years provider. It should be focused on low levels and emerging SEN, so that we do not have the issues with having to wait so long to prove that children are eligible.

Looking ahead, Members have asked me to share what I see as my future priorities for nursery schools. Those have developed out of the conversations and discussions I have had with head teachers, staff and early years experts, and they build on examples of innovation and partnership working that many, but not all, nursery schools currently demonstrate. Nursery schools should focus on the needs of disadvantaged children and children with special educational needs and disabilities, but all of them can drive early years system improvement by providing pedagogical leadership. We can work in partnership with other local childcare providers, including childminders, to deliver better quality and practice. We can maximise the use of their skills, experience and resources to become more sustainable.

As Members know, we have committed to consulting openly on the future sustainability of nursery schools. That is the right approach. Nursery schools operate within a changing world and it is important to recognise that it might not be the case that nursery schools should provide more of the same, and in the same way. We need to ensure that they are focused on where they can have the greatest impact. The landscape for the delivery of children's services is evolving. Partnership working is the norm in many areas, but practice is variable. Some local authorities, but not all, make full use of their nursery schools by commissioning services and asking them to co-ordinate or deliver quality improvement for their areas. System leadership of that sort makes very good use of nursery schools' expertise and experience, and I want to encourage more of that.

However, some local authorities hardly engage with their nursery schools, leaving them isolated rather than drawing on the expertise and specialist resources they offer. The schools landscape is changing as more secondary and primary schools opt to convert to academy status and join multi-academy trusts. Moreover, all public bodies, including schools, are grappling with tight budgets. That will mean looking at how to deliver better value for money and getting the balance right.

We have a lot to bear in mind as we consider the future, but I think that we are coming from a strong starting point, given the tremendous track record nursery

schools have in delivering rich learning experiences and high-quality early education to disadvantaged children, including those with special educational needs and disabilities. Our consultation will explore the vision in more detail, including the best ways to bring it about. I hope that those in the sector will take part and share their experience, wisdom and views with us once the consultation is launched. They certainly have not been shy in sharing those views with me so far. I appreciate it, and I sincerely hope they will continue to be honest and frank with me as we move forward together. The steps I have outlined will ensure the continuation of the important contribution that nursery schools make to the early years sector and the future opportunities of young children in deprived areas.

Nadine Dorries (in the Chair): Ms Jones, would you like to wind up in the few seconds left?

10.59 am

Helen Jones: I would. Briefly, I thank my colleagues for their contributions to this debate. I am far from reassured by what the Minister has said. She offered no certainty to nursery schools and clearly does not understand the problem.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House has considered funding for maintained nursery schools.

Youth Justice System: Gypsies and Travellers

11 am

Kate Green (Stretford and Urmston) (Lab): I beg to move,

That this House has considered outcomes for Gypsies and Travellers in the youth justice system.

I am very pleased to have secured this debate in order to raise the experiences and disproportionate representation of Gypsy, Traveller and Roma children in our youth justice system. This is a significant issue for the youth justice system. The most recent annual “Children in Custody” report, an independent report by Her Majesty’s inspectorate of prisons commissioned by the Youth Justice Board, was published in November last year and revealed yet again the over-representation of Gypsy, Traveller and Roma children in youth custody, as have numerous reports before it.

Despite a welcome decrease in the number of children in custody in recent years, analysis of the “Children in Custody” report by the Traveller Movement shows that the number of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children and young people in custody remains disproportionately high: 12% of children in secure training centres identify as Gypsy, Traveller or Roma, as do 7% of boys in young offenders institutions, and 51% of Gypsy, Traveller and Roma children in young offenders institutions report that this is not their first time in custody.

The figures, which are troubling in themselves, almost certainly understate the true position. The “Children in Custody” report is based on survey data, not on comprehensive and systematic monitoring of young offenders and children. The surveys completed by young offenders are based on information from only five young offenders institutions, and young offenders institutions sited in the adult prison estate are not included. Yet the Irish Chaplaincy, for example, estimates that YOI Isis, which is situated in Belmarsh prison, currently houses around 20 Gypsies and Travellers aged 18 to 21. There is little data available on sentence length, although we know that a third of Gypsy, Traveller and Roma boys in young offenders institutions had been sentenced to less than 12 months in custody. It is therefore reasonable to assume that over a full year, the overall number of Gypsy, Traveller and Roma boys in custody in the youth justice system will be higher.

However, perhaps reflecting the relative paucity of data, such over-representation in the youth custody system does not always receive sufficient official recognition and attention. All too often, Gypsy, Traveller and Roma children are overlooked by both service providers and policy makers. For example, Charlie Taylor’s recent review of the youth justice system did not mention Gypsy, Traveller and Roma young people at all, despite the representations made to him by those groups.

Gypsy, Traveller and Roma children share similar characteristics with other children in custody, particularly in relation to having been in care and their poor educational experience. It is clear, despite the deficiencies of the data that we have and the lack of attention to their circumstances, that the disproportionate representation of Gypsy, Traveller and Roma young people in the

[Kate Green]

youth custody system reflects the widespread failure of support systems and services prior to those young people entering custody.

Andy Slaughter (Hammersmith) (Lab): I am delighted that my hon. Friend secured a debate on this subject. She is right that we have sufficient information, because of the work of the Irish Chaplaincy and others, to know that discrimination is a serious problem, but it is shameful that the Government do not collect the statistics. Would she welcome the Minister telling us today that the Government will use up-to-date census data and will have a comprehensive investigation of this issue?

Kate Green: As my hon. Friend will hear, that will be the precise thrust of my speech this morning.

Gypsy, Traveller and Roma children are disproportionately likely to be the subject of care proceedings. That feeds through to the significant numbers of Gypsy, Traveller and Roma children in custody who have been in local authority care: 47% and 33% in secure training centres and young offenders institutions respectively, according to the Traveller Movement.

Meanwhile, at every key stage of their schooling, Gypsies and Travellers have lower rates of attainment. Again, their poor educational experience prior to entering custody shows up in the youth justice system: 84% of Gypsy, Traveller and Roma boys in young offenders institutions had been excluded from school, and 55% said they were 14 or younger the last time they attended school.

Although their routes into custody offer a depressing reflection of the disadvantage that Gypsy, Traveller and Roma young people experience in wider society, what is even more depressing is that these failures continue while Gypsy, Traveller and Roma children are in custody. Generally speaking, those children have a worse experience in custody compared with other children, whether in education, safety, health, understanding procedures, or being prepared for life after release. At every stage when the state ought to be looking after these young people, helping them to develop and preparing them for positive lives on release, it fails them. That need not be the case.

Despite Gypsy, Traveller and Roma children being significantly more likely to have left education early, had lower rates of attainment and had higher rates of absences and exclusions, they have very positive perceptions towards education while in custody. Some 61% of Gypsy, Traveller and Roma children in secure training centres believed education would benefit them when they left. In young offenders institutions, 70% said education would benefit them, compared with 58% of non-Gypsy, Traveller and Roma children. Gypsy, Traveller and Roma boys were also more likely to be involved in vocational and skills training or to have a job while in custody.

Despite indications of a positive appetite for education, opportunities are being missed. In secure training centres, only 55% of Gypsy, Traveller and Roma children, compared with 70% of other children, said that they had learnt skills for jobs that they would like to do in future. Youth custody institutions and facilities need to develop targeted strategies to improve educational outcomes for Gypsies, Travellers and Roma in custody, and need to promote

courses that will allow those young people to lawfully participate in businesses that fit with their family lives and culture on release.

A similar picture pertains in relation to health. The Irish Chaplaincy's "Voices Unheard" report first identified that a significant proportion of Gypsy, Traveller and Roma prisoners suffer mental health issues. The Traveller Movement's research into the "Children in Custody" responses found that those children in secure training centres were twice as likely to report having unmet health needs, while a quarter of Gypsy, Traveller and Roma boys in young offenders institutions said they were disabled and 23% reported emotional or mental health problems.

Gypsy, Traveller and Roma children in secure training centres were significantly more likely to report feeling unsafe and experiencing bullying or intimidation by staff or other young people. According to the Howard League, half had been restrained compared with 29% of other children. We see a similar experience in young offenders institutions with Gypsy, Traveller and Roma boys reporting higher rates of victimisation from other young people. Gypsy, Traveller and Roma detainees were also three and five times more likely to have their canteen and property taken off them by other young people in young offenders institutions and secure training centres respectively.

Finally, in secure training centres, Gypsy, Traveller and Roma children struggled to maintain contact with their families, and were less likely to know who to look to for help when opening a bank account, finding accommodation or continuing health services when released. Gypsy, Traveller and Roma boys in young offenders institutions were also less likely to know who they should contact if they encountered problems on release.

It is clear that many steps need to be taken to address the poor outcomes for Gypsy, Traveller and Roma children in custody. As my hon. Friend the Member for Hammersmith (Andy Slaughter) suggested, a significant barrier is the lack of adequate data. In schools, every headteacher knows the exact ethnic breakdown of his or her pupils and is therefore able to adapt strategies and policies to correct any disadvantages they experience. Shockingly, such data are not available in the youth custody system. Reports such as "Children in Custody" present only a partial snapshot. As the then prisons Minister conceded on 9 March 2015 in answer to a written question from my hon. Friend the Member for Hammersmith, Ministers

"are unable to determine the actual number"

of young Gypsies and Travellers in youth custody establishments.

The limitations of relying only on survey data are compounded by the fact that the youth justice system still uses ethnic monitoring systems based on the 2001 census classifications. Since 2011, the census has used the so-called 18+1 ethnic categorisation, which enables the identification of Gypsies and Travellers. Reflecting that, the police are expected to update their ethnic monitoring system soon to include Gypsies and Travellers, while the adult prison estate has monitored Gypsies and Travellers since 2011. The youth justice system will therefore be the only key criminal justice agency without proper modern ethnic monitoring of Gypsies and Travellers.

Given the troubling picture presented by the Traveller Movement, the Irish Chaplaincy, Her Majesty's inspectorate of prisons and others, it is not surprising that pressure for the youth justice system to address the issue is mounting. In November last year, amendments tabled by Baroness Brinton to the Policing and Crime Bill would have required the introduction of ethnic monitoring in the youth criminal justice system for Gypsy, Traveller and Roma children and young people. In the debate on her amendments on 16 November, Baroness Brinton pointed to the need to move to the 18+1 system to consistently capture the representation and experience of Gypsy, Traveller and Roma young people in the youth custody system. The national police chiefs lead for Gypsy, Traveller and Roma issues, Deputy Chief Constable Janette McCormick, wrote to the Lord Chancellor, urging her to support the amendments.

I recognise that obstacles exist to introducing that system of ethnic monitoring in the youth justice system. In the Lords' debate on the Policing and Crime Bill, Baroness Whitaker acknowledged that

"Many young people from the Gypsy and Traveller communities are fearful of admitting their ethnicity because of the bullying and exclusion"

that they had previously experienced—but, as she pointed out,

"trust can be developed if the information is shown to be helpful."—
[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 16 November 2016; Vol. 776, c. 1499.]

I also recognise concerns about the cost and complexity of changes to case management systems. Similar arguments were raised about the extension of ethnic monitoring to encompass Gypsies and Travellers in the police systems, but discussions with the Home Office and the National Police Chiefs Council revealed that there would be no cost to upgrading their systems. It is highly doubtful that the youth justice system can have a significantly more difficult or complex case management system than the police, which have eight or nine additional data sets and 45 territorial police forces to contend with.

From my conversations, I do not believe that what is needed in the youth justice system is a complete corporate systems overhaul, but instead a small amendment to existing data systems. In any event, the cost of updating the system is outweighed by the benefits of helping to turn around the lives of these children and ensuring they lead purposeful, positive lives on release. I know that point is recognised by Lord McNally, chair of the Youth Justice Board. I was very grateful to have the opportunity to discuss the matter with him recently and I very much welcome his constructive engagement.

I am also pleased that in a letter to Lord Rosser following the House of Lords debate last November in response to points he raised about the cost of changing systems, Baroness Chisholm said that the Youth Justice Board is committed to moving to the 18+1 classification, but I note that no specific timescales or costs were suggested in that letter.

Children from a Traveller background clearly experience greater levels of need and have worse experiences in custody than other children. A year ago, the then chief inspector of prisons Nick Hardwick said that

"with any other group such huge disproportionality would have led to more formal inquiry and investigation into what part of their backgrounds or interaction with the criminal justice system had led to this situation."

I applaud the Prime Minister's commitment to monitoring racial disparities in public service outcomes and nowhere is that more acutely needed than in relation to Gypsy, Traveller and Roma children. I was therefore very pleased that in responding to me at Cabinet Office questions on 2 November last year, the Minister for the Cabinet Office and Paymaster General said that he would ensure that every Government Department and agency would use the 2011 census classifications. Nowhere is it more surely time to move from warm words to taking action properly to capture and monitor the data needed to address the needs of this deeply disadvantaged group of children than in the youth justice system. I hope that the Minister will be able to tell us the tangible steps the Government are taking to do that and that they are taking them quickly.

11.16 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Justice (Dr Phillip Lee): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Ms Dorries. I congratulate the hon. Member for Stretford and Urmston (Kate Green) on securing the debate. She has a long history of engagement in these issues, both before coming into Parliament and since.

Young people are some of the most vulnerable in the secure estate. We are determined to improve standards in youth justice so that we not only punish crime but intervene earlier to prevent crime and reform offenders to prevent further crimes from being committed.

There has been a significant and welcome reduction in the number of young people entering the youth justice system in recent years. However, we are concerned about the levels of disparity that exist in the justice system. Last August, the Prime Minister announced an audit of public services to reveal racial disparities, and the review, headed by the right hon. Member for Tottenham (Mr Lammy), has been established to provide an independent assessment of the treatment of and outcomes for black and minority ethnic individuals in the criminal justice system. Gypsies and Travellers fall within the scope of the review. In November last year, the right hon. Gentleman wrote to the Prime Minister setting out some of his emerging findings. The final report is due to be published in the summer, and we will give its findings careful consideration.

We also welcome the Women and Equalities Committee inquiry launched in November last year, which will look at the effectiveness of Government policy in improving outcomes for Gypsy, Romany or Traveller communities across education, health and employment as well as the criminal justice system. We will monitor the outcome of that inquiry.

I note the recent report by the Traveller Movement on Gypsies, Romany and Travellers in the youth justice system, for which the hon. Member for Stretford and Urmston drafted the foreword. I commend its work to promote increased race equality, inclusion and community cohesion.

The Youth Justice Board does not currently require local authorities to collect data specific to the identification of Gypsy, Romany and Traveller children and young people. However, the YJB and Her Majesty's inspectorate of prisons publish an annual report, "Children in Custody", which monitors the number of GRT children in young

[Dr Phillip Lee]

offenders institutions and secure training centres. The latest report, published last November, found that of the young people surveyed in STCs, 12% identified as GRT in 2015-16, which was up from 11% in 2014-15. For young offenders institutions, 7% considered themselves to be GRT, which was down from 8% in 2014-15.

The report showed that in young offenders institutions there was no difference between GRT children and the rest of the cohort in understanding spoken and written English. It also showed that participation in education, work or vocational skills training in custody is higher for those identifying as GRT than among the rest of the cohort.

Mr David Lammy (Tottenham) (Lab): As I think the Minister is indicating, surveys show that Gypsy and Traveller young people's experience of education in youth custody is positive; to the extent that they are in vocational training, they want to do it and their perceptions of being in education are positive.

Nadine Dorries (in the Chair): Order. This is not a speech, Mr Lammy. It is an intervention.

Mr Lammy: I have seen that as I have been around prisons. That is something that the youth justice system can build on. I hope the Minister might indicate how that might happen.

Dr Lee: I know that the right hon. Gentleman is very interested in expanding the evidence base on the experience of GRT children in the youth justice system, in particular. As the hon. Member for Stretford and Urmston indicated, the genesis of a lot of the problems encountered in the justice system predates their appearance in the system. A lot of them relate to the fact that those children do not attend school, so their first opportunity to receive education is in the system. We are conscious of that, and we are pleased that some of the indicators show that, when those services are offered, children engage with them. We want that to continue.

As I said, the youth justice system is of great importance to the Government. We have made it clear that outcomes are not good enough for children in custody. Reoffending rates remain stubbornly high, and not enough is done to support young offenders. That is evident for all young offenders, including those who identify as GRT. We also remain concerned about the level of violence in the youth secure estate. Recent figures demonstrate that levels of assault, self-harm and restraint remain too high.

In December, we set out our response to Charlie Taylor's review of the youth justice system and how we will improve outcomes for young offenders and safety across the youth custodial estate. We will develop a new pre-apprenticeship pathway to ensure that all children and young people are in education, training or employment on their release. We have committed to boosting the number of frontline staff in young offenders institutions, and we will develop two secure schools with a particular focus on education and health. They will look to attract a wide range of specialist providers and allow them the freedom to decide how best to deliver services. I look forward to updating the House on the progress of those reforms as the work develops.

It is important that ethnicity classifications for young people are robust and accurate, so any potential disparities must be identified and suitably addressed. In 2011, the National Offender Management Service adopted the 18+1 ethnicity monitoring system on the centralised database used in prisons and young offenders institutions for the management of offenders, following the change of ethnicity classifications within the national census. The 18+1 system included as additional categories "Arab" and "Gypsy or Irish Traveller", but the new classification is not consistently used by secure children's homes, secure training centres and youth offending teams.

The YJB uses a number of different IT systems to monitor performance across the youth justice system. The two largest systems are eAsset, the custody booking system, and the youth justice application framework, which is used to record the ethnicity of young people and draws on data from individual youth offending team case management systems. Both of those systems currently use criteria from the 2001 census categories, which means that they do not capture GRT as a distinct category.

I am pleased to say that the Youth Justice Board has confirmed it is keen to move to the 18+1 system. However, although we support working towards consistency in the data that are recorded, further work is required to assess the feasibility and costs associated with such a move.

Kate Green: I am very encouraged by what the Minister is saying. Can he indicate how quickly that feasibility work can start?

Dr Lee: No, but I will write to the hon. Lady with a guide to how long it will take. There are some issues around the implementation, as she will understand, not least because the national census criteria may change again. It is work in progress, but I am happy to write to her.

Not only would the YJB have to make changes to its central systems, but it is likely that the youth offending teams would have to amend their individual case management systems too.

Andy Slaughter: I am very glad about what the Minister has said, but to clarify that point, is he saying that that will happen and he is just going to give us a date, or that it might happen depending on the cost?

Dr Lee: No, I am not committing to it happening. I am committing to coming back to Members with the approach we are taking. There are potential issues not only with the costs, but with how the work is going to be implemented across a diverse set of institutions, which are run by different organisations. I am committed to coming back with a schedule setting out the timing and how we are approaching this issue.

Work has begun on looking into the implications of the changes. In October 2016, the Youth Justice Board informed the four case management system suppliers, which cover 158 youth offending teams in England and Wales, of its intention to move towards the revised classification system. It is formalising its business requirements prior to initiating a preliminary impact assessment, which will set out the dependencies with

existing IT systems and identify the feasibility and indicative costs of moving to the revised classification system.

On an issue raised by the hon. Member for Stretford and Urmston, the Government agree in principle with the use of the 18+1 system. We opposed the amendments that Baroness Brinton tabled to the Policing and Crime Bill for two main reasons: first, because further work was required to consider the cost and feasibility; and, secondly, because enshrining its use in legislation would create issues in the event that the Office for National Statistics decided to change the 18+1 system and introduce a new system of ethnicity classification in the future.

Although there is much work to do, the Government are committed to accurate monitoring of ethnicity across the youth justice system.

Question put and agreed to.

11.26 am

Sitting suspended.

Prevent Strategy

[SIR DAVID CRAUSBY *in the Chair*]

2.30 pm

Lucy Allan (Telford) (Con): I beg to move,

That this House has considered implementation of the Prevent Strategy.

It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship for the first time, Sir David. I am pleased to have the opportunity to raise this important issue. The statutory Prevent duty introduced in 2015 has given rise to increasing levels of concern in different parts of our communities and of the House. There is now a level of disquiet, which it would be wrong to ignore, about how the Prevent duty is working in practice and its impact on community cohesion.

The Prevent duty requires those in a position of trust, such as teachers or doctors, to report people who they perceive might be a risk—

The Minister for Security (Mr Ben Wallace): I am sorry to intervene on my hon. Friend so early, but I am afraid that she has repeated the same line she said at the beginning of the debate on her private Member's Bill on Friday. There is no requirement to report; there is a requirement to put in place safeguards and risk assessment for children. She may look at the guidance, at paragraphs 67 and 68 on page 11. It does not include a requirement to report. I ask her to change that line, because it is part of peddling a myth of what Prevent is about.

Lucy Allan: I thank the Minister for correcting me on that point. I am opening a debate on issues of concern to many people, and I would not want to fall inadvertently into any traps of myth-peddling.

The people referred to Prevent are those perceived to be at risk of being drawn into terrorism and those deemed possibly to be susceptible to extremism, including non-violent extremism. Today I want to highlight the difficulties that the Prevent duty is creating. I want to set out why, despite individual examples of good practice, Prevent as a concept or strategy to draw people away from terrorism is not working. I also want to draw attention to the way such concerns are being dismissed, rather than listened to, and the way those who express them are being depicted as seeking to undermine Prevent or even our security.

All of us come to this place with the objective of giving a voice to those who are not being listened to or heard, and of campaigning on something we have seen to be wrong or not working—we want to put it right and highlight where it is happening. That is what I am seeking to do in this debate.

The greatest difficulty with Prevent is that it is driving a wedge between authority and the community. The problem lies in the way the communities most affected by Prevent experience and perceive the strategy. For all its good intentions, if it is perceived by those it affects as punitive or intrusive, it will not be productive or have the desired effect.

Mrs Maria Miller (Basingstoke) (Con): I am listening with interest to the point my hon. Friend is making, which reflects the evidence that the Women and Equalities Committee gathered for our report on challenges that

[Mrs Maria Miller]

Muslim people face in the workplace. Has she had a chance to look at that report, which backs up some of her points?

Lucy Allan: I thank my right hon. Friend for making that point. Absolutely, Select Committees such as the Home Affairs Committee and the Joint Committee on Human Rights have looked at all of this in some detail, so in preparing for the debate I read the reports of her Committee and those others. The reports reflect several recurring themes, such as how communities perceive Prevent and what they feel about the way it is being operated. That is incredibly important. If the strategy is to succeed and make us safer, people have to consent to it; they have to buy into it and accept that it is helpful, not intrusive or punitive. If we do not deal with the perception and how people are experiencing Prevent, it will not work.

Keith Vaz (Leicester East) (Lab): The hon. Lady is making an excellent speech and is to be commended for bringing this matter before the House. She is saying that communities need to be at the heart of any Prevent strategy. Prevent must not be seen as Whitehall imposing its views on communities, whatever those communities are. The strategy must work in tandem and engage with them in order to find a solution to the problems of terrorism.

Lucy Allan: I completely agree with the right hon. Gentleman. I am delighted that he made that point, and that he made it so eloquently, because he has helped to articulate my argument.

Under the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015, Prevent moved from being a co-operative and voluntary action by the community to being a statutory duty, and therein lies the problem. A failure to meet a statutory duty can have negative consequences, for example for teachers in schools. Ofsted assesses whether the duty has been met and delivers a grading for the achievement of compliance with it. The grading will be reduced if a school has not complied with the duty. As a school governor, I have seen the incentive to make referrals under Prevent. If we do not make them, we might feel that we will get into trouble, or that there will be a negative impact on the school or a teacher's career.

That approach has led to an exponential increase in the number of referrals since Prevent became a statutory duty. One child a week under the age of 10 is being reported to Prevent—I use the word “reported”, but perhaps I should use “referred” instead.

Dr Daniel Poulter (Central Suffolk and North Ipswich) (Con): My hon. Friend is making some good points about concerns in certain communities, particularly the Muslim community. Does she accept that one issue is that of miscommunication? My understanding is that Prevent is not only about the Muslim community, which seems to be the focus for a lot of the discussion; it is also about the real danger from right-wing extremist groups. Prevent is focused on training people to understand that as well.

Lucy Allan: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. I have not so far mentioned, and I think I will not mention at any point, the Muslim community specifically. However,

I will mention some use of Prevent to tackle the far right, which is a good point and one we should all take on board.

Victoria Prentis (Banbury) (Con): My hon. Friend is being most generous in giving way. In the course of her speech, will she tackle an important evil that Prevent is designed to counter and mention how it is used to build up our child safeguarding provisions?

Lucy Allan: My hon. Friend raises an extremely important issue, to which I will devote a whole section of my speech. I have concerns about the conflation of safeguarding and counter-extremism measures, which I will come to in due course.

The Government naturally have a duty to protect the public, and they are seeking to discharge that duty through the Prevent strategy. We all want to see extremism tackled, and the intention of Prevent is, in theory, to stop young people being drawn into terrorism and to protect them from extremist views that might render them more susceptible to radicalisation. We get into more difficult territory, however, when we start to tackle belief, ideas and the expression of political and religious views. The whole issue then becomes a great deal more complicated. We could find ourselves in a situation in which the Government decide which views are too extreme and debate can be shut down, so that issues that are better discussed and challenged openly are driven underground.

That is all before anyone has even done anything, Prevent is operating in a pre-crime space, which sounds positively Orwellian. That is at the heart of some of the concerns being expressed about the Prevent duty. Our schools need to be places where young people can discuss any issue at all and develop the ability to see extremist ideologies for what they are. We need to help young people develop the resilience to challenge those ideologies, and if we expose them to only the views that the Government find acceptable, we deny them the opportunity to challenge alternative views and fail to equip them with the ability to think critically and learn how to exercise judgment.

Ms Diane Abbott (Hackney North and Stoke Newington) (Lab): The hon. Lady talks about children. Is she aware of a recent case in Bedfordshire where a school called the police because a seven-year-old child had been given a plastic gun as a present? Neither of the child's parents was an observant anything; the father was a lapsed Muslim and the mother was a Hindu. If Prevent has reached the stage where people call the police on seven-year-old children, something is wrong.

Lucy Allan: I agree. I am aware of that case, and there have been many similar cases. That is a real concern, because it puts teachers in the position of having to take action that they might feel is inappropriate, because they do not want to damage their school's credibility and its Ofsted reports. We are suddenly in a cycle where people say, “Let's report people just in case.” The Minister will say that Prevent is a protective and safeguarding measure. We must be very careful not to use words to describe what is happening that do not necessarily reflect reality.

Mr Wallace: Perhaps I can help my hon. Friend and the hon. Member for Hackney North and Stoke Newington (Ms Abbott). The case that the hon. Lady raised was not a Prevent case; it was not referred to Prevent and it did not involve Prevent officers, either council officers or police officers. It had nothing to do with Prevent. *The Guardian* sought to report it as if it was a Prevent case, but it did not bother checking the facts. Therein lies part of the issue; people are happy to report things that might have taken place in another part of the education environment and had nothing to do with Prevent.

Sir David Crausby (in the Chair): Order. I will call the first of the three Front Benchers at 3.30 pm. Several Back Benchers want to speak, and there will be little enough time for them to do so, so I say to the Front Benchers: hold your horses until you get the opportunity to make a speech.

Lucy Allan: I thank the Minister for his intervention. What is important about what he said is that although the incident was not referred under the Prevent mechanism, the same actions were taken. The teachers concerned would have been trained in Prevent and alert to this whole issue. Although they did not formally trigger the Prevent mechanism, they still called the police about an issue that might otherwise have been to do with extremism. It is important to bear that in mind.

From what I have seen, when schools look for signs of extremism, they do not really know what they are looking for. They often come up with suggestions for things that might be grounds for referral that have no possible connection at all to extremism. I have sat in governors' meetings where teachers who want to comply have openly discussed scenarios such as a child coming into school and saying that he has been on a Fathers 4 Justice march or a march to protest against badger culls. To me, Prevent is certainly not intended to tackle that. There is no indication that that type of activity would lead to extremist or terrorist behaviour. It is greatly concerning that people are sitting around in schools thinking, "What possible scenarios can we come up with?"

More and more public sector workers are being trained in how to report under the Prevent duty, but that does not make me feel any more comfortable. I believe that some 600,000 people are now trained to refer people under Prevent for the purposes of re-education and religious guidance. That does not give me confidence at all; it actually makes me feel more concerned. We should not, as a matter of course, have people sitting and waiting to spot signs when, if there had been grounds to report them, their own good judgment may have kicked in and enabled some less intrusive, less authoritarian approach to be taken to deal with the issue.

Dr Poulter: My hon. Friend might be aware that I am one of those public sector workers when I am not working as an MP. May I reassure her that a lot of work on Prevent goes on, particularly in psychiatry, and we use clinical judgment in exercising our duties? Referrals are rarely made to Prevent through mental health services unless there is a reason for doing so. Referrals are usually made due to the exploitation of an individual by other people, and it is those people who end up being referred and engaged in the Prevent process, not the individual themselves.

Lucy Allan: My hon. Friend makes a good point.

Children and young people will always test boundaries, and playground banter and bragging must not be seen as potentially sinister things where children must be watched. That breeds fear, suspicion and mistrust, which concerns me.

My hon. Friend the Member for Banbury (Victoria Prentis) raised safeguarding. I want to challenge the way that Prevent is packaged as a safeguarding measure. In effect, we are told, "Prevent must be a good thing, because it is intended to keep us safe." It is depicted as offering support and advice to ensure that susceptibility to radicalisation is diminished. It is a real concern that that is how the Government perceive Prevent, because that perception is out of step with how Prevent is interpreted and perceived by those affected by it. In the context of Prevent, safeguarding is often about forcible state intervention in the private life of an individual when no crime has been committed, and that is inevitably experienced in a negative way.

It is important to understand that families subjected to safeguarding measures will, in any event, experience them as frightening, shaming and stigmatising. Someone in a position of trust—whether a teacher or a doctor—is used to gather and share data, often about young children, without consent, investigations are conducted and the police are involved. That process is anything but supportive and helpful; it destroys trust. A less heavy-handed approach would be far more constructive. Calling that approach safeguarding, and conflating counter-extremism measures and safeguarding, is quite dangerous.

Victoria Prentis: I, too, was one of those public sector workers before being elected. The difficulty is that counter-terrorism is the extreme end of what the Prevent strategy tries to deal with. The other measures—those to do with child safeguarding—are often part and parcel of the journey to countering terrorism and the problems that are experienced in families who are becoming radicalised. My hon. Friend the Member for Gower (Byron Davies) knows well that criminal activity is very much part of terrorism. I wonder whether my hon. Friend the Member for Telford will talk about those links, which are rightly made.

Lucy Allan: I thank my hon. Friend for making that point. I reiterate that we should not present Prevent as simply supportive and helpful; we must be more aware of the way it is perceived by the people to whom it is delivered. If we do not try to put ourselves in the shoes of the people who experience it, Prevent will not achieve what we want it to achieve. It is all very well for the Government to say, "Well, we know best, we want the best and we are well intentioned. We want to support and protect people." Actually, if we call the police, share data and stigmatise people, we will alienate them. My hon. Friend the Member for Banbury may not agree that that can happen, but I urge the Minister to try to anticipate how he might feel if his children were subjected to a safeguarding procedure. That process is intimidating and frightening, and there is no doubt that people feel ostracised and alienated by it, however well intended it is.

That brings me quite neatly to the way the Government are responding to the concerns that have been raised by Members of several parties in this House and in the Lords, and by the Joint Committee on Human Rights,

[Lucy Allan]

David Anderson QC and many others. We must listen to people when they raise concerns. It is not enough just to say, “Well, it’s well intended and there are good examples of it working well in practice for individual cases.” This is a much bigger issue of principle; it is about whether our communities will be safer or less safe as a result of Prevent. It is about whether communities feel stigmatised, alienated or marginalised. If people are saying that is how they feel, there is a duty on the Government to listen and not just bat their concerns away by saying, “Well, they don’t understand the level of terrorist threat,” “They are seeking to undermine Prevent,” or “They are doing something that is destructive of our efforts to keep society safe.”

I ask the Minister to listen and to understand that the state can be oppressive and authoritarian when it intervenes and interferes in the lives of individuals. People who are concerned about Prevent should not be dismissed as failing to understand or for not being a criminal barrister or having the right knowledge of such things. That is how they feel, and I urge the Government to listen to that. I do not believe the narrative that people are somehow motivated to undermine Prevent. They are just raising concerns, and it would help community cohesion if there was an overt attempt to hear those concerns and not just plough on regardless.

The terror threat is real and we must take all measures to reduce it. I do not underestimate the difficult job that the Minister and his Department have in doing that—I fully support him in his efforts—but the statutory Prevent duty is not the way to do it. It is too blunt an instrument.

I ask the Minister to consider the Select Committee reports we have talked about and to reflect on their recommendations. Some incredibly important work—research done and evidence taken—has been done on that and it would be helpful if all of that was taken on board. I ask him in particular to consider the views of David Anderson QC and the evidence he gave to those inquiries. He had been out in the communities, talking to the people affected, and his specific recommendation was that there should be an independent review of the Prevent duty. I gently ask the Minister to give that further consideration.

The Government have said in response to concerns that they intend to strengthen Prevent. I urge the Minister to consider whether the desired outcome would be more achievable if we were to use more emotional intelligence and consent, in a collaborative, community-led way at the grassroots, rather than the muscle of continued forced state intervention, which is what is implied by strengthening Prevent, even if that is not the intention.

Our safety and security is too important. We must get this right. It is therefore essential that we reflect on all these issues. I am grateful to the Minister for coming here today and for all the contributions that have been made.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Sir David Crausby (in the Chair): As I said, I will call the Front-Bench speakers in 35 minutes or so. Seven Members are standing, so if they keep their contributions short, everyone will get in.

2.53 pm

Yasmin Qureshi (Bolton South East) (Lab): It is a pleasure to speak in this debate. I congratulate the hon. Member for Telford (Lucy Allan) on securing it. I will start with one of her first points: that those who question the use of Prevent are accused of not being concerned with people’s safety. Let me give an example. When the 7 July incident took place near the bus stops in Euston, it happened in an area to which I normally used to travel to go to my chambers in the Temple—it just happened that that day I was out of the country. I therefore think I am well aware of the possible threats to security that people face. When I am accused of not being concerned about people’s security, I find that incredibly insulting because, but for the grace of God, I could have been in that incident.

The Minister intervened on the hon. Lady and said that Prevent is not about reporting but about putting safeguards in place. However, that is effectively reporting. When a person thinks there is someone of concern and they start the safeguarding process, they call on the local authority, social services and various other people—that is effectively nothing but reporting.

The Government have a duty to protect our country, but the rules, laws, programmes and provisions we put in place must be effective. There is no point in having a knee-jerk reaction to a problem and saying, “We will have Prevent. We will put it on a statutory basis, and somehow all the problems of radicalisation will go away”, without realising whether the policy is effective.

Countless studies have been carried out. In October last year I hosted an event for the Open Society Justice Initiative, which had spoken to 80 different sets of experts in the field and many families who had been affected by Prevent. It showed that 80% of the people affected had been referred wrongly—that is 80% of children and families affected completely unnecessarily. The independent reviewer of terrorism legislation, David Anderson, QC, said:

“Prevent has become a more significant source of grievance in affected communities than the police and ministerial powers that are exercised under the Pursue strand of the Contest strategy”.

Again, someone has looked at terrorism legislation and thinks that Prevent is wrong. Unless and until we get the community on board, we will not be able to effect any real changes. All Prevent does is stigmatise people.

Prevent was brought in by the Labour Government, but it was rolled out on a voluntary basis. I have to say I was not keen on it then, but at least it was voluntary. Now it is statutory, which means that doctors, nurses, hospitals and teachers can get into trouble if they do not report something that the Government think they should have done. That puts so much pressure on professionals. They are being asked to make disclosures and breach confidentiality, and families and everyone else are being put under stress for something that is not achieving anything.

Kate Green (Stretford and Urmston) (Lab): Apologies for coming into the debate late, Sir David. I join others in congratulating the hon. Member for Telford (Lucy Allan) on securing it. Does my hon. Friend the Member for Bolton South East (Yasmin Qureshi) agree that professionals—teachers, clinicians and so on—would

say they already have professional standards that meet the need, and that the additional duty does not add anything?

Yasmin Qureshi: I absolutely agree. Dr Clare Gerada, who spoke at the presentation I held last year, said exactly the same thing: they already have duties to look after vulnerable people. By making Prevent statutory, we are pressurising them, which could lead to them being affected if, for example, they feel that somebody should not be referred in a particular case.

James Berry (Kingston and Surbiton) (Con): The hon. Lady is making a good case against Prevent. However, she said that it is not achieving anything. Will she set out the evidence for that assertion?

Yasmin Qureshi: All I hear is that the people who are being affected are annoyed by it, and they are getting upset. It is not achieving anything because the communities we need to have on board are not. It is therefore a waste of time, money and resources.

If we want to deal with radicalisation, whether far-right radicalisation or any other fundamentalism, there are ways of doing that. However, we should not use this method, which criminalises people. For example, in schools we could have classes taught to everyone, not to particular groups, about the dangers of the internet. We do not talk enough about the amount of online grooming, pornography on websites, how many young people are being bullied in schools and how much sex texting is going on. All those things are part of safeguarding. We should invest in classes in junior and secondary schools where all the children get together and are taught about all the dangers they could face, so that they can discuss and deal with them together. That would mean we could prevent them from facing such issues, whether far-right, sexual or whatever. We should not do that in the way that has happened since the Prevent programme was rolled out.

I want to make two final points. All of these measures come from the fact that there are security issues. However, we must remember one thing. I know we are talking about the far right, but we must remember that while the measures all came out of so-called Islamic terrorism, 99% of the people who have died as a result of Daesh, al-Qaeda and other such groups have been Muslims, whether in the middle east or the UK. Far-right extremism has killed Muslims in Canada, USA, Norway, the UK and other countries. Yes, there is an issue with people having right-wing or fundamentalist views, and we need to challenge those views, but Prevent is not the way to do so.

We say that Prevent is about British values. I am not making a joke of this, but the President of the USA, through what he has said and his Executive orders, has contravened every single fundamental British value. When he comes to the UK, he should be put in the Prevent programme, along with his adviser, Steve Bannon, who is a right-wing fascist and white supremacist. Both should be put in the Prevent programme when they come to the UK.

3 pm

Byron Davies (Gower) (Con): I am grateful for the opportunity to make a small contribution to the debate under your chairmanship, Sir David. I congratulate my

hon. Friend the Member for Telford (Lucy Allan) on securing the debate and giving us the opportunity to discuss this issue.

It is my belief that Prevent is making a positive difference. The Government are working in partnership with local communities and grassroots organisations to challenge poisonous extremist narratives and safeguard our young people and society. The battle against terrorist recruiters must be fought on several fronts, including online as well as in our communities. Much of the work being done in the UK is world leading, including the first counter-terrorism internet referral unit dedicated to taking down hundreds of pieces of extremist and terrorist content that are referred to it every day, which has now been replicated internationally. However, extremism cannot be defeated by the Government and law enforcement alone: it is vital that everyone plays their part.

The importance of the Prevent strategy was made clear in the other place in 2016. I draw attention to Channel, which is one part of the broader Prevent agenda. It is an intensive, one-to-one mentoring programme that challenges violent views through the de-programming and rewiring of an individual. About 7,500 referrals were made to Prevent in 2015-16—around 20 a day. Of those referred to the scheme, which was set up in 2005 in the wake of the 7/7 bombings, one in 10 were deemed to be vulnerable to terrorism and were referred to Channel, while a quarter were found to be vulnerable but not at risk of involvement in terrorism.

Baroness Williams of Trafford has noted that

“since 2012 over 1,000 people have received support through Channel, the voluntary and confidential programme which provides support for people vulnerable to being drawn into terrorism. The vast majority of those people went on to leave the programme with no further terrorist-related concerns.”—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 20 December 2016; Vol. 777, c. 1544.]

That shows the important work that Channel and Prevent are undertaking. Every time a person receives support and turns their back on the hatred of extremism is a life saved, a family with renewed hope and a community that is brought closer together, not dragged further apart. Each person who is aided is a story of the struggle to battle extremism, but with each person we move a step closer to defeating the poison of radicalisation and those who would seek to drive us apart.

Lucy Allan: My hon. Friend is making an important speech. Does he agree that the statutory duty in Prevent puts it on to a different level from being just a voluntary and community-based source of support and guidance?

Byron Davies: I understand what my hon. Friend says but, at the end of the day, it is a set of guidelines that we would be floundering without. I accept what she says to a certain extent, but that guidance has so far proven to be of great advantage.

As I was saying, those lives saved shine a light on the positive difference Prevent makes to safeguarding people, particularly children, from the risks of radicalisation—which I think further addresses my hon. Friend's point. Indeed, Simon Cole, who is the chief constable of Leicestershire and the National Police Chiefs Council's lead on Prevent, said the scheme is “fundamental” to fighting terrorism. It is clear from intelligence sources, police on the ground and those in the communities that Prevent plays a crucial role in combating terrorism and extreme ideologies.

[Byron Davies]

Furthermore, Prevent protects our young people, who are the future of our society, from the poison of hatred and vitriol from whatever ideology or extremist element it comes from. Indeed, schools play a vital role in protecting pupils from those risks, and it is right and important that these issues are discussed in an open and trusting environment.

Lucy Allan: Does my hon. Friend agree that trust is important in making Prevent work? If people are reported behind their backs without their knowing, does he not think that erodes trust?

Byron Davies: I agree that it is a question of trust, and of communities understanding the principle behind Prevent. The Government certainly have a big part to play in that, and I think we all share a responsibility for that.

It is the essence of our values that we can discuss the risks of a certain ideology or way of thinking in an open and trusting environment that allows full examination of the issue—not behind closed doors or simply ignoring it in the hope that the problem goes away, because it simply never does. If we are to have a healthy society, the most significant and meaningful thing we can do is to ensure that our children grow up with the key values of tolerance, respect for other cultures, creeds and races, a healthy respect for the rule of law and an inquisitive attitude towards those who wield power.

We must therefore continue to support the vital programmes that challenge those ideologies and individuals that seek to undermine our society, and the foundations on which it is built, with poisonous and extremist narratives. That is why I am particularly pleased that Prevent focuses on all forms of terrorism, including the particularly dangerous and disgusting ideology of the extreme right, as I have mentioned, and not only on one community.

I know that the Home Affairs Committee and others have expressed concerns that Prevent is perhaps not quite as community-led as it should be and is treated with suspicion by some. It is not unusual that schemes and programmes are treated with suspicion by certain communities at first; perhaps we must all work a bit harder at it. I witnessed that at first hand while working with communities on numerous issues during my time with the police service. It takes time to build trust and rapport with local communities, but I know the Government and those delivering Prevent work tirelessly to address certain perceptions and beliefs, and that they are more aware than anybody of the importance of working in partnership with communities and grassroots organisations.

We must not forget that the Government cannot do everything alone; communities and individuals need to step forward. We all need to step forward and play our part in fighting extremism and its root causes wherever we find them without fear or favour. Radicalisation devastates the lives of individuals, their families and communities. Prevent does not target anyone—it is about safeguarding those at risk, plain and simple. Prevent is, and must be, fundamentally rooted in and led by communities. Those delivering Prevent travel the length and breadth of the country to engage with community leaders, civil society groups, local authorities and frontline workers.

We must support this vital work to ensure that we safeguard those who are at risk of the terrible toxicity of radicalisation, and to persuade them of a different outlook based on tolerance and respect for other cultures, of which I spoke earlier. With each person, this scheme helps our society to become healthier, which is why I am, and will continue to be, a strong supporter of the scheme.

3.8 pm

Stuart C. McDonald (Cumbernauld, Kilsyth and Kirkintilloch East) (SNP): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Sir David. I congratulate the hon. Member for Telford (Lucy Allan) on securing the debate. She made a thoughtful speech that I agreed with and supported for the most part.

I do not think anybody here doubts that the Government should have a plan and should act to prevent citizens and residents from falling into terrorism. The Government's good intentions are not in doubt, and I would go as far as to say that some good initiatives are carried out under the Prevent strategy. However, as the hon. Lady said in opening the debate, we must get this right, and we must get the overall strategy right. The way the Government have gone about the strategy's implementation seems to have caused confusion and alienation, and risks being significantly counter-productive. I agree that there should be a review, including of the statutory duty, and I say that based on the evidence that the Home Affairs Committee received. Other colleagues present today will also talk about that inquiry. From what we heard, there is little doubt that trust in Prevent is at rock bottom in some of our communities. As part of our inquiry, in Bradford we met around 70 young people aged between 16 and 25 representing Muslim communities in Bradford, Leeds and Dewsbury. It was a fantastic initiative from the right hon. Member for Leicester East (Keith Vaz), brilliantly organised by the hon. Member for Bradford West (Naz Shah).

The message from the young people was pretty clear and damning. They felt picked upon and stigmatised. Many had felt restricted in what they could say and do for fear of attracting attention. They certainly did not feel engaged with or involved positively in Prevent; it was quite the opposite.

Richard Arkless (Dumfries and Galloway) (SNP): Out of interest, can my hon. Friend confirm whether the Committee took evidence from any Scottish-based stakeholders or kids in Scotland that had been subject to the Prevent duty?

Stuart C. McDonald: My hon. Friend has stolen the thunder from the end of my speech: I will come on to that shortly.

Going back to the young people in Bradford, as far as I could glean, their almost unanimous view was that Prevent was irretrievable. Their views were pretty consistent with a lot of what we heard in oral evidence at formal hearings and in the written submissions that we received as well. With that evidence as a background, even on its own terms the Government's Prevent strategy seems to be falling short. When we look at the 2011 strategy, what was apparently intended sometimes seems to bear little resemblance to what has happened in practice. The strategy pointed out that:

"Prevent depends on a successful integration strategy...the Government will not securitise its integration strategy. This has been a mistake in the past."

In the eyes of so many of our witnesses, securitisation is exactly what has happened at the expense of broader integration.

The strategy also stated:

“The Government’s commitment to localism will support the Prevent strategy. Communities and local authorities have a key part in this strategy. But as a national security issue, Prevent needs to be developed in very close conjunction with central Departments.”

Again, for many of those giving evidence to the Committee, the emphasis had been much more on central departmental control than it was on empowering communities. That is why our Committee concluded:

“Rather than being seen as the community-led approach Prevent was supposed to be, it is perceived to be a top-down ‘Big Brother’ security operation.”

So there is a need, as the Committee concluded, to build “a real partnership between community groups and the state.”

Before I finish I want to touch briefly on the position in Scotland. National security and

“special powers for dealing with terrorism”

are reserved under the Scotland Act 1998—but not “extremism”. Many of the key agencies for countering extremism such as education, police, communities and so on are devolved. From that we have a rather different set of guidance documents issued under the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 on a joint Scottish and UK Government basis. It is worth comparing those documents—how they work and what works best—because there are always things to learn from each jurisdiction. It will not surprise hon. Members that I am going to stick up for the Scottish version. It is interesting how most of the five or so chapters are the same. However, chapter C in the version for Scotland is entitled “A collaborative approach to the Prevent duty”, whereas the guidance for England and Wales has a chapter entitled, “A risk-based approach to the *Prevent* duty”. Although good chunks of that chapter overlap, that difference in emphasis is important: collaboration instead of securitisation.

Furthermore, when we look at the 2011 UK-wide Prevent strategy, that document notes:

“The approach to *Prevent* in Scotland has always made a distinction between preventing terrorism and community cohesion and integration. In Scotland, *Prevent* has been more closely aligned to those areas of policy that promote community safety, tackle crime and reduce violence...These first principles of *Prevent* have influenced delivery in Scotland and this has necessarily involved a different style and emphasis.”

Although not scientific—to answer my hon. Friend’s question—those differences in emphasis and implementation were reflected in another visit undertaken as part of the Home Affairs inquiry when the right hon. Member for Leicester East and I visited Shawlands Academy in Glasgow. It is fair to say that that is the most ethnically and religiously diverse school in Scotland. We discussed with senior pupils and staff issues relating to extremism and terrorism. The pupils were all aware of Prevent, but it did not inhibit their discussions or generally have a negative impact on their lives. The teachers did not feel under pressure or that their relationships with pupils had been undermined. Overall, it seemed Prevent was less in your face for those young people than it had been for the young people in Bradford.

It is essential that we look more closely at those features and see what lessons can be learnt. For that, as Sir David Anderson and the hon. Member for Telford have said, we need a review.

3.14 pm

James Berry (Kingston and Surbiton) (Con): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Sir David. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Telford (Lucy Allan) on securing this debate.

I recognise that there are concerns about Prevent, and I have heard those concerns from a range of different people. As a member of the Home Affairs Committee and as someone with an interest in this area, I have taken the time to speak to Muslim groups with the Committee, and to members of the Muslim community, police officers and teachers. I have not spoken to any far right extremists yet, but I am sure we will get some in to the Home Affairs Committee in due course.

There are two polar opposite views. Prevent is viewed as a vital tool in the fight against terrorism and absolutely essential, or it is said to be discredited because it targets Muslims and places unfair obligations on the public sector. It is important to note that Prevent is just one of the four elements of the Contest counter-extremism strategy that aims to stop people becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism or extremism. In answer to the point made by the hon. Member for Bolton South East (Yasmin Qureshi) about success, it is difficult to measure success when there is no counterfactual, but I am sure that the Minister will tell us about the success that the Prevent programme has had, because I have heard that from some of Britain’s most senior police officers.

It is important to start by asking what we would do tomorrow if we cancelled the Prevent programme today. I asked one of the most senior counter-terrorism officers in the country about this and he was very open-minded. He said, “If we do not like Prevent and we get rid of it, what do we replace it with?” We would surely want a system for identifying people such as the poor young girls from east London—the people who have committed no criminal offence but suddenly slide into radicalism and attempt to go off to somewhere such as Syria. We need a means of identifying them and preventing them from going.

Yasmin Qureshi: On exactly the same point, those young ladies in the school were very bright. The teachers could not see anything wrong with anything they had done, so Prevent did nothing for them and would not have noted them.

James Berry: That is right, but that is certainly not an argument for getting rid of Prevent. There are countless other cases in which the Prevent duty would result in issues being picked up. That is why there have been 1,000 voluntary referrals to Channel, where people have been channelled away from any risks. That is what the Contest strategy does.

This hypothetical was tested when the Home Affairs Committee went on a trip to the USA. Two members of the Committee who went on the trip are in the Chamber today. We asked the Americans what they did about domestic counter-terrorism prevention and whether they had a Prevent type of programme. The answer was no, they did not have such a programme. They recognised that that was a gap in their toolkit and they were actually looking at the British system, although the Committee members did point out some of the deficiencies and gave them some advice. Of course, the trip took place under the Obama regime before Donald Trump became President. If only President Trump were focusing

[James Berry]

on domestic terrorism, which is where the threat actually comes from, rather than banning people coming from seven countries with currently no risk of terrorism on American soil. However, the Americans are looking at a strategy because they do not have a system like Prevent on their soil at the moment.

I will turn to the two main objections. The first is that Prevent targets Muslims. It is right that 70% of those who have been directed to Channel for voluntary referrals have been Muslims and 15% have been far right extremists who are not Muslims. That fact does not mean that the Muslim community is being targeted, but I understand why members of the Muslim community, including the young people we met on the trip organised by the hon. Member for Bradford West (Naz Shah), felt that way. It is right that the Government should do more to publicise the cases of far right extremists who have been dealt with under the policy, because the people we spoke to on that trip simply were not aware of them, even though the cases were well publicised.

Equally, we have to guard against the reality that some groups such as Cage, a disgraceful organisation that gave evidence to the Home Affairs Committee, would make sustained efforts to undermine any replacement of the Prevent programme, just as they have done with Prevent. They have spoken out, criticised and been involved in threats against Muslim groups who stand up and support Prevent or elements of Prevent. They do that because they do not even accept that a problem exists that needs tackling by something such as Prevent in the first place.

Dr Poulter: My hon. Friend is making a very good speech. Does he agree that one of the successes of the Prevent programme has been—for example, in the health service—raising awareness of people who may be vulnerable? People with mental illness are particularly susceptible to adverse influences and potentially susceptible to extremists of all different types exploiting them. The programme has also helped to encourage partnership working between the NHS and the police, because there is often strong clinical judgment exerted and used in such cases.

James Berry: I agree with everything that my hon. Friend said. That brings me to the second main criticism of Prevent—that it puts undue pressure on teachers, doctors and social workers. It is true that they are not policemen and are already under huge pressure—I know that teachers are, because my mother was one—because of all sorts of duties of the kind, besides their core one of teaching. However, they are the people with day-to-day contact with young people and they have the opportunity to notice what others, including the police, may not. That is why they have similar duties to report child abuse, female genital mutilation, forced marriage and the like. We rely on them to pick up things that others might miss or parents would not report.

Kate Green: The hon. Gentleman is right to say that teachers are among those who have regular contact with young people, and it should be part of professional practice to notice when children's behaviour changes—such as becoming withdrawn or difficult. However, teachers and parents in my constituency tell me that the way the

Prevent duty on professionals is perceived is breaking down trust between families, parents and schools. Does the hon. Gentleman agree that that must be addressed if the programme is to work effectively?

James Berry: That certainly must be addressed, but I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Central Suffolk and North Ipswich (Dr Poulter) that the Prevent duty has led to much greater awareness among professionals of what to look for and how to help. We need a way to pick up the signs of radicalisation before it is too late and innocent lives are devastated by being drawn into the ideologies in question. Prevent, the current system, certainly has issues that need to be worked through, and the hon. Member for Stretford and Urmston (Kate Green) raises a good point. There is a need for constant updating, but equally, if we were to replace Prevent it could only be with a similar duty. Whatever we replaced it with would come under sustained attack, and it is our duty in the House to stand up for the Government's efforts as well as to scrutinise and criticise them as we are doing.

3.21 pm

Naz Shah (Bradford West) (Lab): It is an honour to serve under your chairmanship, Sir David. I congratulate the hon. Member for Telford (Lucy Allan) on securing the debate. It is interesting to follow two colleagues from the Home Affairs Committee; we took a lot of evidence on the subject last year and produced a report. I am sure my right hon. Friend the Member for Leicester East (Keith Vaz) will also give his version of events.

Headlines about Prevent have included “Prevent will have a chilling effect on open debate, free speech and political dissent”; “Oxford University vice-chancellor says Prevent strategy ‘wrong-headed’”; “Instead of fighting terror, Prevent is creating a climate of fear”; and “Human rights group condemns Prevent anti-radicalisation strategy”. It is not a matter of one newspaper article getting things wrong. They are not reports from the *Daily Mail*, otherwise known as the “Daily Fail”, about radicalisation and the Prevent strategy going wrong. They are reports derived from academics. People have written to the Home Secretary or the Government expressing concern about how the strategy is implemented.

Some 60% of my constituents are of black and minority ethnic heritage, and the majority are Muslims, but we have not got things as wrong in Bradford West as they are nationally. We have a better middle ground, and some really good conversations are happening. However, the overall consensus among Muslim communities nationally is that Prevent stigmatises them. I accept the view of the hon. Member for Gower (Byron Davies) that it is successful, but only in part. I accept that there are instances in which Prevent has prevented radicalisation. For every article against it, there is always one for it. However, it must be acknowledged that its implementation has created a “them and us” situation between the Government and the Muslim community. That is a fact. I can give a list as long as my arm of incidents in which people say they have been stigmatised.

Research evidence shows that Prevent has had a particularly acute effect on children. An average of one child under 10 is referred every day. I accept that the referrals are voluntary, but as for four-year olds being involved, I am the mother of a five-year-old, and when

he has a tantrum or a paddy it is very extreme, but that does not mean he is on the slippery slope to extremism. Children are children. Yes, we have different ways of running our households, but religious conservatism does not result in extremism. We need to make that point, and it must be acknowledged in the House.

Although I am a critic of the implementation of Prevent, it is clear to me that we need a prevention strategy. When the Home Secretary appeared before the Home Affairs Committee on the previous occasion—not yesterday—she said that we needed to talk Prevent up. Unfortunately I cannot commit to talking it up when it fails to acknowledge the “them and us” that its implementation has created between the Muslim community and the Government. The architect of Prevent, Sir David Omand, observed that the “key issue” was whether most people in the community accepted Prevent “as protective of their rights”. He said:

“If the community sees it as a problem, then you have a problem.”

The Muslim community sees Prevent as a problem.

No one, including the Muslim community, is saying we do not need a Prevent strategy. We absolutely do; we must provide safeguards. I do not know what my now nearly teenage daughter will be doing in her bedroom; the way people are radicalised in the majority of cases is online. However, we need to educate people, including parents, and put safeguarding measures in place.

More than 80% of Channel referrals end in no further action. What does that say about them? The majority of the children referred happen to be Muslim. I met a young boy from Luton who was campaigning on issues to do with Palestine and Gaza. He was referred to Channel just because he was passionate about those issues. We have damped down debate in universities and colleges, where people dare not use the word “terrorism”. A GP I know said in the roundtable referred to by my hon. Friend the Member for Bolton South East (Yasmin Qureshi), “When my child comes home, every day he sees terrorism on the TV”—whether it is the Paris attack, Tunisia or anywhere else in the world, such as Quebec recently. She said, “I dare not have the conversation with him in case he goes back and discusses it in school. If someone does not know how to respond to my child, he might be on the next referral to Channel.” Those are real concerns; they are not made up. I accept that there are organisations that would have issues no matter what the strategy was replaced by, but the young people of Bradford gave evidence to the Home Affairs Committee and said there is a “them and us” situation, and we must respond to that.

I ask the Minister whether the Government will publish their internal review of the Contest counter-terrorism strategy. Will they accept the advice in the independent review of terrorism legislation by David Anderson, QC, and establish an independent inquiry into the operation and effectiveness of the Prevent strategy? By the Government’s own figures 80% of referrals to the Channel programme between 2007 and 2014 were set aside. Will they publish comprehensive data disaggregated by age, gender, location, ethnicity, type of referring authority and type of extremism of the people who have been referred to the Prevent programme, and the outcomes? Without such transparency the Muslim community will rightly continue to view Prevent through a lens of suspicion.

Sir David Crausby (in the Chair): There is time for a very short speech by Keith Vaz.

3.29 pm

Keith Vaz (Leicester East) (Lab): Thank you, Sir David. May I start by congratulating you warmly on your knighthood and the House authorities on their efficiency in changing your nameplate so quickly? I will be very brief. I can say quite honestly that I agree with every single speech given this afternoon, not because it was a bit like all our yesterdays—the Home Affairs Committee, of which I am a former member, did an inquiry into counter-terrorism—but because each came with particular knowledge of this area. Passion has been shown because we want to keep our country secure, protect our children and ensure that the Government’s strategy works.

The hon. Member for Telford (Lucy Allan) deserves special praise for bringing this matter before the House. We really need more than an hour and a half to discuss it. She says that we need a strategy, but the problem with the strategy we have at the moment is that the people we need to work with feel they are on the outside. The issue is one of trust.

I want briefly to say three things. First, as the hon. Member for Gower (Byron Davies) said, my local chief constable, Simon Cole, who is the national Prevent lead for the National Police Chiefs Council, has said that Prevent is fundamental to the success of our strategy against terrorism. We want the strategy to work, and we have to ensure that it works. We have to ensure that communities are involved with it, and it has to be a partnership. That means listening to what the young people in Bradford said, acknowledging what we found in Glasgow when we went up there and listening to the questions from the hon. Member for Kingston and Surbiton (James Berry) to his local university vice-chancellor when he came before our Select Committee. It is important that we work with communities.

Secondly, our Committee suggested that we should change the name of Prevent and call it Engage, because Prevent sounds very harsh. We need to rebrand this mechanism, so that we can engage with communities. Otherwise, they feel that Whitehall is imposing a certain course of action on them. Finally, the internet was the most important form of radicalisation that we discovered during our inquiry. Unless we tackle that, and unless the internet companies are prepared to work with Government, we will not deal with this issue.

There are problems. The Government should acknowledge them and work to ensure that they are dealt with, but more than anything, the message from this House must be, “Please work with communities. Put them at the forefront of our fight against terrorism.”

Sir David Crausby (in the Chair): Can I have an even shorter contribution from Imran Hussain?

3.32 pm

Imran Hussain (Bradford East) (Lab): Thank you, Sir David. I did have quite a lot to say on this subject, but I will try to be as brief as possible. Please bear with me for a few minutes at least.

First, I thank all hon. Members who have spoken in this debate and made some very valuable points. My hon. Friend the Member for Bolton South East (Yasmin Qureshi),

[Imran Hussain]

in particular, made a powerful point at the outset of her speech: nobody here is saying that we do not want our streets to be safe. We absolutely want our streets to be safe and to defeat the poison of radicalisation, but we must ask what the best way of doing that is, and the best way is having a strategy that works.

We have heard from hon. Members that the Prevent strategy, in its current format, is not as effective as it could be because there is massive mistrust of it, in particular among the Muslim community. We have heard evidence of that from young people in my constituency and that of my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford West (Naz Shah). We have heard how 70% of those who end up in the process belong to that community. It is clear that in its current format, the Prevent strategy is perceived as unfair and is stigmatising communities.

We need a complete rethink of the Prevent strategy. We need a strategy that is as effective as possible, that engages Muslim youth and communities and that comes without stories—although some may be fabricated—of cameras, spying and young children being placed in these programmes. I ask the Minister to use this opportunity to reflect on the genuine concerns that the Muslim community in particular has, which I am sure other communities share. We need an overhaul of the whole Prevent strategy to recognise those concerns.

3.34 pm

Richard Arkless (Dumfries and Galloway) (SNP): I offer you belated congratulations, Sir David, on your knighthood. I am conscious that we are short on time and that everyone is keen to hear what the Minister has to say, so I will whizz through some of the points that I have found interesting in today's debate.

I congratulate the hon. Member for Telford (Lucy Allan) on securing the debate, to the obvious agitation of the Government Front Benchers, which in my view makes it even more commendable. She was right to mention at the outset that the strategy appears to be driving a wedge between authority and community. She said that perception is very important—a point that other Members have corroborated. Perception may be everything in this instance. I have heard her talk before about her personal experience as a governor of a school. She made the point that there is peer pressure and that people are incentivised and cajoled to make referrals. That is a very dangerous situation.

I was struck by some of the comments of the hon. Member for Bolton South East (Yasmin Qureshi), particularly about the accusation that if someone criticises Prevent, they somehow do not care about safety. She made that point well with reference to what happened on 7/7. In response to an intervention on her about the strategy not achieving anything, I will say this: evidence is one thing, but how many communities and people do we marginalise to stop one kid being radicalised? I think that was the point she was making.

The hon. Member for Gower (Byron Davies), who brings a wealth of experience as a former member of the police force, was right to say that this is about taking time to build relationships. Perhaps that is where Prevent has gone wrong; we have put the cart before the horse,

and we should have built those relationships before we started asking this community or any community to put people through the referral process.

My hon. Friend the Member for Cumbernauld, Kilsyth and Kirkintilloch East (Stuart C. McDonald), on whom I made an untimely intervention, was right to recognise that everyone wants to prevent terrorism. That is common ground, and it should be noted by the Minister. My hon. Friend gave a more than adequate summary of the position in Scotland, so he has saved me from detailing that.

I did not agree with much of what the hon. Member for Kingston and Surbiton (James Berry) said, but there was one point I agreed with. Everybody wants to prevent terrorism, and he asked a valid question: what would we replace Prevent with? Clearly the perception is that things are not working and that something needs to be done, but it is not wise to leave a vacuum.

The hon. Member for Bradford West (Naz Shah) corroborated the point about perception. If we are going to prevent communities—I do not single out any particular one—from being radicalised, perception is everything. That is an important point. The right hon. Member for Leicester East (Keith Vaz), who of course brings a wealth of knowledge as he led the Select Committee inquiry on this issue, pinpointed trust. That is key. The people we need to influence feel that they are on the outside. I was interested in his idea of rebranding Prevent as Engage. I do not know whether that would work, but I certainly agree with the principle that this is more about engagement than sniping on kids and marginalising them.

Some hon. Members alluded to the distinction between non-violent extremism and violent extremism. I am from the west coast of Scotland. Scotland has a history, unfortunately, of sectarianism. In Scotland, if you ask someone which school they go to, it has nothing to do with education. If you ask someone which team they support, it has nothing to do with football. We understand these dynamics. Perhaps that is why we have a more wide-ranging approach to this issue. We recognise that various communities are susceptible to radicalisation and do not try to single out any particular one.

You are looking at me keenly, Sir David, so I will wind up. In Scotland, this is a reserved matter, with the roll-out of Prevent being undertaken by the Scottish Parliament. We put engagement and fostering relations with communities at the heart of what we do, which involves simple things like discussions with people before they are put in the referral process and engagement with various communities to ensure that they are on board. If we foster that relationship, perhaps communities will come to us with information before we have to start knocking on doors. If the referral process were from the bottom up, it would work a lot better and would not marginalise the very people who we need to help us prevent terrorism.

Sir David Crausby (in the Chair): I call Diane Abbott. The Minister looks desperate to get his points in, so could you give him some time?

3.39 pm

Ms Diane Abbott (Hackney North and Stoke Newington) (Lab): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Sir David. I, too, congratulate the hon. Member for

Telford (Lucy Allan) on initiating this important debate. I think that the Muslim community can take some reassurance from the fact that MPs of all parties and from all parts of the country are scrutinising how the Prevent strategy works in practice.

Clearly, the first duty of Government is to protect the citizen. As hon. Friends have said, it is nonsense to say that those of us who are asking questions about Prevent are somehow careless of the threat of terrorism. I remember the 1996 IRA bomb at Canary Wharf—I was standing in my kitchen in Hackney when I heard it go off. Do not tell those of us in our great cities, who have sometimes had very close engagement with the after-effects of terrorism, that we do not take it seriously. Of course the Government have to have a counter-terrorism strategy. I have met people from the Metropolitan police's counter-terrorism command and been very impressed by much of their work.

However, what President Trump shows us is that there is such a thing as an effective counter-terrorism strategy, but there are also ineffective and counterproductive counter-terrorism strategies. It is now very clear to everybody that banning people from seven majority-Muslim countries, plus green card holders, plus Syrian refugees, from coming into the US has been wholly counterproductive and unsuccessful.

Keith Vaz: And we have the support of the Home Secretary. Only yesterday she said that the ban was a gift to the propagandists who support ISIL. I am sure that my hon. Friend the shadow Home Secretary will find lots on which to disagree with the Home Secretary, but they are on the same side on this issue.

Ms Abbott: Exactly. There is such a thing as an anti-terrorism strategy that is misconceived, counterproductive and does not actually make people any safer.

Let me quickly return to the question of the police being called because a child in a Bedfordshire school had a plastic gun. The Minister claims that had nothing to do with Prevent. All I can say to him is that the Central Bedfordshire Council local education authority admitted that the teachers were attempting to act in accordance with the Government's Prevent guidance, and they admitted that they would not have called the police if a white child had received a toy gun.

Let me quote the child's mother, who is probably closer to the situation than the Minister. She said:

"To this day, I cannot fathom why a teacher who has known my family for years would suspect terrorist activities based upon a plastic toy gun. Our only distinguishing feature is the colour of our skin. I was utterly humiliated by this experience—but more importantly my sons were confused and terrified. They had to move schools, lost important friendships and...lost trust in their teachers. They will carry the scars of this experience for some time yet."

The sole reason why they were singled out was the Prevent programme. An anti-terrorism programme that has that kind of result with innocent families and mothers and children is clearly at risk of being wholly counterproductive.

As other hon. Members have said, the report from the Open Society Justice Initiative analyses the effect of the Prevent strategy on the education system and the NHS. It states that the effect is to erode trust, because it is draconian and therefore counterproductive.

There is a long line of reports critical of the Government's failing strategy. The National Union of Teachers has mounted a sustained criticism of Prevent and passed a motion opposing it outright, as has the National Union of Students. Other teaching unions—the University and College Union and NASUWT—have also opposed it. Liberty has made strong criticisms. Organisation after organisation is calling for either reform of Prevent or certainly review. None of these organisations has any sympathies with terrorism, or acts as an apologist for it; their members and supporters are the potential victims of any terrorist incidents that are committed here.

The Joint Committee on Human Rights has again called for a review, arguing, as so many hon. Friends have argued this afternoon, that Prevent has the potential to drive a wedge between the authorities and entire communities. It is clearly targeted at one community. The Government's own report, "The United Kingdom's Strategy for Countering Terrorism: Annual Report for 2015", stated that 70% of referrals were linked to "Islamist-related extremism". As hon. Members have said, with a power and an authenticity that I can only hope to match, that is having an alienating effect on a whole community. It worries me that Ministers will not recognise that fact, and I believe that the alienating effect is made worse by some aspects of the Casey review.

Of course the Government have a duty to protect the right to life of all their citizens. That includes, but is not confined to, terrorism. The problem with the Prevent strategy is that it seems to be failing in its stated objective; it is not necessarily preventing the growth of terrorism, because it seems to be counterproductive. It tramples on hard-won rights and demonises whole communities. As the hon. Member for Telford pointed out, it tends towards criminalising ideas, towards saying what people should be allowed to think, which is contrary to British values.

Even with the widespread concern on the ground about Prevent, more than 400 children under 10 have in the past four years been referred to the police's Channel programme, which is part of Prevent—400 children under 10. Families are terrified that their children will be taken from them, guilty of engaging in playground games, play-acting or childish bragging. The National Police Chiefs Council says that 80% of all referrals require no action at all.

Anti-terrorism is a serious issue, and effective anti-terrorism is always intelligence-led. That must be fully supported and resourced. Prevent is the opposite of an intelligence-led policy. Any counter-terrorism strategy that depends on sending the police to interview seven-year-old children who happen to have a plastic gun is misconceived. It is my view, and that of Opposition Members generally, that it is time for a major review of Prevent and a fundamental rethink by the Government.

3.46 pm

The Minister for Security (Mr Ben Wallace): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Telford (Lucy Allan) on securing the debate. I am a father of three. I am a Lancashire MP, representing many diverse communities in my constituency, and in our communities there are threats from both far-right and Islamic extremism. I am therefore well aware of some of the issues that we face on the ground in trying to keep all of our young people safe in today's world.

[Mr Ben Wallace]

However, I do not accuse people who question or criticise Prevent of being anti-security or trying to put at risk the society in which we live. I recognise that people have a right to question Prevent, and I recognise the issues that have been raised today. I have to say that I could not agree more with the right hon. Member for Leicester East (Keith Vaz), who put it perfectly well, and my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston and Surbiton (James Berry) also made the point that we have to strike a delicate balance. The balance is between safety and security and our obligations to society; some of the very extreme threats and individuals who try to peddle that to our young people or people who are vulnerable to exploitation; and ensuring that policing is done by consent and that the relationship between the community and the Government is indeed collaborative and that they are working together for the best.

Of course we could fine-tune Prevent and do more to engage, build that trust and work with communities. I have said to my hon. Friend the Member for Telford that I am very happy to take her to a Prevent provider, or to meet either a provider or some of the local authorities to do that. I make that offer to all colleagues in the Chamber, to ensure that we start down the road of ensuring that people understand both sides of the argument.

One of the most moving things for me was speaking to a number of community groups involved in delivering Prevent. It is sometimes quite hard to argue with their point of view. When one meets people whose children have been saved from going to Syria to fight for Daesh, it is quite hard to say to them that the Prevent strategy does not help, that it has not helped to protect their children or even saved their lives.

As the Minister for Security, I have the privilege of knowing about many of the successes. We do not often advertise the successes, because we want people to move on with their lives. I am thinking of the 15-year-old in Lancashire who was radicalised by the far right and whose headteacher put him in touch with Prevent. He is now not only out of the specialist school he was in, but in mainstream further education, enjoying the prospect of a good life. I cannot advertise who those individuals are or put their names on a leaflet for everyone to see, because we want them to progress further in life.

Keith Vaz: The classic example is the difference between the three Bethnal Green girls and the two young men from Brent. The two young men from Brent had strong relationships with the local police and the leader of the council and were able to come back when they got to Istanbul, whereas we lost the three young girls from Bethnal Green. The key to this is building up that trust and those relationships between the police and the community.

Mr Wallace: I could not agree more. It also means that unfortunately we often know about the failures rather than the successes. The right hon. Gentleman knows from his long period as Chairman of the Home Affairs Committee that in the world of policing and security it is nearly always the failures that we hear about when there is an intelligence breakdown or someone slips under the radar. As someone who started in counter-terrorism as a young man in his early 20s, I can tell

Members that something always gets through the net. One failure does not justify the scrapping of Prevent. I think that is important.

We all have a duty to do more to make sure that we challenge some of the perceptions that are peddled about Prevent, and to better investigate the stories that are sometimes put in the media. It was also in Lancashire that a child was reported apparently—according to the media—for saying, “I live in a terrorist house.” The child actually said, “I live in a terrorist house and my uncle beats me.” That story is never reported. The referral was a safeguarding referral about abuse of the child, but that was not good enough for some of the media, who chose to leave those details out and report in a lazy manner. We all have a duty to investigate and explore not only those local authorities that deliver Prevent, but the communities—

Yasmin Qureshi *rose—*

Mr Wallace: I cannot give way; I must press on as I have only seven or eight minutes.

One of the first things I did as Security Minister, because I come from Lancashire, was to travel the country. My challenge to Contest is that it must not start and stop in central London. It must not be about the big metropolitan centres; it must be about the whole of the United Kingdom. I have been to the north-east, the north-west and around the whole country to meet more people, and I will continue to do so.

It is important that we start to pick up transparency in Prevent. One of the ways to challenge those perceptions is to get more statistics out where we can. We are going to do that and I have asked my officials to collate and publish many of the stats that the hon. Member for Bolton South East (Yasmin Qureshi) raised in her questions, because that is one of the best ways to counter the perceptions.

As Security Minister, I have responsibility for countering not only terrorism, but serious organised crime and child sexual exploitation. At the heart of all those—I am afraid I could not disagree more with my hon. Friend the Member for Telford—is safeguarding. What I see across that whole remit is people using the same methods to groom young men and vulnerable people into a course of violent extremism, gangs, crime or sexual exploitation. If we care about the safeguarding of vulnerable young people, Prevent is just one of those strains for delivering that safeguarding. Contrary to what is often reported, safeguarding is delivered not from my office in Whitehall but through the local authorities and the combined safeguarding officers. I met my hon. Friend's Prevent officer in Telford at the beginning of this week; he is the councillor who deals with safeguarding across the piece, not just in Prevent, which is often how it is delivered. Of course we would like to see Prevent delivered more widely—not only from the police but across the board—which would be a right step in keeping communities on side.

We should challenge some of the main criticisms. There is the issue that there is no trust in Prevent. I recognise that in some communities there is a stigma attached to Prevent and that people do not necessarily trust parts of it, but in other communities some people do. It is partly about the relationship between the victims, or the people who have perhaps been diverted from a more extreme course. I have to say that in the

speeches from the hon. Members for Bradford West (Naz Shah) and for Bradford East (Imran Hussain) there was an element of, “Locally we are delivering some success, but nationally we are worried about it,” or, “In other parts of the community we represent, it does not always work.” Of course we have to ensure that we rebuild that trust, and transparency will go some way towards doing that.

It is not the case that there is a special category for reporting children to Prevent, as opposed to normal safeguarding. Let me put this in perspective. Every year there are 621,000 child safety referrals to authorities. Prevent, which is not included in that figure, is less than 1% of it, if compared alongside it. There are safeguarding referrals from teachers, and from all the duties that doctors and teachers hold for safeguarding our children—they have a plethora of duties that are either implied or statutory—so we need to put that into perspective.

I have referred to the accusation that Prevent is not working. There are case studies and champions of Prevent. It is not the case that everyone is against Prevent and no one is for it. I met a mother of two children who did not go to Syria. She is delighted, funnily enough, that her children were successfully referred through the Prevent programme. People forget that Channel is a voluntary process. Regretfully, not everyone takes up some of the offers and some go on to do much worse things. However, Channel is voluntary and Big Brother does not force people into it. Some people have tried to imply that, but it is simply not the case.

In 2015, 150 people were prevented from going to Syria. That is a lot of people’s lives that have been saved. Many more people have been diverted from the path of throwing their life away through either violent terrorism and extremism or crime, gangs and the other areas that those same groomers often exploit—the methods they use are the same.

Many hon. Members raised the issue of internet safety and the hon. Member for Bolton South East made the point about education. We do teach cyber-safety in schools; my children had a lesson in cyber-safety at their primary school. We do teach the discourse between political beliefs and religious beliefs. I went to see a school’s Prevent officer in action in Walthamstow, teaching many girls in east London.

Yasmin Qureshi: Everyone would agree that there is nothing wrong with running programmes and working with young people, but one of the problems is the statutory obligation on teachers, schools and doctors, which means there may well face penalties if they do not deal with things. What we are saying is that it is the

statutory obligation—the almost criminalising part—that is wrong. Why can it not be voluntary?

Mr Wallace: I have listened to the hon. Lady’s valid points, but statutory duties are writ large through the relationship between the state, children and the community. They are writ large in schools and in the medical profession. We all have a statutory duty. If I was a teacher and a child came to me and reported that they were being interfered with or sexually exploited and I did not report it, I would be in breach of a teaching council duty. We all have a duty and that does not make it wrong. What makes it wrong is for us to fail to safeguard our children or take action to prevent them from being radicalised.

There is this idea that we should throw the baby out with the bathwater by scrapping Prevent. I hear what all Members have said today about those perceptions and making sure we reinforce trust and work with communities to ensure that it is collaborative. That is absolutely important and the direction we must travel in to keep it going. On the idea that Prevent is actually having a massive negative effect, I ask colleagues to look across the channel to Germany, France, Belgium and Holland, where they do not have a Prevent strategy anything like ours. As my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston and Surbiton (James Berry) rightly pointed out, in America they have almost no Prevent strategy. Why are they now scrabbling to engage with their communities and ensure that they keep back the flow of terrorist attacks? This country, under Labour, started a process; we invested in a Prevent strategy to work with our communities and to safeguard children and vulnerable people.

I absolutely agree that we can always do more, and I am committed, as Security Minister, to doing so. It is not always the Security Minister who must do that; local police forces must recruit the right policemen in the right places to do the right jobs. Ultimately, Prevent is working. I can only tell hon. Members the successes, but we have saved lives, we are preventing the far right from rising in other parts of the country, and we are making sure that young people have a future. That is why I back Prevent. I am passionate about it and I am happy to take colleagues to go and meet providers and hear about it at first hand. It is not the disaster that it is painted to be. The misperceptions that are peddled, often by an irresponsible media, only add fuel to the fire, rather than working with us to ensure we protect people in the future.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House has considered implementation of the Prevent Strategy.

Marriage Week

[MRS MADELEINE MOON *in the Chair*]

4 pm

Mr David Burrowes (Enfield, Southgate) (Con): I beg to move,

That this House has considered Marriage Week.

It is a privilege to have secured a debate about Marriage Week, which celebrates its 20th anniversary this year. I pipped it to the post when I celebrated my 21st wedding anniversary last weekend, but the last 12 hours have brought home to my dear wife, Janet, the reality of the vow “in sickness and in health,” because there has been a bit of a bug going round our house. I welcome the aim behind Marriage Week: to draw attention to the importance of marriage for individuals, family life and civil society. All of us can take part in the celebration. It is not exclusive to those who are married; it is for everyone, because we all know that marriage is for the common good.

I welcome the Minister to her place. She has already answered my written question about the Government’s plans to promote Marriage Week, saying that

“we cannot afford to overlook the importance of the family as the basic building block upon which we build a successful economy and a stable society.”

That is indeed true, but I want to give her the opportunity to explain further the Government’s plans and the value that they place on marriage.

Many of my hon. Friends support the idea of having a dedicated Minister for the family, so perhaps this is an opportunity to make a bid for the Minister’s promotion—she regularly attends Westminster Hall and speaks about lots of issues. We want a dedicated Minister for the family—indeed, a Cabinet Minister—given that the topic covers so many areas and Departments. When I was looking through some old cuttings the other day I was reminded that back in 2004, the current Prime Minister was the shadow Cabinet Minister for the family. She came to my house when she was supporting my campaign to be the Member of Parliament for Enfield, Southgate, and we talked about families. The current Prime Minister got it, and talked about how important that role is, so who knows? Perhaps in time the Minister can follow that path.

The Minister was absolutely correct: we cannot afford to overlook the importance of family. Family provides social capital to those who have fallen on hard times, as we all have—that experience is common to all human beings. This celebration is not just of a domestic issue. In fact, on Monday Professor Bradford Wilcox will help us to understand the evidence relating to marriage’s global value, which it is important for us to recognise.

However, I would like the Minister to go further. It is important to be unapologetic about the social benefits not just of family, but particularly of marriage. It is difficult to celebrate marriage without using the M-word. As a candidate in 2004-05, I got hissed not when I talked about immigration or Europe, but when I mentioned marriage. Sadly, there is disdain and antagonism towards marriage in some circles, but we can avowedly be great fans of marriage—of the M-word. I am unapologetic about celebrating marriage not only because I am in favour of the family formation, but because of the growing evidence that marriage is socially just.

Jim Shannon (Strangford) (DUP): I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on bringing this important issue to the House. Is he aware of the ComRes poll showing that 21% of people support further increases in the personal allowance, but that 60% support increasing the marriage allowance? Does he feel that the Government should consider making the married couple’s allowance that is provided to couples in their 80s and 90s much more generous?

Mr Burrowes: The hon. Gentleman and I share views on many issues, not least on how welcome it is that the marriage allowance is once again a transferable allowance. However, that is just a small dent in properly recognising marriage and giving it its true worth and value. That could perhaps be done not least by following the call from many of us, and from the Centre for Social Justice and others, to focus particularly on couples with young children. I would certainly support that.

Catherine McKinnell (Newcastle upon Tyne North) (Lab): Not all marriages last, and external support is often needed when there are difficulties. The Department for Education has said that for every £1 spent on relationship support, the Government save £11.40, yet the Department for Work and Pensions seems to be considering significant cuts in support for face-to-face marriage counselling services. Does the hon. Gentleman agree that that would be a terrible mistake?

Mr Burrowes: This celebration and debate is not just about putting everyone in a Persil advert of perfect families, where everything goes right. Things go wrong, and resilience is needed. That can come at an early stage through counselling, support or marriage preparation, or after marriage through MOT tests and further support, not least at crucial moments involving young children or debt. Statistics show that the Government spend only 1.6p for every £100 of social harm that is caused by family breakdown. More needs to be done to tackle the associated price tag of £47 billion a year, which is a conservative estimate.

The way in which a marriage plays out in our society should provoke the Government to do all they can to ensure that marriage and the social benefits it affords are accessible to everyone, for richer and for poorer. In 2015, the Marriage Foundation—I very much commend Sir Paul Coleridge, who is here today, and Harry Benson for the great evidence-based work that they have done over the years—found an alarming widening of the marriage gap between rich and poor, with wealthier couples being four times more likely to get married than those from poorer backgrounds. Some 80% of high earners marry, whereas only 24% of low earners do. The rich get married and the poor increasingly do not. That bias in favour of wealthy couples is a social injustice. In fact, to use the words of the former shadow Cabinet Minister for the family—now our Prime Minister—it is a burning injustice, which needs to be tackled by the Government and others. That is vital because marriage supports family stability and provides an important pathway out of poverty.

Marriage must not disappear; in fact, it should be central to Government policy making. I sometimes search Government policy documents on my computer to see where the M-word comes up, but it often does not. There should be family impact statements looking

at the impact of marriage and the support it provides in a lot of arenas. The life chances strategy or the social reform strategy, or whatever it will be called, will be published shortly, and I will again search to see where the word “marriage” comes up, because it needs to. If we are tackling burning injustices, we need to support marriage.

I want to spell out some social benefits of marriage. Unmarried parents are six times more likely to break up before their first child's fifth birthday. Children from broken homes are two-and-a-half times more likely to be in long-term poverty, and 44% of children in lone parent families live in relative poverty—almost twice the figure for children in couple families. Cohabiting couples make up just a fifth of couples with dependent children, but nearly half of all family breakdown. There are a lot of reasons to consider, but marriage is socially just and aids social mobility. Children who experience family breakdown perform less well at school, gain fewer qualifications and are more likely to be expelled from school. I therefore encourage the Government to commit more resources to tackling family breakdown by celebrating marriage.

I welcome the marriage tax allowance. We have mentioned the importance of that; it brings us in line with other OECD countries that have recognised family stability by recognising marriage. However, it is also important to build on that good work. The fact that 90% of a married person's tax allowance remains transferrable means that although we have that recognition in principle, it does not really get to the heart of the problem.

There are many creative ways of celebrating marriage. As hon. Members have mentioned in their interventions, we can do much more. There is the financial element—we have debated whether that is important in the past—but more than that, it is about practical support and how we provide relationship support. I welcome the previous Prime Minister's absolute commitment to that and the money that was provided for relationship support, which must continue—indeed, it should increase, because it is money well spent. Supporting fathers, which several hon. Members present have championed through the all-party group on fatherhood, is particularly important, as is broadening access to marriage preparation classes and marriage counselling.

I pay tribute to the Marriage Foundation, which is behind next week's celebration, and to Harry and Kate Benson, whose life as a couple has recently received a lot of publicity. They recognise that marriage is not just a bed of roses. We all experience problems. Marriage Week is about recognising that we must not take our marriages for granted—we all need to work on them, and that applies to me as much as to anyone else—and nor should society or the Government. We should promote and celebrate this vital institution for a good society.

4.10 pm

Andrew Selous (South West Bedfordshire) (Con): I commend my hon. Friend the Member for Enfield, Southgate (Mr Burrowes) for his tremendous speech, which I strongly support.

The most powerful statistic in this whole area is that, of all the parents who are still together when their children reach the age of 15, 93% are married. That says so much about why marriage matters. As MPs, we are

here for all our constituents—we are here for the single mums who do an amazing job, and we are here for people who are not married—but it is right to celebrate marriage as a massively important social institution that builds resilience and is clearly really good for our children.

Three quarters of 20 to 24-year-olds say that they want to marry, so the aspiration for our younger people is very much there. Likewise, three quarters of lone parents and almost nine in 10 step-parents agree that it is appropriate and necessary for the Government to send the message that having two parents is important. That is all worth putting on record.

The Austrian political economist Joseph Schumpeter said that in a modern consumer economy, people might end up living for the present rather than having projects for the future. That involves things like saving less and borrowing more. Critically, he said that there would be less willingness for people to make long-term commitments to one another. Of course, the greatest long-term commitment that we can make is a marriage in which we bring up children.

There is so much more that we can do, including really good marriage preparation and really good marriage MOTs. We all get our cars serviced once a year; we spend time and money on it because we think it is important. But how much more important it is to have a look under the bonnet of our marriages, to make sure that what started off romantically, but might now feel a bit like running a small business with an ex-girlfriend, stays on track.

Mr Burrowes: My hon. Friend has been a great champion of marriage for many years. He also has experience in Bedfordshire with voluntary organisations that try to help couples, particularly those who have just had a child. Some Government funding was coming through for such projects; does he know whether any progress has been made?

Andrew Selous: I am very pleased that the last Prime Minister doubled the amount of spending on relationship support across Government, as my hon. Friend already mentioned, but there are real pressures on the sector and on the Relationships Alliance. I will meet the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions next week to discuss those issues.

Steve Double (St Austell and Newquay) (Con): Was my hon. Friend as surprised as I was to learn that last year the Government spent more money on repairing cathedrals than on supporting marriage and family relationships? Will he join me in calling on the Government to put more resources into supporting marriage?

Andrew Selous: I am a great supporter of cathedrals, as I am sure my hon. Friend is, but it should not be either/or. We need to take care of the living as well as the buildings in which people celebrate great events.

I will end my short contribution by stating the importance not only of marriage preparation but of really good ongoing marriage support. I am afraid that many churches often provide some of the worst after-sales service of any organisation I know. We all get into bad habits—I put my hand up to that, and my wife would be the first to draw attention to it—but just one evening a year can make a huge difference. We do it for our cars, so why not for our marriages?

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Mrs Madeleine Moon (in the Chair): I call Fiona Bruce. I remind her that we still need to hear from the Minister. If she takes interventions, the Minister will have less time.

4.14 pm

Fiona Bruce (Congleton) (Con): I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Enfield, Southgate (Mr Burrowes) for securing this debate on a subject that is too infrequently spoken of in this place but that is important to the people we serve. Some 80% of young people aspire to marry, because they recognise the benefits of marriage for the parties, for any children they may have and for wider society. As my hon. Friend the Member for South West Bedfordshire (Andrew Selous) said, marriage promotes stability in relationships. I absolutely agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Enfield, Southgate that it is therefore a matter of social justice that the Government support marriage, particularly because it is the least well off who have the least resilience to cope with the consequences of relationship breakdown.

There are many benefits of marriage. The health benefits are powerful for women and men. Marriage is associated with a significant reduction in depression and marital status affects the progress of Alzheimer's disease in later life—singles have twice the risk of developing it. Married people are more likely to survive cancer, and they have a lower risk of suicide. The longevity effect of marriage can even offset the consequences of smoking.

We are all rightly concerned about the cost and scarcity of social care, but the social care burden is significantly greater if elderly people are not being looked after by their spouse. Those living with a spouse are least likely to go into an institution after the age of 60. A European study of 20,000 older people found that men and women living with a spouse were more likely to be satisfied with life. Older people living with a spouse are also the most healthy group.

Obviously, many people in couples find themselves alone in later life, and single people may find themselves bringing up children. As we have said many times when discussing this issue, there is no condemnation of any individual when we speak about marriage. We know and recognise that single parents work valiantly and often very successfully to bring up children, but statistics show that marriage is good for people and for their children. Studies consistently indicate that children raised by two happily and continuously married parents have the best chance of developing into competent and successful adults. During early parenthood, the single biggest predictor of stability—even when controlling for age, income, education, benefits and ethnic group—is whether the parents are married. That challenges the assumption that factors other than marriage—so-called selection effects—are at play. As we have heard, 93% of all couples that are still intact by the time their child is 15 are married. Indeed, 9% of married parents split before their child's fifth birthday, but 35% of unmarried parents split.

There is a huge level of interest at the moment in young people's wellbeing and mental health, but family structure is very rarely considered to be the important factor it is. I am patron of a children's mental health wellbeing charity in my constituency; the chief executive has told me that it is having to care for children at a

younger and younger age, and in nearly every case family relationship difficulties are one of the chief causes of their mental health problems.

Derek Thomas (St Ives) (Con): My hon. Friend is right to mention the benefits of raising children in a stable family home. Does she agree that the Government have a real opportunity and responsibility to promote marriage because of what it is and what it does for children?

Fiona Bruce: Absolutely, particularly with respect to mental health. Teenage boys who live with continuously married parents have the highest self-esteem among teenagers, while teenage girls who live with continuously cohabiting parents have the lowest. I could cite a plethora of other research and statistics, but I am out of time. Marriage is indispensable to a flourishing society. We need to stop fighting that fact and start supporting it.

4.19 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Welfare Delivery (Caroline Nokes): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mrs Moon, and to be able to respond to this very important debate today.

I do not intend to start by being facetious, but the comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Congleton (Fiona Bruce) have left me fearing for my own future good health. Nevertheless, I welcome the comments that many Members have made about the importance of lone parents in our society and the very, very hard work that they put in to bringing up their children.

Of course, I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Enfield, Southgate (Mr Burrowes) on securing this important debate on Marriage Week, although not quite during Marriage Week, which I understand runs from 7 February to 14 February, coinciding very nicely with St Valentine's day, which is coming up very soon indeed. I acknowledge his keen interest in social justice issues and that of the many other Members who have spoken. It demonstrates the importance that the House places on the subject that so many Members, from all parties, are here today for what is just a 30-minute debate, and have sought to make their contributions.

Mike Freer (Finchley and Golders Green) (Con): I also congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Enfield, Southgate (Mr Burrowes) on securing this debate. Does my hon. Friend the Minister agree that the fact that marriage is now open to all helps to embed social justice in our society?

Caroline Nokes: I very much thank my hon. Friend the Member for Finchley and Golders Green (Mike Freer) for that comment. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Enfield, Southgate on his 21 years of marriage to Janet, but I understand that my hon. Friend the Member for Finchley and Golders Green has recently also celebrated his wedding anniversary. Although he has only been married for two years, he has actually been with his husband for a quarter of a century. That is something that we can all be very impressed by and I extend my congratulations to them.

Of course, Marriage Week provides us with a very good opportunity to celebrate the commitment and connectedness that a stable relationship brings to a

family. The Government view the role of families as fundamental in shaping individuals, and in having an overwhelmingly positive effect on wider society. We know that growing up in families where parents are collaborative and communicative gives children the skills they need to develop into happy and successful adults, and the vital institution of marriage is a strong symbol of wider society's desire to celebrate commitment between partners.

The institution of marriage can indeed be the basis of a successful family life and many people make this very important commitment every year. As we have heard, marriage can lay the foundations for parenthood, and is emblematic of the love and security that parents need to give their children.

A stable family that provides a nurturing environment for children is something that the Government will continue to champion and encourage. That is why we are focused on helping families and children, to enhance the educational and employment opportunities available to the young, and to reinforce the benefits that parental collaboration undoubtedly has.

Catherine McKinnell: Since 2015, Marriage Care in Tyneside has provided counselling services to 54 couples and 48 couples have received relationship education, undoubtedly helping those couples to form healthier marriages and stronger family units. Does the Minister agree that the Department for Work and Pensions should continue to fund face-to-face marriage and relationship counselling services?

Caroline Nokes: I thank the hon. Lady for that comment, and I have written the name of her constituency on my speech so I remember to mention specifically the point she has made about Newcastle upon Tyne.

The importance of marriage is reflected in the Government's introduction of the marriage tax allowance. Furthermore, our commitment to supporting different types of family means that we have extended that tax allowance to include civil partnerships and, of course, same-sex marriages, which were introduced in 2014 and have been taking place since.

Jim Shannon: I understand that the take-up of the marriage tax allowance has not been as great as the Government had hoped. May I gently suggest to the Minister that the take-up would increase dramatically if she and her Department were able to make it a more serious allowance? Perhaps that is something the Government can consider.

Caroline Nokes: I am sure that is also a matter for Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs, and recently it has been a subject that my own constituents have raised with me, following some publicity about take-up of the marriage tax allowance.

This debate is an opportunity for us to celebrate the diversity and vibrancy of marriage as the basis for family life across the United Kingdom, and we recognise that supportive families can come in many different shapes and sizes.

When it comes to the critical issue of improving children's outcomes, the evidence shows that it is not the structure of a family that is important but the quality of the relationship between the parents. Recent research

by the Early Intervention Foundation has shown that children exposed to frequent, intense and poorly resolved inter-parental conflict have poorer outcomes in later life. We also know that an improvement in parenting skills does not mitigate the worst effects if relationship issues are not addressed.

It is an unfortunate fact of life that marriages can and do break down, but the Government have been clear that, even when a family has separated, both parents still have a positive role to play in the lives of their children. Evidence shows that parental collaboration has a direct and positive impact on child outcomes. As we have heard, children tend to have better health, emotional wellbeing and higher academic attainment if they grow up with parents who have a good relationship and who are able to manage conflict well. That is why we are committed to supporting healthy relationships between parents—whether married or cohabiting, together or separated—in the best interests of children.

Andrew Selous: I just wonder whether the Minister could reflect on the statistic that 93% of couples who are still together when their children reach the age of 15 are married. Does that not speak very powerfully, notwithstanding what she said about the recent research by the Early Intervention Foundation?

Caroline Nokes: I thank my hon. Friend for that comment and I will shortly make some very specific points about marriage that I know will make everybody very happy.

Over 48,000 couples have participated in counselling and more than 17,000 practitioners have been trained to help families in difficulty in the last four years, during which we have invested more than £30 million in services offering support to couples, to reduce parental conflict. In total, 160,000 people have been given access to support, to reduce that conflict. Alongside that, our ongoing child maintenance reforms are delivering a new programme designed to increase collaboration and reduce conflict between separated parents.

Our current programme was designed without the benefit of the latest evidence about the importance of good inter-parental relationships, while a focus on national commissioning of services makes it hard to establish effective referral mechanisms from local services. This means that, in some areas, take-up remains low, despite the prevalence of relationship distress. The hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne North (Catherine McKinnell) made an important intervention earlier and we will soon announce plans to procure new services to help disadvantaged parents, and others, to address parental conflict.

Catherine McKinnell: Will the Minister give way?

Caroline Nokes: I am really sorry, but I am now left with only three and a half minutes and I still have quite a lot that I would like to say.

The importance of both parents to children's future outcomes is well known to all of us. Only around half of children in separated families see their non-resident parent every fortnight or more. Through both our programme to reduce parental conflict and our child maintenance reforms, we are specifically supporting fathers, as my hon. Friend the Member for Enfield,

[Caroline Nokes]

Southgate mentioned, in both intact and separated families, to form more collaborative co-parenting relationships and hence improve their children's outcomes. We know that some fathers feel that they are not recognised by public services as having responsibilities for their children and we want to explore how to give them the same chance to engage in their children's lives as mothers.

Of course, we are aware that different organisations offer classes specifically aimed at preparing a couple for marriage, and those classes can offer very real benefits to people in those circumstances. We want to support programmes that have the biggest impact possible, which is why our new programme will offer support to all family types.

I acknowledge the great work of the community of organisations that advise my Department on family and parental conflict issues. I recognise the great breadth and depth of experience they have in this area. In seeking to draw on their valuable experience, on 23 January I met members of the Relationships Alliance—Relate, Marriage Care, OnePlusOne and Tavistock Relationships. We enjoyed a really productive and informative discussion about the challenges involved in addressing parental conflict, including in the most disadvantaged families, and the new national development of this important work.

The Relationships Alliance is an important organisation that plays a key role in promoting the many benefits of healthy adult relationships, and our objectives are very closely aligned. Members of the alliance have been long-standing partners of the Department, both in their capacity as subject matter experts, and as contract-holders for our current and past delivery programmes. They have given their time and expertise to policy development, and I thank them for that support. In particular, they have supported our efforts to create a new programme targeted at reducing parental conflict. We will continue to engage with the Relationships Alliance, and a wide range of stakeholders, in the future.

The Green Paper that we will bring forward shortly is a listening exercise as much as a tool to express our policy intentions. It will provide an excellent opportunity to hear from stakeholders to garner their views and expertise, and I look forward to exploring the outcomes in more depth. Disadvantaged children are a priority for Government support, and as such will also be a priority for our parental conflict contracts.

In conclusion, let me assure hon. Members that this Government are clear on the importance of the family and of marriage, in all the different forms that it can take, and we are continuing to work to drive up outcomes for children by increasing collaboration between parents, which we know is so crucially important.

I reiterate my thanks to all Members who have expressed their views and their particular enthusiasm and support for marriage. I welcome that, I acknowledge that and I reassure them that the Department intends to continue to work very hard to ensure that marriage gets the support it needs to continue being a strong bedrock for the families and the children for whom we want to secure the best possible outcomes in the future.

Question put and agreed to.

Ultra Low Emissions Vehicles

4.30 pm

Andrew Selous (South West Bedfordshire) (Con): I beg to move,

That this House has considered ultra-low emission vehicles.

It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mrs Moon. I am grateful to have been granted this debate. Before I begin, I should say that in a conversation I had earlier today with the Minister's colleague, my right hon. Friend the Member for South Holland and The Deepings (Mr Hayes)—I understand that this is his policy area—he agreed to have a meeting with me shortly on this issue, and I am grateful for that.

It is nearly five years since I initiated a debate on ultra low emissions vehicles in the Chamber. I have strongly championed the new technology throughout that time. In my debate in May 2011, I said that the issue mattered for four main reasons: first, because it is part of the answer in tackling climate change; secondly, because it is at the heart of creating the new industries of the future; thirdly, because it helps the United Kingdom respond to the challenge of energy security; and fourthly, because it helps our constituents reduce the cost of driving. In that debate, no one, including me, mentioned the important contribution that ultra low emissions vehicles can make in improving air quality, which is an issue that is rapidly rising up the political agenda, not least because 40% of local authorities are currently breaching air quality guidelines. A quarter of children in London are breathing illegally polluted air, meaning that their lung capacity may never recover. The air quality in London last week was worse than that in Beijing.

Mr David Burrowes (Enfield, Southgate) (Con): One of my local schools is in an area that breaches the limit. In fact, my constituents, particularly those living off the North Circular Road, are breathing some of the worst air in London, if not the country. Does my hon. Friend recognise that the highest cost to the health of Londoners and those across the country is paid by those in our most deprived communities, who on average are exposed to 25% higher levels of air pollution than people elsewhere?

Andrew Selous: I totally agree with my hon. Friend. It is often the most disadvantaged communities that suffer the worst air quality. That is another reason why the issue is so important.

In May 2011, there were 57,000 ultra low emissions vehicles on our roads. Nearly five years later, that figure has increased to 87,000. The Government's central projection of 5% of all cars in the UK being ultra low emissions vehicles by 2020 means that we need to have 1.6 million such vehicles on our roads by then. The Committee on Climate Change recommends that 9% of the cars on our roads should be ultra low emissions by 2020. That equates to 2.8 million cars. Even 9% is unambitious compared with Japan, which has a target for 20% of all its cars to be ultra low emissions vehicles by 2020. While I am very happy to give the Government due and proper credit for what they have done in this area, my purpose in holding the debate is to challenge them to lay out a much clearer road map as to how we are to get to at least 1.6 million ultra low emissions vehicles on our roads by 2020.

In response to a parliamentary question I asked recently, the Department for Transport declined to indicate how many ultra low emissions vehicles it expects to be on our roads by the end of this year, in 2018 or in 2019. I think it would be helpful to have a more detailed road map of how we will achieve the 2020 target.

Sir Greg Knight (East Yorkshire) (Con): Does my hon. Friend agree that the correct approach is a balanced one? Encouraging the greater use of low emissions vehicles should not mean that we should ban historic vehicles from our roads. I declare an interest as the chair of the all-party group on historic vehicles.

Andrew Selous: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend. He has a long record of campaigning on this issue. We should help people transition to the new, cleaner vehicles that we see on our roads, and his point is well made.

Sir Greg Knight: Will my hon. Friend give way again?

Andrew Selous: If my right hon. Friend will forgive me, there are quite a few other Members who wish to speak.

Sir Greg Knight: I will be brief. Can I place on the record the fact that historic vehicles comprise 0.7% of all licensed vehicles, so their impact on the environment is negligible?

Andrew Selous: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend. He has done a service by putting that figure on the record.

Do the Government intend to influence the choice of public sector vehicles that taxpayers pay for, such as local authority school buses, police cars, ambulances and so on? Installing many more charging points, both for home charging and for charging en route, is critical to the increase in ultra low emissions vehicles. The modern transport Bill will enable the UK to make further progress. Issues that should be addressed include the standardisation of sockets and plugs for charging, and the ease of payment among different charging providers. Only last week, a Central Bedfordshire councillor who has an electric car shared his frustration with me at not being able to plug it in to charge in some locations and not being able to pay for the charge in others. The Government need to take a lead.

John Howell (Henley) (Con): I am glad my hon. Friend has mentioned councillors. Does he agree that local authorities have a vital role to play? What they can do can magnificently help low emissions vehicles.

Andrew Selous: My hon. Friend is absolutely right.

Convenience store representatives have asked whether any charging point investments they may be required to make can be offset against their business rates. While we must have more charging points, we must act fairly towards small businesses. What steps are the Government taking to expand electric vehicle car sharing services, which have been introduced in Paris, Indianapolis and Singapore? Have they given any thought to the steps that need to be taken to establish a healthy second-hand ultra low emissions vehicle market, the lack of which is currently holding back growth?

Is there anything the Minister can say to reassure Guide Dogs, which is concerned about increased injuries to pedestrians as a result of ultra low emissions vehicles' quietness? Volkswagen, BMW and Ford plan to set up a European network for the speedy charging of electric vehicles. Their technology will apparently be significantly faster than the current arrangements. Will the United Kingdom benefit from similar private sector investment in the latest and fastest technology?

The United Kingdom has the largest market in the European Union for ultra low emissions vehicles, which is something we should all celebrate, but I note that a quarter of all the vehicles in Norway are already electric or hybrid electric. The Netherlands, along with Norway, plans to completely phase out diesel vehicles by 2025. Last year, China produced 517,000 new energy vehicles, as it calls them, and it expects to quadruple its new energy vehicle output to 2,000,000 vehicles by 2020. This year, it will also install another 800,000 public charging stations. I appreciate that China is a much larger country than the United Kingdom, but a smaller country can still aim for the same trajectory of growth, and that is what I would like to see the United Kingdom do to become and remain a world leader.

It is important that when we refer to ultra low emissions vehicles, we do not just refer to what comes out of the exhaust. There are, I understand, estimated to be 84,000 transport refrigeration units powered by highly polluting diesel engines that are not yet regulated. That is a significant omission in the urgent battle that the Government need to fight to significantly improve the United Kingdom's air quality. What action will the Government take on transport refrigeration units?

When we refer to emissions, we should include nitrogen oxide and particulate matter. It is important to realise that particulate matter comes not only from exhausts, but from tyres and brakes. What research are the Government commissioning to reduce emissions from tyres and brakes? For the industry to continue to invest, there needs to be long-term commitment from the Government. The plug-in car grant is a critical lever to developing that market and continuing commitment to it is important, as is continued investment in charging infrastructure. Taxation is a matter for Her Majesty's Treasury, but can the Minister say anything about representations made to Treasury Ministers on the research and development tax credit? That needs to be internationally competitive to demonstrate ongoing commitment to the industry over the next decade. Can the Minister say anything about changes to vehicle excise duty and company car tax to reflect the amount of nitrogen oxide and particulate matter emitted in addition to the levels of carbon emitted?

Dr Rupa Huq (Ealing Central and Acton) (Lab): Has the hon. Gentleman seen last week's air quality audits from the Mayor of London's office? Does he welcome the recommendation to move school entrances and play areas away from areas with idling vehicles, and the idea of "no engine idling" schemes to reduce harmful emissions during school time? Perhaps the Minister could take those points on board too.

Andrew Selous: I referred to last week's very bad levels of air quality. The hon. Lady is right; as my hon. Friend the Member for Henley (John Howell) said, local authorities absolutely have a role.

[Andrew Selous]

If the Government are to meet their legal air quality obligations, change is necessary. We need to make sure that there are affordable, cleaner alternatives for people on low incomes to switch to. What estimate have the Government made of the ability of compression engines to mix diesel and hydrogen in vans and lorries to reduce emissions? It is excellent to see the Liverpool-based technology firm ULEMCo working with the University of Liverpool and Huazhong University's Wuhan New Energy Institute to do exactly that. It is also good to see the Scottish company Alexander Dennis partnering with Chinese vehicle manufacturer BYD—it stands for “Build Your Dreams”—to put electric buses on our roads and Zhejiang Geely making electric taxis in Rugby for the streets of London.

Dr Alan Whitehead (Southampton, Test) (Lab): Would the hon. Gentleman perhaps like to add to his ask list the issue of local authorities that are grappling with air quality issues? Five local authorities are under infringement and, with the Department, are dealing with a plan for low-carbon development to counter poor air quality caused by transport. The Department's response may well be to provide funding to, for example, convert taxi fleets, local authority vehicles and public vehicles to low-carbon usage. Would he encourage the Department responsible to make sure that grants go to those local authorities?

Andrew Selous: What is happening in London with taxis for the future is excellent, and I am sure we would all like to see more cities across the United Kingdom making progress. The hon. Gentleman has a long record of interest in this area, and I thank him for putting that point on the record.

What discussions are the Government having with local authorities to roll out ultra low emissions buses and taxis more widely across the United Kingdom? As the UK seeks new markets and trading arrangements, I want to see this country excelling in that area, with high take-up in our home market and massive exports around the world. I am extremely grateful to colleagues who have come along to take an interest in this important matter today.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Mrs Madeleine Moon (in the Chair): Order. There are some people standing to indicate that they wish to speak who did not submit their names for the debate. I warn all those who would like to speak that I intend to go to the Front-Bench spokespeople at 10 past five.

4.43 pm

Rebecca Pow (Taunton Deane) (Con): I commend my hon. Friend the Member for South West Bedfordshire (Andrew Selous) for bringing forward this debate and for his work championing this issue, which began long before I got to this place. I will split my speech into two parts—first, why we need to encourage more electric and hybrid vehicles on to the road and, secondly, the framework that we need to enable that to happen.

It is really obvious now why we need to make the switch to electric nationally and with all speed. It is because of the shocking air quality statistics that we

have all highlighted recently. Only last week, the levels of air pollution in London overtook those in Beijing. One would hardly credit that that could be possible in this nation, but it is true.

I have taken part in two air quality inquiries. The first was as part of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee and the second as part of the Environmental Audit Committee. The statistics that we were presented with were quite shocking. We have failed our nitrogen oxide and particulate matter targets miserably, and the impact has been a terrible knock-on effect on health. We are told that something like 40,000 to 50,000 people die every year as a result of air pollution. I believe that the statistics could be higher, and that is a shocking indictment of how we are running our society.

Mr Burrowes: We should consider the impact on children. Bowes Primary School in my patch is 66% over the legal limit. The issue is whether an ultra low emissions zone, which could be extended by the Mayor, would help on the north and south circular routes. It may lead to further congestion and other problems. Has the hon. Lady looked at ultra low emissions zones to see whether they are a good solution to the problem?

Rebecca Pow: I will say a bit about those zones later, but I think all local authorities will have to consider them. I hope the Minister will have some guidance on that later.

Even in Taunton Deane, which people might consider a beautiful rural area with a few urban centres, there are two pollution hotspots. One is on East Street, which is a busy road going right into the centre of Taunton. The other is on the famous A358—I have spoken about getting an upgrade for that road ever since I arrived in this place—where there is a pollution hotspot in a village called Henlade. We need to tackle that and, although I believe local authorities have the powers to tackle such issues—I have questioned Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Ministers about that—they do not have the know-how on how to put measures in place. More particularly, they do not have the funds to tackle the issue even if they would like to.

I welcome the fact that the Government will produce their consultation on air quality fairly soon, and we look forward to seeing what is in it. I urge the Government—this is particularly a point for DEFRA—to adopt World Health Organisation rules on air quality, as they are far more stringent than the European rules that we have nevertheless shockingly contravened.

I come on to the real reason for today's debate, which is encouraging the use of electric cars to help tackle air quality. As we have heard, the electric car market is growing substantially. There are many models available on the market now. Some are extremely well designed and are built to last. Many could be built not exactly as kit cars but on a much more local basis. Perhaps that might spawn new industries in our constituencies that could manufacture those cars. I would welcome the Minister's views on whether we should have some sort of incentive to kick-start those industries.

There are already some world leaders in the industry. Formula 1, which is largely based in this country, has already been driving electric racing cars—there is a new league called Formula E, where they are raced at venues around the world. If we increased productivity and

innovation in an industry that we already invest in, we could become world leaders. There would be spin-offs for our industrial strategy, and for technology and innovation, as we leave the EU, and it would work to improve our environment and help to build an environment that works for everyone—a point that the Government have to address. There will be spin-offs all round.

Julian Sturdy (York Outer) (Con): My hon. Friend is making a powerful argument. I entirely agree that we have to improve air quality. The 9% target—I think it was provided by the Select Committee on Energy and Climate Change—is one that we really need to aim for. Is one of the biggest barriers to the growth of low emissions vehicles not the high depreciation costs that are incurred at the moment? Does my hon. Friend have any ideas about how the Government could help overcome that?

Rebecca Pow: I will leave the Minister to come up with some answers on that.

I have been having discussions with a company called EV Hub Global, which has a 21st century idea: a hub—a filling station—for electric cars, run on a membership basis. We cannot increase our use of electric cars by the numbers that have been predicted unless we have the right infrastructure in place to refuel them. At the moment, there are 1,000 rapid chargers available in the UK and approximately 100,000 electric vehicles, and 50,000 taxis have got to be off the road by 2020. If they are all going to go electric, and if we are all going to buy electric cars, we have to have a framework in place to recharge them. Those hubs can help.

People I have talked to in the industry suggest that we should focus on fleet vehicles first—buses, taxis, vans and lorries—and then the domestic car market will follow. I appreciate that we have to be very careful not to create economic difficulties for businesses that use vans; it is a very fine line.

Networks are important, and ideas for incentivising fleet businesses to convert to electric vehicles are crucial. Our electric charging facilities have to get faster. People do not want to spend an hour charging up—they want to spend 30 minutes or less—so we need innovation to help that. Equally, we need storage for the charging facilities so that they do not have an adverse impact on or disrupt the grid. Charging hubs or extra facilities need to be where we most need them, so we should focus on cities and airports first. There will be a new runway at Heathrow, so it will be important to focus on that. We must plan how we will work these ideas into towns such as Taunton, which has just been given green town status, to reduce high-emission cars. There are some big opportunities here.

I again thank my hon. Friend the Member for South West Bedfordshire for bringing this subject to our attention and for giving us the opportunity to speak. There are huge opportunities, so we should be positive about the world of hybrid and electric cars, but the framework has to be in place. I very much welcome the Minister's view on how he will enable that. Over and above everything else, we have to tackle this dreadful air pollution.

4.52 pm

James Heapey (Wells) (Con): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mrs Moon. I echo the words of my hon. Friend the Member for Taunton Deane

(Rebecca Pow) in congratulating my hon. Friend the Member for South West Bedfordshire (Andrew Selous) on securing the debate.

I agree with all that has been said about the need to promote ultra low emissions vehicles. It is clear that we have to do so to meet the carbon targets that we have committed to and because air quality is increasingly featuring in the public conscience. Court cases about air quality may force the Government's hand more quickly than the requirement to meet our carbon plans.

Our plans to reduce transport emissions by 2020 are already quite challenging. The Energy and Climate Change Committee, on which I previously served, produced a report that looked at how the Government are progressing towards meeting those targets. It was apparent that hitting the targets we set for 2020 will be very difficult indeed. The transition to biofuels will help, of course, but there are real challenges to achieving that transition, given the capability of some of the cars currently on the road. Obviously the quickest way to meet those targets, both for 2020 and beyond, is to adopt ultra low emissions vehicles.

The technology is hugely exciting. When the Select Committee visited California just before we finished compiling our last report, we visited Tesla. Seeing the vehicles there, I came to understand that they are no longer golf carts or milk floats; they are proper cars that will really excite people the world over and will achieve significant saturation, even if the market is left to its own devices. A small plug: I am delighted that Tesla is going to come and speak to the all-party parliamentary group for Globe UK, which I chair, in a few weeks' time to explain its vision to colleagues in Parliament. Of course, other manufacturers are doing great things, too—it is not just Tesla—but I have seen that factory, and what it is doing really is very impressive.

The argument for such cars is compelling. They are not milk floats. They have all the gadgets and oomph—I think that is the technical term—that cars need to turn the heads of proper petrolheads. They are also amazingly cheap to run. Of course, they now accelerate like proper cars and have all the gadgets inside like proper cars, but it is the fact that they can run for hundreds and hundreds of miles for pence that makes the real difference.

I agree with colleagues that the existence of a second-hand market is important. As my hon. Friend the Member for Taunton Deane rightly said, the Government should focus their attention on really screwing down on the fleets to ensure that they are aggressively encouraged to become ULEV fleets as quickly as possible. Vehicles are invariably in fleet service for only a very short time—a year or two—and it is those vehicles that filter through to the second-hand market most quickly.

The Government need to address three barriers to the roll-out of electric vehicles, which the Minister has heard me talk about previously. First, we need to get the charging network right. The challenge is not the charging network at service stations on motorways and trunk routes, because service stations all over the country now have electric charging points. Nor is it the charging network on driveways at people's homes, because the Government's excellent grant scheme ensures that when someone buys an electric vehicle they can install a charging point on their private land. It is residential curbside charging, particularly in areas of high population density. If someone goes out in any direction from here,

[James Heappey]

it will not be long before they find high concentrations of people living with no private parking. Having a curbside charging network—probably buried in the curb stone—would be an extraordinary infrastructure project.

Rebecca Pow: My hon. Friend is making a serious point. Is that not where the hubs that I talked about could be useful? We could have hubs in various areas in cities so that people do not need to park and charge on the curbside; they can go to the hub, which they join on a membership basis.

James Heappey: I, too, had the pleasure of meeting EV Hub, and its initial model focuses on commercial fleets. The reality is that, if every vehicle has to go via one of those hubs when it leaves its parking spot each morning, the scale of the demand will be unworkable. We have to find a solution to curbside charging for those who do not have off-road parking of their own.

We also need to find a way of incentivising businesses to install electric vehicle charging points in their work car parks. When we visited California, a number of businesses made a great virtue of that and let people charge their cars for free while they were working. It would be worthwhile to find a way of encouraging businesses to do that.

The second barrier is the preparedness of the energy system itself: quite simply, do we have the generation capacity to meet the likely increase in electricity need? Is the energy system—the wires and switches—capable of dealing with the clusters in demand when a lot of EVs are charged in one street or neighbourhood at the same time? Is the system smart enough yet? Has it been digitised so that we can mitigate that clustering in both time and space by load-shifting, so that cars are charged when the energy is available at the cheapest possible point? We risk exacerbating the peak energy price in the evening if we do not have that digitised load-shifting capability in place. If everybody comes home and lazily plugs in their car before they go inside, alongside switching on the kettle, cooking supper and all the other things that go on in homes when people first get home at night, demand will increase massively.

Thirdly, people will need certainty about the future tax regime for how we charge people to drive cars. It is blatantly obvious that Her Majesty's Treasury is not going to give up the receipts it currently gets for fuel duty without a compensating tax in place, and I suspect that that will be very pricey. If we are really going to encourage people to go for electric vehicles, we need to be very clear—perhaps in a Green Paper alongside the modern transport Bill—about what we are thinking of for an alternative way of raising tax from motoring once people transition and we lose the fuel duty.

We can work through all that, but the Government need to be clear about their role in encouraging the transition. The grants that are in place are doing an excellent job and, as a result, people are being encouraged to look at EVs in particular. The more EVs come down in price and, crucially, the more they increase their range, the more people will see them as a viable option and be incentivised by the grants. The size of the grants will be the indicator of how serious the Government are about facilitating the transition.

My plea, however, is that we do not penalise the drivers of diesel cars. I declare an interest as the driver of a diesel car, who thought I was doing the right thing by buying one, because it produced low emissions and was efficient. We have our diesel cars now and, if we are to be incentivised to transition away from them, the Government need to recognise that we did not do the wrong thing by buying them—quite the contrary, we thought we were doing the right thing.

The transition is happening, the technology is compelling and Government intervention is the throttle in the process. To meet the fourth and fifth carbon budgets, however, we surely require the Government to put their foot down fully on the accelerator.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Mrs Madeleine Moon (in the Chair): Order. I have 10 minutes before I need to call the Front Benchers, so I will ask the three gentlemen standing to be very circumspect with their time. I can allow them a little more than three minutes each.

5.1 pm

Jim Shannon (Strangford) (DUP): Thank you, Mrs Moon. It is a pleasure to speak in the debate and I congratulate the hon. Member for South West Bedfordshire (Andrew Selous) on initiating it.

In my younger days—and, probably, those of everyone in the Chamber—we walked to school, the shop and church, and we took the bus anywhere else. Time has moved on, and families may have one, two or more cars, which has led to the many problems with pollution and effects on the environment.

The Volkswagen transmission issue is still an ongoing problem. The week before last I met some of my constituents who informed me that after the new software had been installed the cars did not go well. Has the Minister had the opportunity to find out exactly where we are? Also, I understand the Government's initiative to reduce road tax for newer and more eco-friendly cars, but what is being done to encourage young people to take up such opportunities?

Without fear of contradiction, I hope, I can say that I live in the most beautiful constituency in the whole of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. We want to keep Strangford that way and have corrected environmental damage caused to beautiful old buildings, for example. The council has also designated car-charging points. Those are all steps in the right direction.

Some information and stats on ULEVs have already been given, such as the numbers registered recently. To put the figure into perspective, however, some 43,000 ULEVs have been registered for the first time in Great Britain, compared with some 3.4 million cars registered overall. There is still a long, long way to go. The Minister has stated:

“Plug-in vehicle registrations reached a record high in 2015...more than the past 5 years' totals rolled into one”.

Some 29 models are now available, which gives a lot of variety and choice for those who wish to go that way.

We need to have plug-in points available for people to charge their cars so that the fear of running out of power is not valid. The Government have a role in providing grants for businesses, such as shopping centres, or in

ensuring that all council facilities, wherever they may be, have at least one power point. Will the Minister outline any such initiatives or plans for initiatives? Also, what discussions have taken place with the Assemblies and devolved Administrations?

I am conscious of the time, Mrs Moon, given the challenge you set us. These days, people want to travel further and we try to provide a good public transport system at a cost. We also have an opportunity to outlay funds for the benefit of all. I support any measures that will incentivise those who wish to be more environmentally sound to be able to make that choice financially. I also take the opportunity to caution the Government about enforcing such a choice or removing choice for others. We may all want new cars to be ultra low emission, but those who wish to choose standard cars must be allowed to do so and not be financially penalised. Whatever the Minister's response, I urge him to be aware of the difference between incentivising and penalising.

5.4 pm

John Pugh (Southport) (LD): I thank the hon. Member for South West Bedfordshire (Andrew Selous), who introduced the debate, for the opportunity to talk about something apart from Brexit for once.

When we talk about this subject in Transport questions, I often intervene. I do not know whether the Minister has noticed, but I sound a slightly sceptical note, simply because I am not wholly convinced of the case for electric cars. The roll-out is slow, the product is expensive and there are a lot of long-term uncertainties, including maintenance—when a car is no longer to be seen by the franchise dealer but goes to the local garage—and supply issues. The hon. Member for Wells (James Heappey) alluded to the difficulty of getting the grid and supply of electricity right and ensuring that not everyone in London goes home at 6 o'clock and plugs in electric cars at the same time.

There is also the issue of exactly how the electricity is generated. The Chinese are indeed making lots of electric cars, but they are building a lot of coal-fired power stations as well. Furthermore, a degree of optimism bias exists in the business with regard to where battery technology will take us, so the absence of much consumer confidence means that most people prefer a hybrid car to an electric-only one. There is also a lack of clarity about what success would look like when we are all driving electric cars. The vision was partly sketched by the hon. Member for Wells, but I do not think that we are at all clear.

The one point that I want to make is that at one time the Department used to express itself as being technology-neutral, but—probably under the influence of Liberal Democrat Transport Ministers as much as anything else—we started to talk almost exclusively about electric cars. Many other viable alternatives are around, such as hydrogen cars, which are being developed by Honda and Toyota. I believe that the Metropolitan police are thinking of ordering some, and I have driven in one. Hydrogen cars fuel up much more quickly than electric cars, a charging-point structure is not needed and the costs have been coming down. They are a very viable alternative.

Other alternatives are already around, and they are what I might describe as under-supported—for example, liquefied petroleum gas. I do not want to be a spokesman for petrolheads, but the LPG infrastructure is already there.

Manufacturing capacity is already in place at Ellesmere Port, where we make LPG for export. We rarely incentivise it appropriately—someone will get £10 off in tax each year, which is a minimal incentive. There is little benefit to drivers from converting, unless they hang on to the car for a very long time. The duty on LPG, as opposed to straightforward petrol, is uncertain.

There is one big problem with electric cars that fuel cells, or even hydrogen fuel cells, will not cut into effectively. At the moment, if we put a battery big enough into a lorry to drive it and let it do what it has to do, that is basically the payload of the lorry. Lorry drivers will not be driving electric vehicles any time soon, so we need to incentivise them to use the cleanest possible fuel—and that is not diesel.

5.7 pm

Neil Parish (Tiverton and Honiton) (Con): I, too, congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for South West Bedfordshire (Andrew Selous) on securing the debate, on keeping a spotlight very much on air quality and on bringing in ultra low emission vehicles.

We have to remember that, in hotspots in this city and throughout the country, 80% of the nitric oxide that turns into nitric dioxide is produced by transport. We really have to deal with that. At issue is private cars, and we have to put in place the right systems of grants and encouragement for the public to buy. For example, charging points must be not only available, but very fast, so people do not have to wait all day for their car to charge up if they are going long distances.

I agree with the hon. Member for Southport (John Pugh) that lorries will be difficult to turn electric. Delivery vans, taxis and buses can reduce their emissions dramatically, not just through electricity but other fuels. Unless we target such high areas of pollution, we will not be doing enough for air quality. The lives of thousands of people out there in our inner cities are being shortened by air quality.

Yes, electric vehicles carry great incentives now—we are talking about 4p a mile in running costs—and I congratulate the Government on the initiatives in place, but only 1% of vehicles are electric and ultra low emission, while in Norway the figure is 25%. The key now is to ensure that people have alternative vehicles, not only purely electric ones, but hybrid vehicles, which allow drivers to use petrol or diesel over long distances and the batteries when they get to the inner cities. That could perhaps also be done with hybrid lorries, so that lorries' engines charge on the journey into London and they are able to make deliveries in central London using their electric motors.

We must stop these vehicles—from taxis to buses and delivery vans. Given our lifestyles, we all like to order our shopping online with a click from Tesco, Sainsbury's or wherever, but all that has to be delivered by a van, which again means emissions in our inner cities. We must tackle the issue head-on, and tackle the hotspots in particular, by incentivising people to ensure that we take diesel polluters out of our city centres, and I am confident that the Minister can do that.

Mrs Madeleine Moon (in the Chair): Order. The Minister has been asked a large number of questions. I would like to give him as much time as possible to respond, so will the Front-Bench spokesmen also be very tight with their time? I call Alan Brown.

5.10 pm

Alan Brown (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (SNP): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mrs Moon. I congratulate the hon. Member for South West Bedfordshire (Andrew Selous) on bringing forward this debate and sticking to a theme that he has raised before—it is obviously close to his heart.

We have heard much about air quality and the need for action. Just today, I read in the newspapers that according to the United Nations special rapporteur on hazardous substance and waste, air pollution is a crisis that plagues the UK, particularly for children, and urgent Government action is required. In November 2016, for the second time in 18 months, the Government lost a court case on their proposals to tackle air pollution. ClientEarth, which took the Government to court, states that over-optimistic modelling of diesel car fumes was used rather than actual road emissions. The Government clearly need to take proper action. It has also been widely reported that up to 40,000 deaths per year arise from air pollution. Air pollution is a killer, and we need to tackle it head-on.

Transport alone accounts for 23% of CO₂ emissions; transport and electricity generation are the joint largest net contributors to those emissions. That highlights the scale of the problem that needs to be tackled. Over the years, Governments of different colours have introduced a series of initiatives to encourage low emissions vehicles. Many of those initiatives seemed logical at the time, but Governments and their initiatives change, and that has hindered progress in people purchasing low emissions vehicles and the roll-out of the infrastructure that is required to support them.

In January last year, the Minister said he reckoned that the sale of ultra low emissions vehicles had reached a tipping point, and in September 2016 the Department for Transport issued a triumphant press release that said there had been a 49% increase in registrations of ULEVs compared with the previous year. That sounds great, but 805,000 new vehicles were registered and fewer than 10,000 of those were ULEVs, so they actually account for only 1.2% of new vehicles. As the hon. Member for South West Bedfordshire said earlier, we need a massive increase in the sale and registration of these vehicles to reach the 5% target by 2020, and we are behind schedule. It is good to hear praise for the wee independent oil-rich country also known as Norway, where ULEVs have a market share of approximately 20%. What lessons does the Minister think can be learned from Norway, and what are the Government doing to replicate its success?

I appreciate the Government's grant scheme. On the face of it, the scheme is good—it is attractive and the figures look good—but clearly there are still not enough people purchasing ULEVs, so perhaps it needs to be reviewed. Perhaps the Government just need to raise awareness and encourage the public to take up those grants. The Scottish Government have introduced a low-carbon transport fund, which, as well as grants, allows people to access interest-free loans of up to £35,000, which are repaid over six years. Businesses can access interest-free loans of up to £100,000. That is another way of encouraging people to purchase these vehicles. Again, perhaps the UK Government could do more.

The Scottish Government have spent £13 million in the last five years to support bus operators, and Aberdeen actually has Europe's largest fleet of hydrogen-powered buses. Some 15% of charge points in the UK are in Scotland, which shows that Scotland is ahead in providing that infrastructure.

Alison Thewliss (Glasgow Central) (SNP): Does my hon. Friend also recognise that Glasgow City Council and the Scottish Government did a lot of work during the Commonwealth games to install lots of charging points in sports venues around the city where people may want to go?

Alan Brown: Yes, and I welcome that work, although ironically, I was contacted by a constituent who is concerned that Glasgow City Council will charge people for using parking bays while they charge their cars, which is actually a disincentive. The council needs to take that on board.

As we have heard, we need to get diesel vehicles off the road. Similarly to the example that the hon. Member for Wells (James Heap) gave, I have been contacted by constituents who are concerned that they will be penalised for having purchased diesel vehicles in good faith. Will the Government look at compensation or find other ways to fully incentivise those people to move to ultra low emissions vehicles? We must find a way to disincentivise people from buying diesel cars. There were good proposals in the Government's consultation on the modern transport Bill, but the Bill has been delayed. When will it come forward, and will it contain proper measures, as we have discussed?

5.15 pm

Andy McDonald (Middlesbrough) (Lab): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mrs Moon. I congratulate the hon. Member for South West Bedfordshire (Andrew Selous), who has campaigned for a clear road map for ultra low emissions vehicles for some time, on securing the debate.

Ultra low emissions, electric and alternative fuel vehicles and technologies offer huge opportunities for UK plc. The UK automotive sector added £18.9 billion in value to the UK economy last year, supporting 169,000 people in manufacturing directly and 814,000 across the industry and throughout the supply chains. If we are to sustain those numbers, we must strive for further growth and investment in more high-skilled design and engineering jobs. Supporting our ULEV market must be a priority for this Government.

A strategic approach to ULEVs must be a priority not just for growth's sake but for the sake of public health and the environment. However, the Government have presided over nothing other than an air quality crisis that is poisoning our towns. We know about the 40,000 deaths in the UK every year. Brixton Road in London breached its annual pollution limit for 2017 after just five days, and the Government are legally required to produce a strategy for improving air quality by 24 April, following a judicial review in which a High Court judge described the two previous plans of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs as "woefully inadequate".

Sadly, the Government are failing on the environment. Yes, new registrations for electric, hybrid and alternative fuel vehicles are increasing year on year, but the Government

are more than 1.5 million registrations short of their 1.6 million target for 2020. The UK is also legally bound to provide 10% of transport fuel from renewable sources by 2020, and it does not look like that target will be met, given that the proportion of energy from renewable sources fell last year from 4.93% to 4.23%.

Labour believes that clean air is a right, not a privilege. I will address some of the barriers, but we must consider all the levers for change. It is imperative that the Government recognise that the transition towards a low-carbon sustainable future is a journey in itself. The future vehicles market is still young and emerging, and we need a properly structured pathway. That means focusing not on purely electric cars but on all cleaner cars, including hybrids, and thinking about how taxation and grants can effectively incentivise uptake.

It is clear that the Chancellor's changes to vehicle excise duty lacked any consultation, and the industry is calling for the changes that are due to take place in April to be delayed. Will the Minister review those concerns with his counterparts in the Treasury and consider whether focusing on CO₂ alone remains rational? There are also concerns that cuts of £500 and £2,500 to plug-in grants for electric and hybrid cars and home charge points may not be allocated as effectively as they could be. Will the Minister outline how those cuts help to encourage motorists to shift to lower-emissions vehicles?

The prominence and accessibility of the wider infrastructure is also key to shaping consumer choices. We recognise some of the Government's work towards that and welcome their broad aims for the imminent modern transport Bill. It is essential that we have a good network of smart and easy-to-use charging points, and it is key that charging stations offer common standards and appropriately accommodate drivers. We must be wary that, at least initially, even rapid charging might take much longer than filling up a petrol car. Preparing for the wider impacts of a surge in use of low emissions electric vehicles is also key. Will the Minister therefore outline what the modern transport Bill will include and when it will be published?

Does the Minister have a plan to address the concerns of the Institute of the Motor Industry, which warns of the huge skills gap in licensed technicians—just 1,000 of 250,000 are currently trained to fix such vehicles? We must ensure that all small garages and mechanics have an opportunity to upskill and are not left behind. Without action, insurance premiums and waiting times for maintenance will be higher, not lower. Will he also update the House on developing operation restrictions through the clear air zones plan and his Government's third attempt at an air quality plan?

The key for the industry is uniformity; a patchwork of different plans would be troublesome. Given the size and weight of heavy goods vehicles, the technology is far more problematic for such vehicles, but their impact is huge—they contribute between 20% and 30% of emissions. The Minister will know the importance of the Automotive Council, introduced by the previous Labour Government to get things moving. Hopefully he can work with it.

Labour is pleased that the Government are taking seriously the transition to ultra low emissions vehicles, which will be the single biggest incremental change in transport for a century. However, we need effective consumer incentives and a customer-centred approach to upskilling

and infrastructure as well as making full use of the public sector's procurement power. Only then can we hope to reap the full benefits of the migration to ULEVs.

5.21 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport (Andrew Jones): I will go at some pace and not take any interventions, because I have many points to make and an astonishing number of questions to answer. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for South West Bedfordshire (Andrew Selous) on securing the debate. He has a long and distinguished record of campaigning on this issue. In terms of health and carbon emissions, and from balancing our grid and the move to renewables to ensuring that our automotive sector, which has been so powerful, is busy building the vehicles of the future, not of the past, we can all see the benefits of this fantastic new technology.

How will we achieve our objectives? We are investing a significant amount of money to support the ultra low emissions vehicle market. In 2015 the Chancellor committed more than £600 million to the market, and in the 2016 autumn statement that was boosted by a further £270 million.

My hon. Friend the Member for South West Bedfordshire mentioned the requirement for a plan. We have a plan, called "Driving the future today", which was set out in 2013, and we are on track. Significant progress has been made: we have supported the purchase of more than 80,000 plug-in cars through the plug-in car grant, and we expect that figure to reach 100,000 soon. That is a strong start, but I have no doubt that the scale of the challenge ahead is quite big. We will continue to support other vehicle types as well, through the plug-in van and plug-in motorcycle grant schemes. Last month we announced the winners of £20 million of funding for a low emissions freight and logistics trial.

To start on the questions, my hon. Friend raised the issue of transport refrigeration. Air Liquide was one of the winners, which will trial five refrigeration units that will use a prototype liquid nitrogen system. I confirm that the Government have been actively involved in developing new legislation at a European level, and a new regulation was recently agreed that will mean that any new transport refrigeration unit powered by a combustion engine will be subject to strict new emissions limits from 2019.

Colleagues have highlighted the importance of tackling air pollution, particularly in our larger cities and towns. To make some progress there we need to see change in the bus and taxi markets. We will continue our support for buses through the low emission bus scheme. We have seen £30 million invested there to convert 325 buses in a clean, new infrastructure. For taxis, we have the £20 million taxi infrastructure scheme. The TX5 from the London Taxi Company and the Metrocab from Frazer-Nash are being built here in the UK, which is a very positive story. We therefore have progress to build on.

In the 2016 autumn statement the Chancellor announced a further £150 million of new funding to help local authorities introduce more clean buses and taxis to our roads. Indeed, as was suggested, we are liaising with authorities all over the country. We will make announcements—hopefully quite shortly—on how that money will be invested, and I encourage all authorities

[Andrew Jones]

to seize the opportunity to transform their public transport fleets. We are already supporting some cities through the Go Ultra Low City scheme, which we wish to become global exemplars in the deployment of ultra low emissions vehicles.

Many colleagues highlighted the importance of having the right type of infrastructure. Our evidence suggests that the majority of drivers will want to charge their vehicles at home overnight, but that is not what everyone needs—there is also range anxiety—so we need more publicly accessible charge points. Through a mixture of public and private funding we have created more than 11,000 charge points across the country and more than 900 of those are rapid charge points—that is the largest network in Europe. I reassure my hon. Friend that the current plans of vehicle manufacturers to build a Europe-wide fast charging network do indeed include the UK, as one of Europe's leading markets. Regulation is clearly a part of this issue. A modern transport Bill is coming shortly, which will include many points raised by colleagues.

I will now move on to the questions. Do the Government seek to influence the choice of public sector vehicles? Yes. We are currently reviewing the Government buying standards for new vehicles, and the new standards will encourage the purchase of ultra low emissions vehicles in the public sector. On convenience stores and charge points, we have been carefully considering all the responses in the consultation on the modern transport Bill, and that will be sensitive to the potential costs as well as the benefits for any business, so that will be picked up.

On the expansion of electric vehicle car sharing schemes, as we have seen in other parts of the world, we have supported through funding the development and expansion of car clubs in England and to date we have helped to launch, expand or develop 24 car clubs across the country.

My hon. Friend asked whether the Government have considered the second-hand market. Yes, we have. When electric vehicles first went on sale there were concerns about the durability of the technology. As that has become much less of a concern the market has stabilised. However, my officials are watching that carefully and will continue to do so.

On electric vehicle noise, an EU regulation will require sound generators on new types of electric and hybrid vehicles from 2019, but of course manufacturers can choose to fit sound generators at any point if they so wish before that—that is the last date, not the first date.

On VWs and the corrections, well, I have a VW with a defeat device and I received a letter inviting me to have

my VW corrected only a few days ago. I am interested to hear that the process might not be working quite as smoothly as was hoped. I will pick up that point with my ministerial colleagues to take forward.

We certainly are taking a cross-UK view. My officials regularly speak with colleagues from all the devolved authorities and Governments and local authorities. The key thing is that we want to make progress as the UK, and progress can only be made when everyone is involved.

My hon. Friend the Member for Taunton Deane (Rebecca Pow) mentioned EV Hub. We are in contact with many charge point providers, including EV Hub, and we are funding rapid charging hubs through the Go Ultra Low City scheme.

In response to the hon. Member for Southport (John Pugh), the Government are indeed technology-neutral. We are backing ultra low and zero emissions vehicles however that is best achieved, and that does include hydrogen. I have opened a hydrogen fuelling station in south-west London and saw the benefits of that technology.

That was a real scamper across the debate. There were many other points that I was unable to make or answer in this speech, but we are very busy promoting an exciting agenda. We have many more initiatives but there is clearly a long way to go. The debate has shown that we share a common goal: to make our country a global leader in ultra low emissions vehicles.

5.29 pm

Andrew Selous: I am extremely grateful to my hon. Friend the Minister, who I know cares passionately about and is a genuine enthusiast for this area. I am grateful to him for answering all the questions he did. May I ask him to have his officials go through the contributions so that if any were unanswered he can kindly write to me and place a copy of the letter in the Library of the House so that interested colleagues can pick it up?

Andrew Jones: I am happy to do so.

Andrew Selous: I am grateful. I was reassured by much of what the Minister said. However, the one issue I would bring him back to is the interim targets. It is great to hear that he thinks we are on track, but will he provide us with the detail to ensure that we really are, to scrutinise—

5.30 pm

Motion lapsed, and sitting adjourned without Question put (Standing Order No. 10(14)).

Written Statement

Wednesday 1 February 2017

HOME DEPARTMENT

Policing

The Minister for Policing and the Fire Service (Brandon Lewis): My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary has today laid before the House “The Police Grant Report (England and Wales) 2017/18” (HC 944). Copies are available in the Vote Office. The report sets out my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary’s determination for 2017-18 of the aggregate amount of grant that she proposes to pay under section 46(2) of the Police Act 1996, and the amount to be paid to the Greater London Authority for the Mayor’s Office for Policing and Crime.

The allocations that have been laid before the House today are as set out in my statement of 15 December. This reflects the fact that the Government are committed to protecting the public. The Government will provide the resources necessary for the police to do their critical work, and prioritise finishing the job of police reform by enabling the police to transform so they can tackle changing crime, deal with previously hidden crimes and protect the vulnerable.

Following the principles set out on 4 February 2016 when setting out the final police funding settlement for 2016-17 [HCWS510] direct resource funding for each PCC, including precept, will be protected at flat cash levels compared to 2015-16, assuming that precept income

is increased to the maximum amount available in both 2016-17 and 2017-18. No PCC who chooses to maximise precept in both years will face a reduction in cash funding next year compared to 2015-16. We have updated our precept forecasts for 2017-18 since February to reflect actual tax base increases in 2016-17.

I will continue to allocate specific funding for counter-terrorism policing to ensure that critical national counter-terrorism capabilities are maintained. We have allocated £633 million resource funding and £42 million capital funding to support counter-terrorism policing in 2017-18. In addition a further £32 million will be provided for armed policing from the police transformation fund in 2017-18. Police and crime commissioners will receive full counter-terrorism funding allocations imminently. For security reasons these allocations will not be available in the public domain.

This statement also includes details of other funding streams that the Home Office, the Department for Communities and Local Government and the Welsh Government intend to provide to the police in 2017-18.

I have set out in a separate document available online the tables illustrating how we propose to allocate the police funding settlement between the different funding streams and between local policing bodies for 2017-18. These documents are intended to be read together.

Police capital

As set out in the provisional police grant report in December I still intend to allocate the majority of capital funding directly to local policing bodies.

Attachments can be viewed online at: <http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-statement/Commons/2017-02-01/HCWS446/>

[HCWS446]

Ministerial Correction

Wednesday 1 February 2017

COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Homelessness Reduction Bill

The following is an extract from proceedings on Report of the Homelessness Reduction Bill on 27 January 2017.

Mr Marcus Jones: We have already announced more than £600,000 for a social impact bond in Greater Manchester to support entrenched rough sleepers who have the most complex needs. [*Official Report, 27 January 2017, Vol. 620, c. 567.*]

Letter of correction from Mr Marcus Jones:

An error has been identified in the speech I made on Report of the Homelessness Reduction Bill.

The correct statement should have been:

Mr Marcus Jones: We have already announced **£1.8 million** for a social impact bond in Greater Manchester to support entrenched rough sleepers who have the most complex needs.

ORAL ANSWERS

Wednesday 1 February 2017

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Wednesday 1 February 2017

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MINISTERIAL CORRECTION

Wednesday 1 February 2017

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**not later than
Wednesday 8 February 2017**

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